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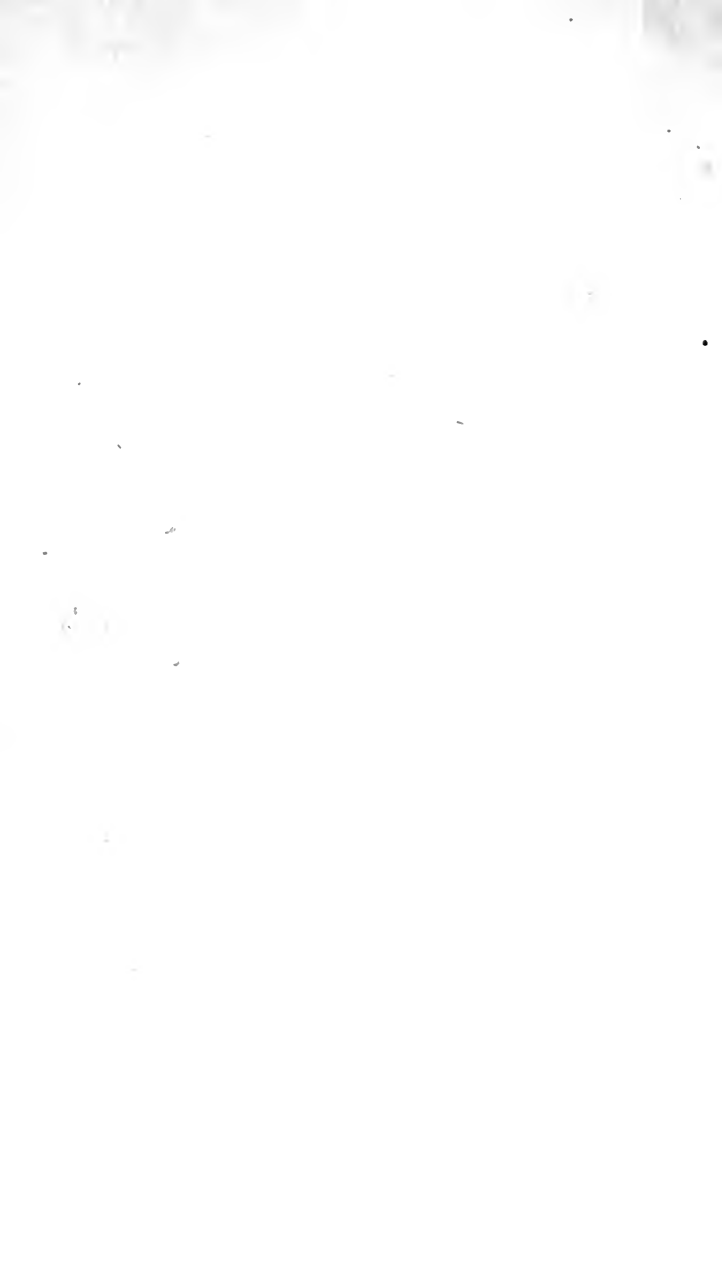




M. Henry Green

Princeton N.J.

October 1860











DAILY BIBLE ILLUSTRATIONS;

BEING

ORIGINAL READINGS FOR A YEAR,

ON SUBJECTS FROM

SACRED HISTORY, BIOGRAPHY, GEOGRAPHY,
ANTIQUITIES, AND THEOLOGY.

ESPECIALLY DESIGNED FOR THE FAMILY CIRCLE.

✓
BY JOHN KITTO, D.D., F.S.A.

EDITOR OF 'THE PICTORIAL BIBLE,' 'CYCLOPÆDIA OF BIBLICAL
LITERATURE,' ETC. ETC.

v. 4
SOLOMON AND THE KINGS.

NEW YORK:
ROBERT CARTER & BROTHERS,
No. 530 BROADWAY.

1859.

DAVID BIBBLE ILLUSTRATIONS;

2013

• **REMAINING FOR A YEAR.**

P R E F A C E.

THE Volume now presented completes the Illustrations founded upon the Historical Books of the Old Testament.

The greater number of persons, and the larger variety of incidents, comprised in the portion of Holy Scripture to which the present Volume is appropriated, impart to it a somewhat distinctive character, in the diversity of the subjects which it embraces. The opening breadth of the political relations and circumstances, has caused the Author's special attention to be given to what may be called the philosophy of Hebrew history, and to the development of the principles of religious and social action. This, as usual in the present work, has been attempted less by discussion than by the mode of expository statement in which the facts have been set forth, and by which the Author has been enabled to produce, in an unpretending form, some of the best results of extended researches.

When it came to be understood, that it would not be possible to enter upon the History of the New Testament in the Fourth Volume, as originally contemplated, many communications, from known and unknown friends, were received, urging the Author to extend his plan, so as to embrace the consideration of those portions of Holy Writ which could not be brought within the limits of the Four Volumes: and as many of the notices of the Third Volume in the periodical press, contained the same recommendation, the Author conceived that he had sufficient grounds for concluding that a **SECOND SERIES** would be acceptable to the public; and as he had become attached to his labor—which is most truly

one of love to him—there wanted but this indication, joined to the hope of larger usefulness, to induce him to turn his attention to the consideration of the best mode of accomplishing a wish so strongly and generally expressed.

It soon appeared that the Gospels, being essentially the Life of Jesus ; and the Acts of the Apostles,—which, taken in connection with the Epistles, form the History of the Early Church—would furnish ample and interesting materials for two more volumes. And, having proceeded thus far, it was seen to be desirable to finish the design, and give a real completeness to the Series, by bringing within its scope the large portion of the Bible not included in the original sketch. It is considered that Job and the other Poetical Books, with Isaiah and the other Prophetical Books, would supply rich materials for two more volumes, and pleasantly carry this new Series of Daily Readings over a second year.

Under these views it is, with the Lord's blessing, intended, after the interval of a few months for such preparations as may be needful to secure regularity in the publication of the Quarterly Volumes, to commence a Second Series of DAILY BIBL ILLUSTRATIONS—the Volumes comprising which will appear in the following order:—

I. JOB AND THE POETICAL BOOKS.

II. ISAIAH AND THE PROPHETS.

III. THE LIFE AND DEATH OF OUR LORD.

IV. THE APOSTLES AND THE EARLY CHURCH.

LONDON, *April*, 1851.

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DAILY BIBLE ILLUSTRATIONS.

Fortieth Week—Sunday.

THE REFUGE.—I KINGS II. 5, 6; 28-34.

AT the commencement of the period upon which we now enter, we behold that man of blood, Joab, when he saw cause to be apprehensive of his safety, fleeing to the tabernacle of God, and placing himself in sanctuary there by taking hold of the horns of the altar. This step, taken by him when there lay, in his judgment, but a step between him and death, raises some profitable suggestions in the mind. That altar was sanctified by the victims offered and the blood sprinkled upon it, typifying the atonement made for the sins of the world by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, in the extremity of our spiritual distresses, as our only means of safety, pardon, and hope, what is there for us to do but that which Joab did?—what but to repair to this altar—grasp it with the strong hand of faith, and declare ourselves at length in refuge—that at length we have found the ransom of our souls, and that we have entered the sacred precincts in which the enemy, the accuser, has no power to enter, and whence his hand has no power to rend us? Christ is that refuge—and, beyond all men upon whom the sun shines, are they happy who have taken sanctuary in him. Nothing from without can harm, nothing affright, them more. They rest secure in him; and, enfolded in his protecting arms, the storms which trouble the life of man, and sprinkle gray hairs

here and there upon him, often before he knows of it, affect him not, in his quiet rest, or are heard only as the muttering thunders of the distant horizon, which only enhance his sense of safety, and do not trouble his repose. The winds may blow bitter, and cold, and fierce, around him; but the house of his hope is not shaken—for it is founded upon a rock.

“Betake thee to thy Christ, then, and repose
Thyself, in all extremities, on those,
His everlasting arms,
Wherewith he girds the heavens, and upholds
The pillars of the earth, and safely folds
His faithful flock from harms.
Cleave close to him by faith, and let the bands
Of love tie thee in thy Redeemer’s hands.”—QUARLES

Yet there was a difference. The altar of the “worldly sanctuary” did not give its shelter to all who took hold of it in faith in the efficiency of its protection. There were exceptions. There were sins too great for it to shelter. A murderer might be torn even from the altar to die, or might, as the case of Joab himself evinces, be slain even there. Here the parallel wholly fails. None, however guilty, has been cast forth from the refuge which the cross of Christ affords, as unworthy its protection, nor did ever any perish at its foot. Not any cast forth on account of their sins—for Christ came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance; and the heavier a man feels the burden of his sins, the more the refuge is dear, and the more it will be prized by him. The only ground on which, hypothetically, a man could be cast forth, would be for lack of faith; but he is never cast out on that account; for faith only—justifying faith—the faith which entitles a troubled soul to the rights of sanctuary—only such faith could have brought him where he is—to the foot of the cross.

Yet there is a mirage in the spiritual as in the natural atmosphere; and many appear to be safe within the refuge, who are indeed far away from it. Their hand may

seem to grasp the very horns of the altar, yet no drop of the blood of the atonement can be found upon their raiment. The world reigns yet in their hearts, and its lusts and lucre fill their hands. And yet the self-deceivers know it not. They lie quiet in an ideal refuge of their own creation; but its walls will not stand the day of decision, which is destined to burn up the hay, the straw, and the stubble of man's confidences, and shall try even the silver and gold by the sure test of fire. These are they who in the greatest, to man, of all coming days, shall claim a favorable recognition from the great King. "Lord, Lord, have we not taught in thy name, in thy name cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works?" but whose ears shall tingle even unto blood at the answer—"I NEVER KNEW YOU.—Depart from me."

In the East a shepherd does not *drive* his sheep, but *leads* them. He goes before them, and they follow him. So it is in the spiritual kingdom. Men are not driven but "drawn" to their refuge in Christ. The world *drives*—but not to God. Joab was not drawn but driven to the altar, and therefore he found no refuge there. "It is the fashion of our foolish presumption," observes Bishop Hall on this case, "to look for protection where we have not cared to yield obedience. Even a Joab clings to God's altar in his extremity, which in his prosperity he regarded not. The worst men would be glad to make use of God's ordinances for their advantage. Necessity will drive the most profane and lawless man to God." But this is not the right spirit, that creates the claim to refuge with Him. To establish that claim, it is not enough to feel that the world is a hard master, still less to seek to avoid the punishment which the world's law inflicts upon our sins. It is necessary that sin should be felt to be exceeding sinful, and known as the abominable thing which God hateth; it is requisite that the burden of the sin should press heavy on the soul, and that the most burning desire to be rid of it should be felt—not because of its human penalties—not for the loss, the bonds, the stripes, the death, with which man

may visit it—but because it separates the soul from God, because he is angry with it every day, and because, unless purged away, atoned for, pardoned, blotted out, it will forever exclude the soul from the blessedness of his presence, which is heaven here, and heaven hereafter.

It may seem hard that Joab, who had rendered more services to the state than any man in Israel, who was so greatly successful in all his military undertakings, and who had been so faithful to David in all his troubles, should thus in his old age be called to account for his old sins, which were at the time passed over,—which had, as it were, been condoned by subsequent services and employments of trust and honor; hard that he should thus be called so late to pay blood for blood to Abner and to Amasa. No doubt he ought to have been punished; but whether by those whom he had served so well, and whether after so long an interval, may be questioned by some. It was justice. But was David (for it was he who enjoined this task to his son) the man to exact the severest extremity of avenging justice from Joab—was it for him to forget that he had himself made this very Joab the instrument of his murder of Uriah? Joab deserved to die; and at an earlier day we had been content to see him brought by the king to justice—and even at this late period, we might not much have murmured to see him fall under the sword of the blood-avenger of Abner or Amasa. But we like not the mode, the time, or the circumstances of this judgment; we like not that David should, on his death-bed, have laid the charge upon his son, “not to allow his hoar head to go down to the grave in peace.” Let us learn from it, however, this lesson, that it is not in the power of any of our services or best deserving, to buy off the penalty due to our ancient sins. There it remains written in the great book of death against us. The hand is not ours—the power is not on earth, that can cancel that page, or blot out the handwriting against us. But there is One that can do it—who, for our sakes, purchased at no mean price the right to do it. And he *will* do it, if, with true faith in his power, and with truly humble hearts,

we ask him. He is ready—he is most willing—he only waits to be asked, to make these things be as though they had not been ; to cancel all, the old and the new. Let us not grieve him—let us not insult his blood-bought prerogative, by wasting our strength in the vain attempt to do ourselves, that which he alone is able to do for us.

FORTIETH WEEK—MONDAY.

JOAB AND ADONIJAH.—I KINGS II. 13–25.

THE execution of Joab, to some points of which we referred yesterday, grew out of, and was connected with, other matters, which may to-day engage our attention.

We have seen that David, on his death-bed, enjoined his youthful heir to put Joab to death ; and we have stated the impression which this injunction, from a man on the borders of the grave, is calculated at the first view to make upon the mind. There has, indeed, been a disposition manifested to set aside the reason assigned by David himself, and to substitute others ; such as his secret resentment for the slaughter of Absalom, joined to a politic desire to relieve the reign of the young king from the presence of a person so powerful, whose dangerous influence had been felt most oppressively by himself, and whose recent support of Adonijah rendered it doubtful that Solomon could reckon upon his allegiance. It is impossible to deny that these considerations may have had weight upon David's mind, unconsciously to himself. But if they were consciously entertained by him, there was no reason why he should not have stated them to Solomon ; and we are, therefore, driven to the reasons he does give, as those which he deemed sufficient, not only to call for, but to justify, this extreme and apparently harsh measure. In these, there is nothing of private vengeance, but everything rests on the basis of public duty. He refers to the foul

murders of Abner and Amasa, whom Joab “slew, and shed the blood of war in peace, and put the blood of war upon his girdle that was upon his loins, and in his shoes that were on his feet. Do, therefore, according to thy wisdom, and let not his hoar head go down to the grave in peace.”

Now, it is very possible that we lose the force of this declaration, by estimating it according to the views and sentiments of our own later law of mercy and forgiveness. The sentiment continually set forth in the Old Testament is, that innocent blood cries to God from the ground for vengeance. and that, if suffered to go unpunished, it brings down a curse and judgment upon the land. Let us look at some texts enforcing the view which both David and Solomon were bound to take of this matter. “If a man come presumptuously on his neighbor to slay him with guile, thou shalt take him from mine altar, that he may die.”* This exactly met the case of both murders by Joab; and the neglect of a rule so plain, and so stringently stated, might well appear as a perilous neglect of public duty. Again: “Ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer which is guilty of death: but he shall surely be put to death.”† After a similar injunction in Deut. xix. 13, it is added, “Thine eye shall not pity him: but *thou shalt put away the guilt of innocent blood from Israel, that it may go well with thee.*” Look, also, to the case of Manasseh, whose punishment and captivity is mainly ascribed to “the innocent blood which he shed (for he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood), *which the Lord would not pardon.*”‡ That this point of view was, as it ought to be, present to the mind of David, and influenced his conduct, is very clear; for, at the very time of Abner’s murder, he publicly implored that the judgment of this innocent blood might be averted from his house and kingdom, and that it might rest upon Joab and upon his house.”§ This, in fact, was formally reserving Joab for the future judgment which he then felt powerless to execute. Besides

* Exod. xxi. 14.

† 2 Kings xxiv. 4.

† Num. xxxv. 31.

§ 2 Sam. iii. 28

this, it must not be overlooked that the recent terrible judgment upon the land, on account of the long-past destruction of the Gibeonites by Saul, was well calculated to enforce these views, and give great intensity to David's apprehensions of the consequences to the realm of these crimson sins of Joab being much longer suffered to pass unpunished. The same instance was likely to bring out, with strong and terrible force, the point of view constantly produced under the theocratical constitution, that mere lapse of time weakens nothing, strengthens nothing; and that before Him, who is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever, and whose existence knows no morrow nor yesterday, the sin, a generation old, is as fresh as at the time of its committal,—even as the holy and blessed thought or aspiration which comes over the mind, or rises from the heart, of any reader at the present moment, will be as fresh to His knowledge a thousand years hence as it is at this instant of time.

If this state of the case be correct, and we are persuaded that it is, no excuse for David's conduct in this matter is required; but was rather—under the views he was bound to entertain—not only blameless, but laudable, and entirely in accordance with his duty as a theocratical king and a father.

This has reference to David's injunction; and Solomon places its execution entirely on the same ground, although the immediate *occasion* was of another sort, and supplied a new ground of offence.

It will be remembered that Adonijah had been remanded by the young king, his brother, to private life. But it seems that after his first alarm had subsided, his hopes began to revive; and it may be collected that his old and powerful supporters, Joab and Abiathar, encouraged his hopes. They seem, however, to have been closely watched, and the king knew much more of their projects than they at all suspected.

The first tangible matter, however, which occurred to afford Solomon an occasion of arresting their designs was of a remarkable nature, and it is difficult for us, trained up in

a different class of ideas and associations, to grasp in all its breadth.

While David lay in his last illness, the officious zeal of his attendants recommended that the most beautiful damsel in all Israel should be sought out, and that she, becoming his wife, should remain in constant attendance upon him to cheer and comfort him. This lot fell upon Abishag, the Shunamite, who, at his death, remained a virgin widow. Now, the indicative fact is neither more nor less than this, that Adonijah sought this lady for his wife. Fearing to make any direct application to the king, and being well aware of his mother's influence with him, he applied in the first instance to her. To one of more suspicious temper and of keener discernment than Bathsheba, some misgiving might have been awakened by the connection of ideas which he suffered to appear when introducing the subject:—"Thou knowest the kingdom was mine, and that all Israel set their faces on me, that I should reign over them: howbeit the kingdom is turned about, and is become my brother's;"—and then, as if suddenly conscious that he was unwisely committing himself, he added,—“for it was his from the Lord.” This was certainly a curious preamble to the request he came to make, and at least evinces his own consciousness of its high importance. The good-natured Bathsheba, anxious to soothe his wounded pride, and to make what seemed to her a harmless atonement for the frustration of his hopes, in which she herself had been an instrument, noticed none of the latent and dangerous meanings involved in these things, but hastened to assure him of her readiness to undertake the mission he proposed. One might suppose that she would have been a little shocked at the grossness involved in the idea of a son espousing his father's widow,—the rather, as she was unconscious of his real object, which would have rendered the matter more intelligible to her. But the truth obviously is, that, strict as was the law respecting intermarriages—strict beyond the law of any nation, a great practical laxity had grown up in these matters, especially in high quar-

was, and above all at the royal court. Of this we have had some painful instances already in the family of David, even during his life-time.

Nothing can more clearly show the large measure of formal and truly oriental state which had by this time been introduced into the Hebrew court, than the ceremonious manner of the interview between the king and his mother. One would suppose she would have made an application in private; but, whether from choice or necessity, it was not so. She entered the hall in which the king sat on his throne; and when he saw her, he arose, and advanced to meet her, bowed to her, and conducted her to a seat on his right hand. She said that she had a small request to make, and deprecated a refusal; and he assured her that it should be granted, whatever it might be. But he no sooner understood the nature of her application, than his countenance darkened. "Ask for him the kingdom also; for he is mine elder brother; even for him, and for Abiathar the priest, and for Joab, the son of Zeruiah." These words can mean nothing else than that he discerned in this application the first development of a further design upon the crown, concocted between these men, of which he had already some information, but of which this was the first tangible intimation on which he could act. And he did act—and that with an unhesitating promptitude which justly shocks those who look not beyond the simple fact which appears in the face of the transaction. He sent Benaiah, the captain of the host, to put Adonijah to death wherever he might find him. It was when Joab heard of this that he fled to the altar—his doing which seems to us a sufficient indication of such conscious complicity with Adonijah in a further design, as Solomon had detected. Unless he knew himself guilty, and supposed, from the execution of Adonijah, that all was known to the king, there was nothing in what had happened to lead him to conclude himself in danger. Whatever wrong or treason might be latent in Adonijah's application for Abishag, there was nothing, taking that matter by itself, to connect

Joab with it; but his own act, and the words of the king, show that there was something more, within and beyond this, with which he was connected, and which involved him in the doom of Adonijah. The past offence of this prince had been overlooked. Solomon had pledged his royal word to respect his life so long as he should show himself a worthy man. That he is punished, therefore, shows that there was a new offence of the same nature; and it was Joab's part in this, not his share in the old offence, for which Adonijah himself had been pardoned, that supplied Solomon with the occasion of executing the injunctions of his father.

Some reader may still be at a loss to perceive how the application which was made by Adonijah, for leave to espouse the widow of his father, afforded the indication of ulterior pretensions which Solomon could so readily recognize. It may therefore be proper to refer back to the instance of Absalom's taking possession of his father's concubines at Jerusalem, and to the remarkable words of Nathan, in his rebuke to David,—“I gave thy master's wives into thy bosom.” Connecting these instances with the one before us, we may perceive that among the Jews, as in other Eastern and in various African nations, the harem of the preceding king was regarded as a sort of regalia appertaining to the crown, and so essentially the property of his successor, that the possession of it, or of any essential part of it, gave much strength to a claim that might otherwise be disputable. The process is curious, and so adverse to our own notions, that it is difficult thoroughly to understand. But the fact of the existence of such a custom, and of the notions connected with it, is certain, and might be illustrated by instances which cannot here be produced.

If this explanation of these unpleasant transactions be correct, Solomon stands fully justified for the course taken by him towards Adonijah, Joab, and Abiathar; and Adonijah loses all claim to the degree of sympathy which may have been felt for him in regard to his previous attempt; for we have his own word for his knowledge of the fact that the

appointment of Solomon was "from the Lord." Abiathar was declared by Solomon to be also worthy of death; but his life was spared in consideration of his sacred character, and his long companionship with David. But he was deposed from the honors and emoluments of the priesthood, and was directed to confine himself to his own private estate at Anathoth.

FORTIETH WEEK—TUESDAY.

SHIMEI.—I KINGS II. 8, 9; 36-46.

JOAB was not the only man whom the dying charge of David recommended to the unfavorable notice of Solomon. Shimei was another. His words concerning this notorious person were—"Behold, thou hast with thee Shimei the son of Gera, a Benjamite of Bahurim, who cursed me with a grievous curse in the day that I went to Mahanaim: but he came down to meet me at Jordan, and I swore to him by the Lord, saying, I will not put thee to death with the sword. Now therefore hold him not guiltless; for thou art a wise man, and knowest what thou oughtest to do unto him; but his hoar head bring thou down to the grave with blood." We reject the attempts which have been made to modify this translation in order to remove its apparent harshness, believing the meaning to be correctly given. Taking it, therefore, as it stands, the sense appears to be this: David intends to warn Solomon against Shimei, as a dangerous subject prone to break out into disaffection, and whose power of doing harm required that he should be carefully watched. He himself had, for reasons of policy, and in consideration of his meeting him, with a large body of Benjamites, at the Jordan, pardoned him for his gross and treasonable insults at Bahurim. He had pledged his oath to him for his safety. Solomon, however, was not bound to regard him as altogether

expurgated from that crime; and, should he be detected in any new offence against himself, he was advised not to excuse and pardon him, as his father had done. We excuse David altogether from the attempt to palter with his oath, on which some found his justification. Those who say that the oath bound only David, but left his successor free to punish the crime he had sworn not to punish, forget that, in matters of grace and justice, the word of a king binds not only the individual monarch, but the crown. Were it otherwise, the beginning of a new reign would be equivalent to a revolution, and would be a reign of terror and dismay throughout the land. David was incapable of the miserable quibble here ascribed to him. Still the law of Christian forgiveness was not in those times known; and we are unable to find it, and have no right to expect it, in the behavior of those ancient kings—not even in David, still less in Solomon. It is a beautiful testimony to the spirit of Christianity, that those who have been brought up under its influence, find much to distress them in transactions which would, at this very day, appear perfectly reasonable, just, and even laudable among eastern nations. The difference is nowhere more emphatically announced than in the words of our Saviour,—“Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, that ye shall love your friends and hate your enemies: but I say unto you, Love your enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that despitefully use you and persecute you.” Since our Lord himself announces this as a new doctrine, and declares that it did not exist in “old time”—had no practical operation—it would be in vain to look for its operation in the conduct of men belonging to those times. The greatest men were animated by the spirit of the age in which they lived, and belonged essentially to that age; and we might as well complain that they travelled from Dan to Beersheba upon the slow-footed ass rather than by the rapid rail, as that they were not in all things actuated by the spirit of a later revelation and a later time. We are therefore not anxious to show that there was nothing vindictive in this

counsel of David to his son ; but we do think that a prudential regard for the safety of that son's reign, in warning him against dangerous persons, was the predominant motive of his counsel, and the only motive of which he was himself conscious.

Under the like circumstances, a king in the situation of Solomon, in almost any country of Europe itself—excepting, perhaps, only in our own country, where “the liberty of the subject” cannot be interfered with—would have shut such a man as Shimei up in some fortress for life ; or, in the East, would have put out his eyes, or deprived him of his tongue, or both, or have subjected him to some other infliction to render him harmless ; and in either part of the world, any prince who dealt with so suspicious a character not more harshly than Solomon, would be deemed to have acted leniently by him. He put him upon his parole, or rather made him a prisoner at large, assigning him for his residence, however, the largest and the most pleasant city in the land, even Jerusalem, in which many counted it a privilege to dwell. The brook Kidron was assigned him as a limit ; and he was solemnly warned that, whenever he ventured beyond this limit, the penalty was death. This was necessary ; for, to a man thus laboring under political suspicion, freedom to go beyond the assigned limit whenever he liked, would quite have nullified the object of placing him under *surveillance* in the metropolis. He might as well have been left entirely at large. And it was equally necessary that the order should have been absolute and indiscriminate ; for if *any* excuse were to be allowed, an excuse could easily be found or created whenever the man desired to be absent.

At all events, Shimei accepted the engagement, and was clearly thankful that the limitations were so lenient and reasonable, and the conditions so easy to observe. As clearly he did not consider himself hardly dealt with ; and as he appears to have expected some harsher judgment, we, at this later day, and with no minute knowledge of all the facts,

have scarcely the right to censure that conduct towards him, of which he found no reason to complain.

Under this limitation, Shimei abode three years at Jerusalem. At the end of that period three of his slaves ran away from him, and were perhaps encouraged to do so by the notion, that the restriction under which their master lay must prevent him from following them. They were mistaken; for Shimei no sooner heard that they had been seen at Gath, than he saddled his ass, and hastened thither to reclaim them. He returned with them to Jerusalem; but had no sooner arrived than he was summoned before the king, who, after reminding him of his solemn engagement under oath never to quit Jerusalem upon pain of death, and reproaching him with the wickedness "*which thine heart is privy to,*" gave the signal of death to Benaiah, now captain of the host in the place of Joab, who "went out, and fell upon him that he died."

Justifying, as we have done, the limitation imposed upon Shimei, we are bound to uphold also this stringent judgment upon its infraction. He had been fully warned of this result, and had accepted the condition. Had he refused, he would probably have been kept in close confinement; but since he had accepted, he was allowed full freedom within the assigned limits. The opportunity of leaving the city was allowed him, simply because he had pledged himself not to avail himself of it. Even so, however, we were formerly disposed, with Dr. Chalmers and others, to regard the transaction as "indigestible," at least in its closing points. We argued to ourselves, that had Shimei been pursued, overtaken, and brought back, it would have been quite right to inflict the severest judgment upon him; but that, to say the least, it was a hard measure, seeing that he had come back voluntarily, and had thereby evinced the absence of any sinister object, or of any intention to escape. But on closer reflection, it appeared that the restriction put upon him was meant to guard against, not so much his escape (for if he escaped, how was he to be put to death?) as against occasional ab-

sences, during which he might plot and conspire, and then return until matters should be ripe for his final disappearance. And as the king had imposed a simple and clear regulation, he was not bound to burden himself with a particular inquiry into the validity of all the excuses which might from time to time be produced for its infraction. How, for instance, in this very case, was the king to know that the slaves had not been sent away, on purpose to afford their master an excuse for visiting a most suspicious quarter?

Upon the whole, it seems to us that in this case, as in many other austere circumstances of Scripture history, the apparent "difficulty" disappears, or becomes greatly attenuated, when *all* the circumstances are closely weighed; and when we contemplate the subject not exclusively from our own point of view, but from that of contemporaries, under influences—religious, political, and social—very different from our own, but which some degree of careful study may enable us to realize. The more this is done, the more "digestible" many of the hardest things of Scripture history will appear. One thing is certain, that there is not a word or hint in the sacred books to show that the conduct of David and Solomon to Joab, Shimei, Adonijah, or Abiathar, was regarded as other than perfectly right and just, if not laudable, by the people of the age and country in which David and Solomon lived. Indeed, we may be sure that Solomon was too sagacious to disfigure the commencement of his reign by acts abhorrent to the public opinion of his time. And if he had that sanction—as we are sure he had—we feel that, in matters not affecting any principle of God's ancient law, we have no right to stigmatize his conduct as unjust or barbarous, although, with our keener sense—with our Christian and occidental perceptions of human obligations, we turn with relief from the grim severities of this blood-stained page.

FORTIETH WEEK—WEDNESDAY.

THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON—I KINGS III.

As it appears eventually that Solomon did some foolish and some mistaken things, it becomes a matter of interest to know wherein lay that "wisdom" with which he is described as being supernaturally endowed.

God giveth to him that bath. It was the previous possession of wisdom that qualified him for more. David distinctly recognized him as "a wise man;" and his wisdom is evinced by nothing more, than his choice of wisdom beyond all other blessings, when the fruition of his wishes was in the vision at Gibeon offered to him. What he asked was "a wise and understanding heart,"—"wisdom to govern this great people;" and his choice was so much approved, that benefits which he had refrained from asking—wealth, power, length of days, were thrown in without his seeking. The terms of his request indicate the nature of the "wisdom" he required. That Divine wisdom in spiritual things—that heart religion, which the Jews sometimes denoted by this name, is not intended. With that he was not pre-eminently gifted; not more gifted certainly—hardly so much gifted, as his father David. The wisdom which he craved was that of which he had already enough to appreciate the value of its increase—practical wisdom, sagacity, clearness of judgment and intellect in the administration of justice and in the conduct of public affairs, with an aptitude for the acquisition and use of the higher branches of philosophical knowledge, natural and moral, which constituted the learning of his age. In the latter he excelled the most famous men of his time. We are told that in the course of his career he found a sufficiency of learned leisure to compose three thousand proverbs, and songs a thousand and five; and that he "spoke," or wrote, on all known species of plants, "from the cedar in Lebanon to the hyssop that springeth out of the wall," as well as in

every branch of zoology,—“of beasts, of fowls, of creeping things, and of fishes.” The loss of these works in natural history is greatly to be deplored. We are not, however, to suppose, that they were regular scientific descriptions and accounts of the various subjects, but such concise observations as we find interspersed among the existing writings ascribed to him, more frequently than in any other books in Scripture. The Jews have a notion, that a considerable portion of Solomon’s observations of this kind are preserved in the works of Aristotle, to whom, according to them, his great pupil, Alexander, sent a copy of Solomon’s writings, which he met with in the East.

Of his “Songs” we have a few interesting specimens in one of the Psalms—in the wonderful “Song of Songs,” which perhaps rightly bears his name; besides which, the introductory chapters of the book of Proverbs abound in poetry of the highest order. Of his “Proverbs” also, we have many specimens left; and these, with the book of Ecclesiastes (if rightly ascribed to him), contain such lessons of practical wisdom, and embody such profound observations on man’s life and nature, as would alone account for the wide-spread reputation which this great king acquired.

It was, however, a monarch’s sagacity in the administration of justice, which was calculated to make the most marked impression upon the popular mind, and likely to be most generally talked about through the land. This quality also came more home to the personal concerns of his subjects than any other, and was for that reason alone the more carefully regarded. The administration of justice was in all ancient monarchies, as it is now in the East, a most important part of the royal duties and functions; and there is no quality more highly prized than that keen discernment in the royal judge, which detects the clue of real evidence amidst conflicting testimony, or that ready tact which devises a test of truth where the evidence affords not even the clue to any grounds of decision. It was an instance of this kind which supplied to the watchful people the first evidence of the

marvellous judicial sagacity with which their king was endowed.

The story is well known. Two mothers, one of whom had lost her son, contend for the possession of the living child; and the king, having to decide which of the two has the best claim to it, detects the real mother by the emotion she evinces when he orders the living child to be divided, and half given to each; and by her readiness to abandon her claim rather than see the child perish before her eyes. We are not aware of anything in Hebrew history that more strongly evinces the despotism which had by this time crept into the kingdom, than the fact that the woman really believed this outrageous mandate would be executed. If a judge made such a suggestion among us, he would be laughed to scorn for so futile an experiment, which the most ignorant woman in the land would know that he was utterly unable to execute. The real terror of the mother, at a judgment which she too well knew *might* be executed, becomes, in this point of view, doubly affecting.

At the present day in the East, the people are prone to exalt the civil wisdom of their kings by nothing so much as by their discernment and equity in judgment. The reader of Eastern history or tale will recollect numerous instances by which the king and judges resort to the most ingenious devices for the discovery of the truth, not demonstrable by direct evidence. Some of these have a certain resemblance to that of Solomon. The Hindoos reverently preserve the memory of some of their kings who have rendered themselves famous by the equity of their judgments. One of the most celebrated of these was Mariadiramam, among other instances of whose sagacity the following is recorded:—

A rich man had married two wives; the first of whom, although ugly, had a great advantage over the second, in that she had brought her husband a son, while the other was childless. But, as if to compensate for her sterility, the second wife possessed such charms of person and character, that she reigned supremely in the heart of her husband.

Provoked at this preference, the first wife conceived a plan of vengeance equally astounding for its diabolical ingenuity and its savageness. She lavished every external mark of maternal love and tenderness upon the infant at her breast, and let the neighborhood know that this child was now her only comfort, the centre of her hopes, in the absence of that affection which her husband denied her. As soon as she had convinced the world that her heart was altogether wrapt up in her little son, she, one night, when the husband was away from home, twisted the child's neck, and laid the corpse beside the second wife, who lay asleep in her bed. In the morning, pretending to seek for her infant, she ran into the chamber of her rival, and there finding the child dead, she fell upon the ground, tore her hair, and gave vent to the most frightful howls and lamentations. This brought the neighbors together: and the other wife was already condemned in their eyes; for it was clear the child had been murdered, and it could not cross their minds that any mother—and, least of all, a mother so fond as this—should thus destroy her own infant, whom she had held up as the only comfort left to her in life. This, however, was what the other urged in her defence—dwelling upon the enmity which the mother entertained against her, and maintaining that no passion was so cruel and relentless as jealousy.

The case was brought before Mariadiramén; and a day was appointed for each woman to plead her cause. They did so, with that natural eloquence which passion usually inspires. The king, unable to decide upon the statements before him, pronounced this sentence: Let the woman who is innocent, and who pretends that her rival is culpable, move through this assembly in the posture which he would show her. The posture he indicated was one from which modesty would shrink. But the mother of the child with much vehemence declared that, in order to convince the assembly that her rival was guilty, she would not only take this turn through the assembly once, but a hundred times if required. The other sorrowfully declined the test, declaring that, although

innocent, she would sooner submit to the most cruel death than do what was then required of her. The other was about to reply ; but the voice of the king stilled all other sound. He pronounced her guilty, and her antagonist innocent. "A woman," he said, "whom the certain prospect of death cannot constrain to an unbecoming action, is incapable of so great a crime ; but a woman who, having lost all sense of womanly reserve, hesitates not at an immodest action, sufficiently declares herself to be capable of the blackest crimes." Confounded to find herself thus discovered, the mother of the child vindicated the penetration of the royal judge, by publicly acknowledging her crime.

The sagacity of Solomon was, however, more marked than this ; for the evidence in the case brought before him was more equal, and the test more intelligent and more appropriate to the particular case. Solomon's was altogether a most wonderful decision ; and its results were most important to him ; for it evinced, in the judgment of the people, his fitness to fill worthily the high place to which he had been raised. Of this some doubt and misgiving appear to have been previously entertained, on account of his age—too young for experience, yet too old for a regency. But now all this was at an end. He had delivered a judgment which the most ripened experience could not surpass. "They saw that the wisdom of God was with him to do judgment ;" and thenceforth they regarded him with the respect and veneration due to riper years.

FORTIETH WEEK—THURSDAY.

PREPARATIONS.—I KINGS V. II CHRON. II.

It was one of the first cares of Solomon to discharge the obligation laid upon him before he was born—of building a temple to the Lord at Jerusalem. For this David had made

very large preparations; but there was still much to prepare, and the young king found it requisite to seek the assistance of the king of Tyre, as his father had formerly done. The king is still named Hiram; and as he is said to have been "ever a lover of David," it was no doubt the same person with whom David had carried on a friendly correspondence.

The correspondence between him and Solomon is given both in the books of Kings and Chronicles,—in the latter more fully than the former, and with added points we are thankful to have preserved. The correspondence is, to our view, very important and interesting. One point must not pass unnoticed. It is said that "*Solomon sent to Hiram, saying,*"—thus implying that the message was orally conveyed; but of Hiram's reply, it is remarked—doubtless with designed emphasis—that he "*answered in writing*"—being certainly the first recorded instance of this application of writing, in which it would seem the Phœnicians were beforehand with the Hebrews.

Solomon's message was in every way creditable to him. Hiram was an idolater, a non-worshipper of Jehovah; and public men of more modern times would, in such a case, probably have thought it becoming to suppress their own special views, in which the person addressed might be supposed not to agree, and confine themselves to the strict matter of business. This was not the course which the wisest of men thought it became him to adopt. He bore testimony to the truth he knew, apprehending that it became him to uphold the Lord's honor under all circumstances,—not wishing to displease Hiram, but determined to pay no timid deference to heathen prejudices. He boldly asserted the very positions which a heathen was least of all likely to receive—the infinity of Jehovah, and his supreme dominion. "The house which I build is great; for *great* is our God above all gods. But who is able to build Him a house, seeing the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him?" The effect of this conscientious boldness in bearing testimony to the truth, was such as invariably follows the same line of conduct. Hiram was *not*

displeased, but rather spoke reverently of this high God, and expressed his earnest desire to co-operate in so good a work. Indeed, his language is stronger than that of Solomon himself, and may suggest that this declaration had made a serious impression upon his mind, or at least had strengthened some convictions made during his former intercourse with David, in whose mind the glory of God was so active a principle of thought, speech, and action, that it seems impossible for one to have been a “lover of David,” without being also, in some measure, a lover of David’s God. In Hiram’s answer these remarkable words occur,—“Because Jehovah hath loved his people, He hath made thee king over them.” And again: “Blessed be Jehovah, God of Israel, *that made heaven and earth.*” Here is a clear acknowledgment of Jehovah as the creator of the universe, of his government of the world, of his providence, and that by Him kings reign.

As in the case of David, what Solomon requires is assistance in art, and certain kinds of wood for building from the mountains of Lebanon. The payment was also, in like manner, to be in agricultural produce,—corn, wine, and oil. Solomon does not want, as David did, carpenters and masons; so that there can be little doubt that David had retained in his employment, on various works, the men who had previously come to him from Tyre, and these had doubtless taught others. Indeed, there was probably great activity in building, particularly at Jerusalem, throughout the reign of David. In that city, the rapid increase of population, from its being made the metropolis of the kingdom, must have created a constant demand for new buildings. There is a hint of this in Solomon’s command to Shimei to fix his residence in Jerusalem. He does not tell him to rent a house, but tells him to *build* a house,—assuming, apparently, that, under the circumstances, the two things were the same,—that telling him to fix his abode in Jerusalem, involved the necessity of building a house; or, in other words, that no person could find a house to live in who did not build one for himself.

As Solomon had already established a close intercourse with Egypt, and had even espoused a daughter of the Egyptian king, he had also very probably secured the advantage of a supply of artisans from that country, so famous for old experience in the arts of construction. What Solomon wanted most was a master of the works, able to carry out the plans left by David; and it was for such a man that Solomon applied to Hiram. The account of the attainments required is curious, as showing the very diverse qualifications sought in one man, in an age wherein labor and skill was much less subdivided than it afterwards became. The qualifications, however, had respect to the furniture of the temple, and not to the construction of it, which leaves open the question whether Solomon had otherwise provided for this part of the undertaking—say by obtaining an architect from Egypt,—or that the qualifications required for this purpose are to be regarded as included among those of the skilful person sought from the king of Tyre. The latter seems probable, as the qualifications enumerated are nearly the same found in Bezaleel, who, however, not only excelled in the matters specified, but superintended the whole construction of the tabernacle. The selection of Hiram fell in this instance on a person who bore the same name with himself, and who had the advantage of being the son of a Hebrew woman of the tribe of Naphtali, though his father was a man of Tyre. It is probable that there were others at Tyre as well qualified as this person; but this one was chosen by king Hiram, on the supposition that his connection on the mother's side with the Israelites would render him more acceptable to them, as well as cause him to feel more interested in his undertaking.

What Solomon demanded was, “a man cunning (skilful) to work in gold, in silver, and in brass, and in iron, and in purple, and crimson, and blue, and that can skill to grave,” &c. Josephus understood that Hiram was skilful in “*all kinds of works*” but in these particularly. And this is probable; for in the case of Bezaleel, after the enumeration of

the like qualifications, it is added, that he was skilled "in all manner of workmanship."

Comparing this enumeration with that of Bezaleel's qualifications, we find some significant additions. Among the metals in which that person wrought, "iron" is not named, nor is there mention of anything composed of that metal in the works of the tabernacle. The mention of it here shows that iron had, through the intercourse of the Israelites with the maritime coast, come into considerable use. There is, indeed, no mention of iron in the account of the building of the temple; but where so much wood was used, much iron must have been employed in fastening the parts together, as well as in the tools of the workmen; and we are told, in fact, that David prepared "iron for things of iron," in large abundance. 2 Kings ii. 6; 1 Chron. xxii. 3.

Here, also, is the additional mention of coloring,—in fact, of the very dyes for which the Tyrians have been immemorially famous. There has been some dispute about the true character of these colors. This seems to be set at rest by the discovery of the figure of two Tyrians in the tomb of Rameses Miamun, at Thebes, arrayed in dresses which exhibit the colors in question. It may be, indeed, imagined that we may not take these colors as determining the exact



shade, but as furnishing the nearest approximation which the pigments of the Egyptian artists allowed. But we should think there is little doubt they could obtain the exact color, if they desired it, although, with regard to the blue or purple, it may be doubted whether it were of as much use for painting as it was for a dye. The dress itself is remarkable, as shown in the annexed figure, and is a valuable contribution to the costumes of the region to which Palestine belongs. The colors are

purple and scarlet, and so arranged, that one half of the person is clothed with the one, and the other half with the other. Both colors are extremely vivid, as the Greek and Latin writers represent them to have been. The scarlet part of the outer short mantle or cape has a pattern of large purple spots upon it, which appear to have been formed during the process of dyeing, either by sewing on patches of cloth of the shape of the spots, or by applying more earthy ground to protect the purple in these places from the re-agent which turned the rest scarlet. The mantle and tunic are both edged with a deep gold-lace; and the whole forms a gorgeous dress, agreeing well with the refinement and luxury which ancient writers ascribe to the Tyrians, and which are so vividly described by the prophet Ezekiel,—chap. xxvii. On comparing the colors with those given in Syme's edition of "Werner's Nomenclature of Colors," we find the blue or purple to have a close resemblance to China blue,—or, perhaps, a shade lighter, between that and azure blue. The red is a distinct scarlet red, deepening into vermillion. As far as appears, the only use of these colors was in the veils or curtains which covered the doors of entrance to the outer and the inner sanctuary.* Its material was dyed of these colors, and it was decorated with figures of cherubim, probably wrought in needlework. To this skill in dyes, in colors, in textile fabrics, in brassfounding, in smithery, in gold and silver work, Hiram added the knowledge of "carving," probably wood-carving and modelling; for the analogous qualification of Bezaleel was "carving of timber,—of which kind of work there was much more in the temple than in the tabernacle.

FORTIETH WEEK—FRIDAY.

CEDARS OF LEBANON.—I KINGS VI. 10; II CHRON. II. 8, 9.

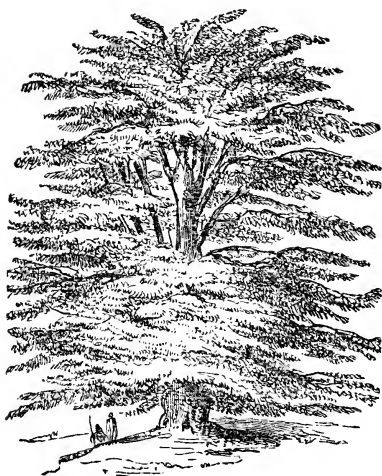
TIMBER, of various kinds, was what Solomon chiefly re-

* Chron iii. 14.

quired of king Hiram. That it was needful to procure timber from so distant a quarter, and that through the intervention of foreigners, shows that, although trees of various kinds, and especially such as bear fruit, may have been abundant in Palestine, such as afforded wood suited for building purposes were not much more common in the country than they are at present. As it is eventually said that Solomon made the cedar-wood of Lebanon as abundant in Palestine "as the sycamores that are in the vale,"* this shows that the sycamore was the native timber tree in common use. But the wood is coarse, and would not be much valued where anything better could be procured. Hence it was a sort of luxury to use cedar-wood, which, although not the most desirable of timbers, is at least considerably better than sycamore; and, being brought with cost and trouble from a distance, would be the more valued on account of its comparatively high price. Thus, again, in Isaiah, ix. 10,—“The sycamore-trees are cut down, and we will change them into cedars;” which does not mean that cedar-trees were to be planted in lieu of sycamores, seeing that the cedar-tree does not flourish in Palestine, but that the Israelites would soon be able to repair their losses, and rebuild in greater perfection. These cedar-trees formed Solomon’s chief requirement from Hiram.

The tree called the “cedar of Lebanon” is very well known in this country, where many specimens of it exist, having been originally propagated in the 17th century from seeds obtained from Lebanon. It is a wide-spreading tree, generally from 50 to 80 feet high, and where standing singly, often covering, with its branches, a space the diameter of which is much greater than its height. The horizontal branches, when the tree is exposed on all sides, are very large in proportion to the trunk, being often equal in bulk to the stem of the fir or the chestnut—a circumstance alluded to by the prophet Ezekiel, in his magnificent description of this noble tree.—Chap. xxxi. 3–6. These branches are dis-

* 1 Kings x. 27



posed in horizontal layers or stages, the distance to which they extend diminishing as they approach the top, where they form a pyramidal head broad in proportion to the height. The branchlets are disposed in a fanlike manner upon the branches, and the evergreen leaves lying thickly upon them in tufts, the whole, in each stage of the tree's ascent, sometimes presents an almost unbroken field of dark green.

The cedar grove, which is regarded as the remnant of the forest which supplied the cedar-wood to Solomon, or rather, perhaps, as the principal existing site of these trees, lies far up among the higher mountains, at a spot which it takes above a day to reach from the coast at Tripoli. The grove is here found, not, as some have conceived, upon any of the summits of Lebanon, but at the foot of a lofty mountain, in what may be regarded as the arena of a vast amphitheatre, shut in on all sides by high mountains, which form part of the upper ridge of Lebanon. Here the trees stand upon five or six gentle elevations, occupying a spot of ground about three fourths of a mile in circumference. They appear

to be of several generations. Of the oldest there are few, perhaps not more than seven or eight; but besides these, there are forty or fifty good-sized, well-looking trees, and a great number of smaller ones, with some small pines among them. The largest trunks are distinguishable by having the small branches at the top only, and by four, five, or seven trunks springing from one base. The trunks are quite dead, and exhibit externally a grayish tint. The branches of others are larger, and the foliage more abundant—but there are none whose leaves come so close to the ground as in the fine specimens in Kew Gardens. These large and noble trees are known to be not above two centuries old; and as this shows the tree not to be of such slow growth as is commonly supposed, we find a satisfactory reason for the varying accounts of travellers as to the number of the largest specimens in Lebanon, during the last three hundred years over which accounts extend. The trees have meanwhile been growing, and their relative proportions have been undergoing constant change. It is usually stated that the number of the largest trees has rapidly declined. We are reminded that the number which Belon found in 1550 was twenty-eight, and that we afterwards successively hear of sixteen, then of twelve, now of seven. But it is probable the difference is more apparent than real, travellers not being agreed what they should regard as the largest trees—some counting more, and some less, and the number reckoned as largest being fewer in proportion as the notions of travellers became more definite, and as their means of comparison increased. How little is to be relied upon in such estimates, where measurements are not given, is shown by the fact that Maundrell reckons only sixteen large trees, while Le Bruyn, who travelled some years later, counted thirty-six, and he admits that it was as difficult to count them by the eye, as to count the stones at Stonehenge. The trees which were of secondary age three centuries ago, must by this time have so increased in bulk as to be among those which Belon would now reckon among the largest, could he count them

over again. There is no apparent cause of decrease, and in a place where the axe of the hewer never comes, there would naturally be a succession of large trees—as, without doubt, has actually been the case. The dimensions of the trees whose trunks are dead, and which must have attained the utmost size, afford the best standard for the full growth of the cedar of Lebanon, and the circumference of the largest and most remarkable is thirty-nine or forty feet a little above the ground. Now, we have found the means of calculating that the cedar increases in bulk at the rate of about $1\frac{1}{4}$ inch in one year, consequently this tree must have been 384 years in actual growing.* Then we must allow the time it took in gradually decaying after it had ceased to increase in bulk, and the time it has stood in its present decayed condition—taking which into account, it cannot be too little, nor probably too much, to allow that from 500 to 600 years may have passed since it first sprang from the ground. This is a great length of time,—more, perhaps, than it is quite safe to allow to a soft-wooded tree, seeing that gives it an existence at least equal to that of the hard-wooded oak. In fact, the estimate may probably be in excess, from its being founded upon the growth of the tree in England, where, as an exotic, the growth is probably slower—or, in other words, the annual deposit of woody matter thinner, than in the region where the cedar is indigenous. It is certainly the largest possible estimate—and therefore the more strongly shows the error of those who fancy that the older of these trees may be such as grow on this spot in the time of Solomon—nearly three thousand years ago. Indeed, although it is also fondly imagined that this is the very grove from which the king obtained his cedars, there can be no question that the supply was drawn from parts of the mountain more accessible to the coast, and from which all traces of the cedar have long since

* This calculation is founded on the fact, that the cedar in the garden of the Manor-house at Enfield, known to have been planted in 1670, measured sixteen feet one inch in circumference in 1821, being 193 inches in 151 years, which is rather more than $1\frac{1}{4}$ inch in a year.

disappeared. The trees here doubtless owe their preservation and the venerable age they have been suffered to attain, to the fact, that if they were cut down, no means could be found of transporting them to the sea. For the same reason, this grove must have been left unmolested from the most ancient times, although we cannot cherish the notion that any of the old patriarchal trees now found here, grew up under the same light that shone upon the throne of Solomon. The spot might, however, very well have furnished, even in that age, those grander specimens of the tree from which the sacred writers drew the conceptions which they have imparted to us of its magnificence.

It may be stated that some writers doubt whether the tree known as the cedar of Lebanon, be really the *Eres* of Scripture. The description in Ezekiel can, however, hardly apply to any other tree known in that region, and belonging to Lebanon; but it is possible that the name may have been extended to other trees of the same genus (*Pinus*,) some of them with wood better suited for beams and planks than the cedar. In appearance, it is scarcely distinguishable from white deal, and it is scarcely of harder consistence; but it has a much finer scent than any kind of deal, and may possibly be more durable. It has been supposed by some, that the wood may in Lebanon be of a firmer texture than that afforded by the specimens in this country—but we have before us a small piece of the wood from Lebanon, which fully answers to this description. Some describe the wood as certainly of not greater value than deal—if indeed so valuable. Yet it is stated that a skilful carver of Warwick has in his rooms some specimens of furniture made from cedar of Lebanon, ornamented with carved work in flowers, leaves, etc., in the best taste, and in sharpness and color so similar to box-wood, that any casual observer would suppose it to be such.

Travellers err in supposing that there are no other cedars in Lebanon than those which are found at this place. Many other single specimens and clumps of cedars are to be met

with among the mountains, but nowhere else have so many together, or such large and venerable specimens, been discovered. The tree is not even peculiar to Lebanon—it is found growing wild in the mountains of Amanus and Taurus ; and it grows very freely in this country—specimens being now rather numerous, at least within twenty-five miles around London. It has considerable general resemblance to a yew, and is sometimes taken for it by the uninitiated. We are aware of one growing in the churchyard of a village in which we formerly resided, which the peasantry resolutely affirmed to be yew ; but it was a real cedar of Lebanon. This specimen is above forty feet high, and about seven feet in girth ; and as a servant of our own used to boast that it was planted by the hand of her father, it must have been of comparatively recent growth.

FORTIETH WEEK—SATURDAY.

WOOD-CUTTERS.—I KINGS 10-16 ; II CHRON. II. 10, 15-18.

CEDAR was not the only timber which Solomon required from the forests of Lebanon. Firs are also named among the trees which Hiram supplied to Solomon. In Chronicles “almug-trees” are added ; but as this wood is in 1 Kings x. 12 described as being brought from distant parts by Hiram’s ships in the famous voyage to Ophir, it is not credible that it was also found in Lebanon ; for in that case it could not be said, as is said in Kings, that no such “algum-trees” (so written in Kings) had been seen in Israel as those which the navy of Hiram brought. As the author of Chronicles does not name the products of this expedition, he was probably led to introduce it here (as he had occasion to mention the use to which the wood was applied), as it was equally with the cedars from Lebanon obtained through Hiram, without thinking it needful to specify the separate source from which

it was derived. We mention this timber to obviate a seeming difficulty, which has perplexed many ; but have no present intention to inquire into the nature of the almug-tree.

We are more interested in inquiring into the system organized for the cutting and squaring the wood in the mountains, and the removal of it to Joppa.

Solomon allowed that some of his people were skilful to cut timber, "like the Zidonians;" and it was therefore arranged, that Hiram was to supply a certain number of workmen to direct the proceedings, and perform the more difficult parts of the work ; for it is to be remembered, that all the timber was fully prepared and fitted for its final use, on the spot, not only to facilitate the work at Jerusalem, but that no labor might be wasted in the transport of the superfluous parts. So small and busy a state as that of Tyre, could not, however, supply all the numerous hands required for the ruder labor, such as trimming the wood, and dragging it down through the defiles of the mountains to the coast. For this Solomon undertook to find laborers. How were they to be found ? David had, it seems, subdued all the remnants of the Canaanitish tribes, and at so late a period, when they were no longer dangerous, and national animosities had abated, considered himself exempted from the obligation of extirpating them. He had therefore spared them, on the condition, not of reducing them to personal slavery, but of their being liable to be called out for service on any public works that might need their aid. They were now therefore numbered, and the adult males were found to amount to 153,600. Of these 70,000 were made hewers of wood, 80,000 bearers of burdens, and 3,600 overseers of the others. A levy of 30,000 Israelites was also made for this service, and there were 550 Israelites as overseers of the whole work. They were not all employed at once, but in relays of one third at a time, so that every man spent four months at home and two in the mountains. This, and the great numbers employed, must have rendered the obligation less onerous than has been represented. These arrangements

were continued for several years on a well-organized plan. The wood prepared by these multitudes was taken down to the sea, there made up into large rafts, and floated down along the shore to Joppa, whereby the land-carriage was reduced to about twenty-five miles to Jerusalem. To support these laborers, and to remunerate Hiram for the aid of his people, Solomon agreed to supply the king, year by year, with 20,000 measures of wheat, 20,000 baths of wine, and 20,000 baths of oil.

It may not be known, that something of the same kind of operations were going on, upon a smaller scale indeed, in Lebanon, during the time Syria was in possession of the Pasha of Egypt, who had great need of timber for various uses, and whose proceedings in procuring it seem to us to illustrate, in many particulars, those of Hiram and Solomon for the same purpose,—especially as to the manner in which laborers were obtained for the service, and the mode in which they were supplied with food.

Most of the wood destined for Egypt was embarked at Scanderoon, and was of course obtained as near as might be from the mountains by which the bay is bordered. The timber chiefly procured was yellow oak, green oak, whitish-yellow pines or fir, beech, and linden. The last is the *largest*, but it is scarce; next to that the yellow oak, then the beech.* The oak of both kinds is straight-grained, like the American; the pine is very knotty and full of turpentine; the beech is of a good, close-grained quality, but not nearly so plentiful as the other two. In the year 1837, about 750 men were employed in the mountains, of whom 250 were occupied in cutting down the trees, and the rest, twice that number, in trimming and dressing the same; and to bring down these to the sea, required the labor of 1,200 men, with *practicable roads*, and with buffaloes and bullocks. If obtained from

* The following are the sizes of the different kinds:—*Yellow Oak*, 80 feet long by 18 to 20 inches square; *Green Oak*, 18 to 20 feet by 7 to 9 inches; *Beech*, 30 to 35 feet by 14 to 15 inches; *Pine*, 30 feet by 16 to 20 inches; *Linden*, 40 to 50 feet by 25 to 27 inches.

parts of the mountains remote from the coast, with difficult roads, and without the help of animals, the number required for the transport would of course be proportionally greater. We thus see the comparatively small number of Phœnician fellers, whose work would suffice to supply labor to the large levies of Solomon. By the Pasha's men, about 60,000 trees were cut down, trimmed, and brought down to the coast in one year, besides about 5,000 abandoned on the road from the difficulty of transport. Of these, 40,000 were fit for ship-building purposes, and the remainder for house-purposes. The wood was freighted for Alexandria in thirty-nine vessels, collectively of 14,120 tons burden, besides eight or nine small craft of eighty or ninety tons, which received cargoes of fire-wood.

From this statement, it is not difficult to discover one of the causes which has made the mountain forests of Syria a covetable possession to the rulers of Egypt, from the Pharaohs and Ptolemies down to the Moslem sultans and to Mehemet Ali. It also enables us to see the extent to which the nearer forests of Lebanon must have been denuded of their trees to meet the large wants of a country so void of timber as Egypt.

But let us turn to the laborers employed in these operations. They were, like the laborers of Solomon, and probably of Hiram, pressed into the service. In this case they are, however, more oppressively, taken from the immediate neighborhood, all the effective men being forced into the service, leaving not a sufficient number to till the ground for their own maintenance. But grain was imported by the government (as by king Hiram from Palestine) from other parts of Syria and from Egypt, and issued to the men as a portion of their pay. This pay was nominally three piastres, or seven pence half penny a-day; but which came short fully one third, by their being obliged to take a fixed portion in grain, without reference to their actual wants, and more than they required, at a fixed price, which is so enhanced in various ways, and under various pretences, as to be much higher than it

could be procured for in the neighborhood. It is very likely, the system being an old one, that Hiram dealt thus with the corn he obtained from Solomon, unless the interests of the Hebrew subjects employed were protected by the presence of the king's own officers.

The men employed in transporting the timber to the coast, receive each a pair and a half of bullocks, which are valued to them at from 700 to 1000 piastres a pair, which sum they are debited with, and must make good in case of loss, accident, or death. The effect of this is, that when a man meets with such a misfortune before he has the means of repairing it, which he can rarely hope to do, he has no resource but flight.

The season for working the timber is but eight months, from the middle of March till the middle of November. During the remaining four months, the people are left in a great measure to themselves; but being winter months, they cannot turn them to much account, unless to prepare and sow a little land for the most pressing exigencies of their families; but a few of them who have trades, find some employment in the neighboring villages. Independently of such resources, their yearly earnings may be thus:—The cutters get two and a half piastres a-day, for 224 working days; which makes in all about four pounds eight shillings, after deducting about twelve shillings for contingencies. The trimmers get three piastres a-day, or six pounds for the whole term, which, after deducting about sixteen shillings for contingencies, leaves about five pounds four shillings. The transporters have three and a half piastres a-day, making in all about seven pounds; but from this must be deducted more than half for the keep of animals, leaving them less than four pounds,—so that they remain in a worse condition than even the cutters, although their nominal wages are one third higher.

In regard to the last branch of employment, it seems to us likely that the arrangement was different in the time of Solomon; for, considering the great quantity of timber secured

by the comparatively small number of men employed by the Egyptian government in 1837, it is difficult to account for the employment of such vast numbers in the earlier time, but by supposing that the labor of men was employed instead of that of cattle, in dragging the timber down from the mountains to the shore.

Forty-first Week—Sunday.

THE CHOICE.—II KINGS III.

God is a great teacher; and all the docile scholars of his school are richly rewarded by him. Look back to the transaction between the Lord and Solomon at Gibeon for full proof of this.

The senses and judgment of the young king were locked up in sleep; he was in that state least of all suited to instruction, when the greatest lesson of his life was taught to him. But it matters little in what state the scholar is—how, for the time, or even habitually, dull or insensate—when He undertakes to be his instructor, who can enlighten both the organ and the object. None teaches like him in mode or matter, and hence the blessedness and the advantage in learning of him. There is nothing good for us in all his treasures of wisdom and knowledge, which He is not most ready, with abounding fulness, to impart. “If any of you lack wisdom,” says James, “let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him.” Solomon found the truth of this, and so shall every one find who makes the like experiment. The Lord is never displeased with large asking—so that it be proper asking—and his free bounty delights to surpass the largest requests and most audacious hopes of the petitioner. And in this case He did not wait to be asked. He came to press his

gifts upon the acceptance of David's son ; asking him to make his choice of all the gifts his almightiness enabled him to offer—or rather, of all that the man was capable of receiving. Whatever we may think of it—and practically we every day deny most of the things we profess to believe—God daily makes as large and liberal offers to us—ay, offers more liberal by far ; and quite as surely will He bestow upon us what we ask, and much more, if that which we seek be well pleasing in his sight. Then

“Come, let us put
Up our requests to Him, whose will alone
Limits his power of teaching ; from whom none
Returns unlearned, that hath once a will
To be his scholar.”—QUARLES.

And well is it with those who, like the same writer, can say,—

“I am a scholar. The great Lord of love
And life my tutor is ; who, from above,
All that lack learning to his school invites.”

Solomon had learned in his school, and had there received that enlightenment which enabled him at once to discern, even in sleep, the exact good that was fittest for him, and that he most wanted.

Well, Solomon asked for wisdom ; and enforced by many reasons his want of it, his own sense of how much it was needed by him. The speech of the young king “pleased the Lord ;” and why ? because it was in accordance with his will. It was Himself that enabled him, that “put it into his heart, to pray this prayer unto him.” He could not have done so, had not God given him the grace to do it. God loves and approves that which is his own, and both accepts and rewards that which is his own acting in us. “Thou wilt ordain peace for us,” says the prophet ; “for thou hast wrought all our works in us.” Isa. xxvi. 12.

Take twelve men from the streets : take them, if you like, from schools and colleges—take them even from the church

doors—and propose to them the same question which God proposed to Solomon. Let them be assured that they shall have what they will from One who has full power to bestow. How many of them, do you think, will ask as Solomon asked—“Give me wisdom?” We greatly doubt if there would be even one—but surely not more. This is just the last thing that people suppose themselves to be in need of. Probably there are not three of the twelve—perhaps not two—perhaps not one—who does not think himself every whit as wise as Solomon already, although he does not like to say it. It has not occurred to us in all our life—not now scant of days, though, alas! scant in accomplished purposes,—to have met with one man who avowed any lack of wisdom, or who, therefore, would have made the choice of Solomon, had that choice been offered to him.

As statistical information is deemed of peculiar value in this age, we may attempt to make “a return” of the mode in which our twelve men would have distributed their choice.

Three at least would answer, “Give us wealth. In the land where our lot is cast, wealth is needed for comfort and usefulness. Yet we seek not our own luxury, but thy honor. That we may have wherewith to be bountiful to those that need,—that we may qualify our children for eminent service to thee in high places,—that we may aid mission, Bible, and church societies, to the utmost of the means bestowed upon us,—that we may subscribe handsomely to the new church, to the parsonage fund, to the fund for the increase of ministers—to the dispensary, to the schools, to the clothing club—to the soup kitchen—to the thousand objects which demand our attention, and which we cannot neglect without discredit in the eyes of the minister and the gentry here.” So some would answer, in meaning, if not in words—but, alas! for the widow’s mite!

Perhaps three more would not speak so high. They would not call it wealth but competency, freedom from anxiety—securing them ability to attend upon the things of

the Lord without distraction. Only secure them that, and they have nothing more or better to ask. For who can go on without distress of soul in this way—troubled for the present and the future—with no security against want in one's old age, and with this continual struggle how to keep up the "appearances" which are so necessary in this evil world?—Alas, for the sparrows! alas, for the lilies of the field!

There are, perhaps, three who covet power, honor, distinction, more than even wealth, which is but a coarser form of the same desire. In one shape or another—from an impatience of superiority—from the love of command—from the burning wish to come out from the general multitude, and to be admired and observed of men, and leave an unforgotten name,—power is more generally desired than may at the first view appear, seeing that, in this country at least, it is a less ostensible and avowed pursuit than that of wealth, or (seeing that wealth is power) generally appears in subordination to it. Or there may be among the three *one*—or less than one (for in statistics one is a divisible proportion)—who, fretted by his external impotency, which hampers him on every side, and prevents him from giving due effect to the large potencies within him, craves beyond all things such power as may enable him to accomplish his large designs, and render fruitful the bold and useful purposes of his will and hope.

There may be two, hardly more, who, on being asked such a question, would think length of days of more consequence than wealth, or competence, or power. They are such whom the tremor, the chill, the cough, the inner pain, the sense of declining strength, have impressed with alarm at the probable shortness of their lives; for without such warning length of days is seldom in these latter times an object of distinct solicitude; for

"All men think all men mortal but themselves,

and every one silently assumes that his own life will be long.

But among those who would make this choice, there may be a few who, standing free in their strength, may yet, from the oppressive consciousness of the swift passage of their days—days so long in youth, so short in age—would passionately entreat for length of days—time—time only, to finish all their labors—time to work out and produce all their large conceptions, and finish all their beneficent undertakings. Such as these will also regard, with something like dread, the breaking up all their old and cherished habits and associations—their children, their friends, their books, their gardens, their trees. With much of this we can sympathize. But let them be of good cheer. Life, though short, is long enough. Even in its ordinary duration it wears out before it ends; and before that end there lies a gulf of “evil days,” in which no pleasure is found. Desire has failed. The sources of life’s enjoyments have been cut off. The sweet uses of life have passed away. Books, and trees, and gardens have ceased to interest. Plans and purposes, that promised us the labor of three lives in one, fall unregretted from our stiffening fingers. And man becomes content to gather up his feet, and die—hoping, as assured, to join the friends who have dropped away one by one before him,—and knowing that his children will come to him soon in that land to which he is going.

There is but one of our twelve left. What doth he ask? Let us trust that, among so many—we can scarcely hope there may be more—there is this one, at least, who has the heart to say—“Give me Thyself; for all things are contained in Thee. Thou art wisdom; Thou art wealth; Thou art power; Thou art length of days; Thou art fulness.

‘Give what thou wilt, without thee I am poor,
And with thee rich, take what thou wilt away.’”

FORTY-FIRST WEEK—MONDAY.

GREAT STONES.—I KINGS V. 17.

It must not be allowed to escape our notice, that although the operations for the procurement of timber are chiefly described, great hewn stones for the foundation of the temple were also, by the aid of Hiram's workmen, to be procured. It is distinctly stated, that "The king commanded, and they brought great stones, costly stones, and hewed stones, to lay the foundation of the house. And Solomon's builders and Hiram's builders did hew them, and the stone-squarers: so they prepared timber and stones to build the house." As to the descriptive epithets, we may combine them into "great costly hewn stones." If they were hewn in Lebanon, and were of such size as the text leads us to suppose, they must have been costly enough by the time they reached Jerusalem, whatever the quality of the stone. It must be confessed, that it is not clear from this text, that the stones did come from Lebanon; it may be understood to mean no more than that, wherever procured, they were wrought by Hiram's stone masons, conjointly with those of Solomon. The transport of "great stones" from so great a distance, suggests the chief difficulty; but besides this, there could really be no need to go so far for them, as stone of the same quality as that of Lebanon might have been obtained much nearer home. In Lebanon, however, and not nearer, they might find large masses of stone which, in the course of time, had been loosened by earthquakes and frosts, and cast down into the valleys, and which needed only to be squared to be serviceable for the required use.

The stone of these regions is hard, calcareous, and whitish, sonorous like freestone, and disposed in strata variously inclined. This stone has nearly the same appearance throughout Syria and Palestine, where it is still used for building, and is perhaps that with which the temple was built, and

which Josephus describes as "white stone." The previous squaring of the stones in the quarry, not only facilitated their removal to the place of building, but produced the remarkable result, that the house being "built of stone made ready before it was brought thither, there was neither hammer nor axe, nor any tool of iron heard in the house while it was in building."—1 Kings vii. 7.

The terms employed by the sacred historian will scarcely strike us in all their force, unless we bear in mind that stones of enormous size are known to have been employed in the ancient buildings of Syria. Thus, in the sub-basement of the great temple of Baalbek, which is probably much more ancient than the now ruined Roman structure which rests upon it, there is one stone sixty-six feet in length by twelve in breadth and thickness, with others of not greatly inferior size; while in a neighboring quarry, which tradition declares to be that from which Solomon obtained his "great stones," are stones of equal and greater dimensions, cut and ready for use, one of them being no less than seventy feet in length by fourteen feet five inches in thickness. This stone, therefore, contains 14,128 cubic feet, and would, if of Portland stone, weigh no less than 1,135 tons.

At Jerusalem, the immense size and obvious antiquity of much of the stone-work around the area which contains the mosque of Omar, and formerly contained the temple of the Lord, have led many to ascribe it to the age of Jewish magnificence,—some carrying it back to the time of Solomon, and others being content to refer it to the time of Herod the Great. This is found in the lower courses of masonry, and at the angles, the superstructure of the enclosing wall being of smaller and inferior masonry, comparatively modern, and doubtless of Saracenic workmanship. To these remains we incline to assign the higher antiquity, and to regard them as remains—the only remains—of the original work of Solomon. The foundation walls, and the lower courses of masonry in the superstructure, so solidly constructed, and composed of stones so large, are seldom wholly destroyed or eradicated—

least of all when they belong not to a building, but to the enclosing wall of an area which seems to have remained the same in all ages, while the sacred fane within the area has itself been repeatedly renewed. Time makes little impression upon such work; and wilful destroyers found the task of demolition to this extent too laborious before the invention of gunpowder. They were content, generally, to destroy the more visible parts of such walls, which was also the more easy, from the upper parts being usually of smaller masonry; and by the time they had demolished all but the lowermost courses, they would find these concealed by the stones and rubbish cast down from above, which opposed a further obstacle to the progress of the work of destruction. They would thus have destroyed all that appeared of the walls, that is, all down to the accumulations of rubbish; while in fact many of the lower courses of masonry, as well as the whole of the substructures, remained entire underneath the rubbish. On rebuilding the wall after the lapse of time, some of this rubbish must be cleared away, to extract from it the stones to be used in rebuilding the wall, and to get at the old work upon which to rear the new; and thus the lower courses of the old masonry, so long hidden beneath the rubbish, would be again brought to light. It is to be noted that, leaving out of view the obviously Saracenic, Crusading, and Turkish portions of the superstructure, the architectural remains of earlier times at Jerusalem exhibit at least *three* distinct periods of construction. The latest of these must, it is historically evident, have belonged to the Emperor Hadrian's restoration of the city as a seat and home of Paganism—the Elia Capitolina of the second century. If there be any works to which those of Hadrian were appended, or in which they were reared, they must at the latest be those of Herod's reign; and if we trace a substratum sustaining the labor of *his* time; and if, further, these works are seen to be of a kind demanding the resources and the tranquillity of a long and prosperous era, and such as could not have been undertaken or carried on during centuries of foreign

domination, of fiscal exactions, of precarious political existence, and of intestine commotion,—then shall we be almost compelled to go back to the earliest times of the monarchy as to our nearest landing-place.*

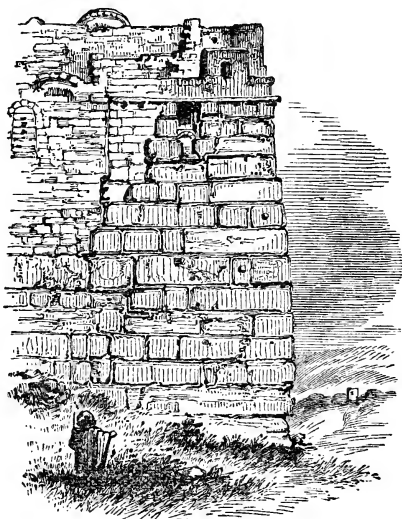
It is in this more ancient substratum that the largest stones are found. As we are only seeking for “great stones” among the ancient remains at Jerusalem, it is unnecessary to give any description of these remains, for which another occasion may be found. It will suffice simply to indicate some of these large stones, and to suggest, that the fact of their being found in the most ancient masonry at Jerusalem, as evinced by its forming the lowermost portions of it, irresistibly takes back the mind to the great and costly hewn stones of Solomon,—for to what other period anterior to the time of Herod, can any works of this nature be assigned?

Along nearly the whole of the eastern side, upon the brow of the steep valley of Jehoshaphat, courses of ancient masonry may be traced in almost a continuous line. In some places the courses scarcely appear above the soil, while in others they rise nearly to the height of the modern walls, especially at the angles and projecting towers, which were built to a greater height with great stones, and of such firm masonry as could not easily be destroyed.† The inequality may be in part accounted for by the irregularities of the ground, and the unequal accumulation of *débris*. At the north-east angle, for instance, several courses of ancient masonry form a corner tower, projecting slightly from the general face of the wall, along a length of eighty-one feet. Many of the stones here measure from seventeen to nineteen feet in length, while a few exceed twenty-four feet. They vary from three to four feet in depth, and from five to eight in width. Speaking of this corner, a very competent observer, Mr. Tip-

* Traill's *Josephus*, i. xxxi.

† Hence the repeated allusion to “corner-stones” in Scripture. And as it was a great feat to elevate such huge stones to their places, the operation is described as being accompanied by “shoutings.”

ping,* remarks, "A close scrutiny of the masonry of the two sides of this corner, shows it to be (allowance being made for the ravages of time and war) of the highest order, immeasurably superior to the rude piling of Cyclopean blocks at Mycenæ and Tyrinthus; indeed, I consider it to be the finest specimen of mural masonry in the world. The joints are close, and the finishing of the bevelling and facing is so clean and fine, that, when fresh from the hands of the builder, it must have produced the effect of gigantic *relievo* pannelling. The material employed is a fine limestone, and is now clothed with that golden hue which a course of ages produces in southern climes."

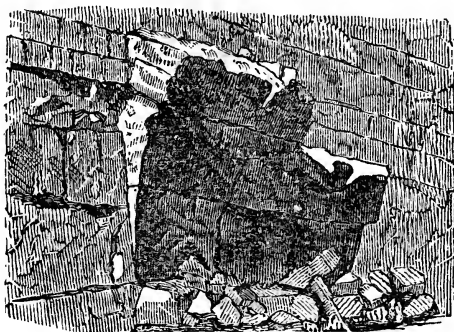


But the south-east angle of the enclosing wall is perhaps the most imposing object in or near Jerusalem, consisting of enormous blocks of stone rising at the corner to the height of seventy feet. In the upper portions, however, the stones are so irregularly interlocated as to show that they belong to the

* Traill's *Josephus*, i. xlv

restorations from old materials, upon the basis of the more ancient lower courses. At this place, and in the wall upon each face of this corner, in the three lower courses, stones are found measuring nearly thirty feet long, and of proportionate thickness and depth; and wherever such stones occur, at this and other spots, there is always observable more regularity than is found higher up—more of uniform intention—more indication of adequate means and leisurely construction.

At the western wall, about thirty-nine feet from the southwest corner, several huge stones jut out,—as if, one is apt to think at the first sight, from the bursting of the wall by an earthquake. On closer inspection, it is seen that the three courses of these immense stones retain their original places.



Their external surface is hewn to a regular curve; and being fitted one upon another, form the commencement or foot of an enormous arch, which once sprung from the western wall in a direction towards Mount Zion, across the valley which separated that mount from Mount Moriah. If the principle of the arch may be supposed to have been known at so early a period—and there is no evidence to prove that it was *not*—this may have belonged to the causeway by which the court went from Mount Zion to the temple, and which was an object of special admiration to the queen of Sheba. However, not to discuss this question, it suffices to say, that the

extreme width of the abutting stones is fifty-one feet. One of them is twenty-four feet six inches in length, and several of them exceed five feet in thickness.

About a hundred yards northward of the arch we come to what is called the Jews' Wailing Place, where occur some of the finest and best preserved masonry in this wall of enclosure. It derives its name from the fact, that the Jews have purchased permission to assemble here every Friday, in the precincts of these ancient stones, to recite a set form of prayers, and to bewail the ruin of "the holy and beautiful house in which their fathers worshipped." At this spot we find five courses of bevelled stones, and over them three courses of smooth-faced stones, little, if at all, inferior in size. The lower courses of the masonry are beautifully fresh and polished in surface,—others, either by time, or more probably by external injury, are much decayed.

The mode of transporting such stones was no doubt the same as shown in the Egyptian sculptures—on low-wheeled trucks, drawn by oxen. On this point there is an interesting



passage in Procopius, having reference to the building of the church of St. Mary (probably the present mosque el Aksa) at Jerusalem by the emperor Justinian. "They hewed rocks of immense size from the mountains; and, having carved them skilfully, carried them thence as follows: First, they made carts of a size equal to the rocks, and placed a single stone in each cart, which was drawn by forty oxen, chosen by the emperor's order for their excellence. Then, as it was impossible for the roads leading to the city to bear these great carts, they cut out to a considerable extent the mountains, and made a passage for them as they arrived."

FORTY-FIRST WEEK—TUESDAY.

THE TEMPLE.—I KINGS VI., VII.; II CHRON. III., IV.

As no two persons who have attempted to describe or depict the temple built by Solomon, have furnished the same idea of the building, it is obvious that the materials which we possess, although sufficiently clear in some of the details, either do not suffice for a distinct notion of the building as a whole, or else that the true signification of the architectural terms employed has not been correctly apprehended. A new source of information has, however, of late years presented itself, in the particulars which have been afforded respecting the plan and arrangements of ancient Egyptian temples,—a careful consideration of which enabled us, many years ago, to suggest the obvious analogy between them and the temple of Solomon. This has since been confirmed by many other writers of high name, and has been the more forcibly impressed upon our own conviction by the repeated occasions we have found of reconsidering the subject. The idea of such a comparison being once established, it became less difficult to apprehend much that had once seemed incomprehensible, and so to realize something like a distinct idea of the sacred structure.

The building was a rectangle,—seventy cubits long in the clear from east to west, and twenty cubits wide, from north to south. Some take the cubit at half a yard, and scarcely any estimate makes it more than twenty-one inches; and, taking even the largest estimate, it must be admitted that these dimensions are but small in comparison with Christian churches and Mohammedan mosques. But these are intended to contain great numbers of worshippers, whereas this, like the Egyptian and other ancient temples, also of small dimensions, was not constructed with a view to the accommodation of worshippers, who never entered the interior, —all public worship and sacrifices being performed, not in

the temple, but towards it (as the residence of the Deity), in the enclosed court or courts in front of the sacred house. Viewed with reference to this special object, and this essential difference, a building becomes large which seems small and insufficient when viewed with regard to objects entirely different. The temple was simply twice as large as the tabernacle. Those who accuse the sacred writers of exaggeration may do well to reflect on this instance, in which an apparent difficulty, thus satisfactorily explained, is at the first view created, not by the largeness, but by the smallness, of the dimensions given.

Small as the temple was, its proportions were noble and harmonious. The porch was ten cubits deep; so that the interior, or cella, was equal to a treble square,—but one square was divided off for the inner sanctuary, so that the just geometrical proportion was thus established. This prevented the appearance of narrowness in the interior, which would have resulted from the *entire* dimensions; while any appearance of narrowness in the exterior view was obviated by the stories of chambers for the use of the priests, built against the sides. These stories were three, each story wider than the one above it, as the walls were made narrower or thinner as they ascended, by sets-off of half a cubit on each side, on which rested the ends of the flooring joints, to avoid *inserting* them in the walls of the sacred building itself. Thus, *externally*, the building had the appearance of a small church, with a nave and two side aisles. But this was not the appearance internally, seeing that the side-buildings were not, like the aisles of a church, open to the interior. These additions at the sides must materially have enlarged the apparent bulk of the building in the external view, which has been much overlooked in the usual estimates of its dimensions. If, as Josephus affirms, the porch was higher than the rest of the building, the resemblance to a church must have been still greater, as this would give the tower in front, besides the nave and two side aisles. Nor is this a strange coincidence,—such Christian churches as have not been

modelled after Greek and Roman temples, having been framed after what was conceived to have been the plan of Solomon's temple.

Like the Egyptian temples, that of Solomon was composed of three principal parts. The porch, or pronaos, the depth of which was equal to a half of its width. Next to this was a large apartment, designated the Sanctuary, or Holy Place, —forty cubits deep by twenty wide. This was the *naos*. And, lastly, beyond this lay the third or innermost chamber, a square of twenty cubits, called the Holy of Holies, answering to the *sekos* of Egyptian temples, where was placed the ark and its hovering cherubim, and where also the most sacred objects of their religion were placed by the Egyptians. The arrangements of the external buildings, with the different courts, also coincided with the arrangements of Egyptian temples, as described by Strabo, and as still to be seen in the existing remains of ancient temples in that country.

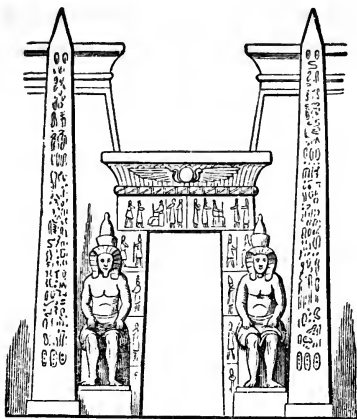
The Holy of Holies, or inner sanctuary, was divided from the rest of the temple by a partition of cedar, in the centre of which was a pair of folding-doors of olive wood, very richly carved with palm-trees, and open flowers, and cherubim,—the whole overlaid with gold. A like pair of folding-doors, of grander dimensions, also overlaid with gold, embossed in rich patterns of cherubim, and knops, and open flowers, formed the outer entrance. Both pairs of doors were furnished with massive pins of gold (not “hinges,” which were not known), turning in holes made in the lintel and the threshold.* These were, in Egypt, often of metal, and some of bronze have been found, and exist in cabinets of antiquities. The door forming the entrance to the most Holy Place was left open, and the space covered, as is usual in the East, by a magnificent veil or curtain. It may be asked, how the interior received light, seeing that the stories of chambers occupied the sides? But these buildings did not reach the top, and in the upper part of the wall between the flat roof

* See Illustration, Twenty-Fifth Week—Saturday.

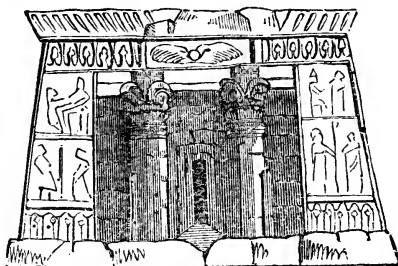
of the chambers and the top of the wall of the main building, was a row of narrow windows which lighted up the interior.

The floor of the temple was formed of planks of fir, covered with gold. The inside walls and the flat ceiling were lined with cedar beautifully carved, representing cherubim and palm-trees, clusters of foliage and open flowers, among which, as in Egypt, the lotus was conspicuous; and the whole interior was so overlaid with gold, that neither wood nor stone was anywhere to be seen, and nothing met the eye but pure gold, either plain, as in the floor, or richly chased, as on the walls, and, as some think, with precious stones in the representations of flowers, and other enrichments. This style of ornamentation is quite oriental, and certainly ancient. The examples which have come under our notice of this, show that precious stones may be applied with greater advantage than is usually supposed to internal decoration, and satisfies us that such might, with truly rich and beautiful effect, have been employed in this instance in setting off the costly enchasement in gold. That precious stones were employed in interior decoration appears from 2 Chron. iii. 6, which expressly states that Solomon "garnished the house with precious stones." And we know that David provided for the work, and his nobles contributed "all manner of precious stones." 1 Chron. xxix. 2-8; 2 Chron. iii. 6.

It seems that even the inside of the porch was lined with gold. This front part of the building was also enriched with two pillars of brass, one called Jachin and the other Boaz—which, being cast entire, seem to have been regarded as master-pieces of Hiram's art. They exhibited the usual proportions of Egyptian columns, being five and a half diameters high. Their use has been disputed. Some think that they stood as detached ornaments in front of or in the porch—like the two obelisks which we often see before Egyptian temples, while others suppose that they contribute to support the entablature of the porch. Their height and dimensions are favorable to this opinion, as are the analogies



afforded by Egyptian buildings, in which two pillars are seen supporting the entablature of the pronaos, resembling also the two pillars on which rested the porch of the Philistine temple which Samson overthrew.



It is not our intention to notice the furniture of the temple—which was the same in kind as that of the tabernacle. The ark was the same as that made in the wilderness—but over it Solomon constructed two colossal cherubim of gold, whose inner wings, outspread, touched each other over the ark, while the outer wings touched the opposite walls of the sacred chamber. In the large hall, or outer chamber, there were also seven golden candelabra instead of one; and

besides the table of show-bread, which was the only table in the tabernacle, there were here ten golden tables, besides others of silver, on which were laid out above a hundred golden vases of various patterns, with the different utensils—the censers, spoons, snufflers, etc.—all of gold, used in the service of the temple.

While the interior of the temple was literally lined with gold, and all its ornaments and furniture were of that rich metal, brass prevailed in the court in front of it, the inner court, in which the priests performed their ministrations. Here was a wonderful specimen of the skill of Hiram, in the shape of the great “molten sea,” resting on the backs of twelve oxen of the same metal—in the same manner as the *stone* fountain in the palace of the old Moorish kings of Grenada rests upon the backs of lions. Here there were also ten other lavers, also of brass, ornamented most richly.

From this it will be seen that the importance of the temple of Solomon, which we have been led to regard as one of the wonders of the ancient world, consisted not in its size—which, as regards the principal building, has been greatly exceeded in every civilized country, and by a vast number of churches in our own; but from the elaborate, costly, and highly decorative character of its whole interior and furniture, and also in the number, extent, grandeur, and substantial masonry of its surrounding courts, chambers, walls, and towers. Indeed, it is not too much to presume that these outer constructions, forming the massive ring in which the costly gem of the temple was set, cost as much as the sacred building itself, immense as was the quantity of gold bestowed upon it.

FORTY-FIRST WEEK—WEDNESDAY.

GOLD.

THROUGHOUT the history of Solomon, nothing is more apparent than the vast quantities of gold and silver which

were in his possession, and which he employed in his great undertakings. But the statement of the quantities of these precious metals left by David for the work of the temple, carries our astonishment to the utmost stretch, and creates some suspicion, that either the numbers have been corrupted in the course of transcription, or that we do not rightly understand them.

The *gold* delivered by David to Solomon for ornamenting the temple, and for the fabrication of its utensils, was this—as king, he bestowed the savings of his reign, amounting to 100,000 talents, which, at 125 pounds troy (equal to 93 pounds 12 ounces avoirdupois), which is the usual calculation—amounted to 12,500,000 pounds troy. Besides this, he gave, as an individual, out of his private estate, 3000 talents, which, at the same calculation, make 375,000 pounds troy. The nobles also contributed 5000 talents and 10,000 drachms (equal to 52 pounds troy), which, at the above rate, amount to 625,052 pounds troy. This makes the entire amount of gold no less than 13,500,052 pounds troy.

This of gold. The silver was in full proportion. David, as king, bestowed a million of talents, making 125,000,000 pounds troy; to which, as an individual, he added 7000 talents, weighing 875,000 pounds troy. Besides this, the nobles gave 10,000 talents, weighing 1,250,000 pounds troy. This makes the whole quantity of silver 127,125,000 pounds troy.

Such are the quantities of gold and silver set apart by David alone to the service of the temple, without account of any appropriations to the same purpose by Solomon himself. The imagination faints in the attempt to apprehend such inconceivable amounts. But as values are better apprehended than quantities, let us turn these weights into values.

The 13,500,052 pounds of gold, taken at the present value of pure gold, four pounds sterling the ounce, would be equal in value to 648,002,496*l*. The silver, at the present price

of the unalloyed metal, which is five shillings the ounce, would be no less than 381,375,000*l.*, making together 1,029,377,496*l.* sterling. But that our national debt exists, and is but one fourth less than this amount, the mere idea of such a sum would be inconceivable. Let us look at it closely. To accumulate such a sum during the thirty-three years of his reign over the united kingdom, would have required David and his nobles to lay by above 31,000,000*l.* every year, being equal to the *entire annual revenue* of the greatest realms in Europe, excepting our own.

In a curious and rare book before us,* we meet with this remarkable passage with reference to the vastness of this amount:—"I have read a pamphlet, printed about a year and a half before the peace of Utrecht was concluded, which (as it was said) was written by the command of Queen Anne's ministry, that the subjects might be convinced of the necessity of a peace with France, and among the powerful motives made use of in that pamphlet, one of the strongest was, that the nation was fifty millions of pounds sterling in debt, which the author affirmed was the eighth part of the value of the whole kingdom. If that be true, then there was much above three times the value of this kingdom laid out upon the temple of the Lord at Jerusalem, which was built by Solomon, which is much above the value of two of the best kingdoms in Europe."

The comparison thus suggested may be pursued upon the more exact materials we now possess. If the above statement be correct, the value of this kingdom, which probably means the value of the real property, has increased in a proportion scarcely less astonishing than that of the national debt. The debt which, at fifty millions, excited apprehension in Queen Anne's reign, is now 768,789,240*l.*, and has been more. But the property which, at the same time, was

* Published in 1722, under the title of "The State of the Greatest King, set forth in the Greatness of Solomon and the Glory of his Reign." By George Reyrols, Professor of the Mathematics (at Bristol).

reckoned at four hundred millions (*i. e.*, eight times fifty millions), is now above six times that amount—the estimated value, at twenty-five years' purchase, of the real property assessed to the property and income-tax being 2,382,112,425*l.* Yet, of this immense sum, the money left by David for the temple would not be greatly less than one half (say five twelfths). It would exceed eight years' purchase of all the costly tillage of this country; and equal eleven years of the annual value of the real property in Great Britain. It would be equal to $11\frac{1}{2}$ years' value of all the leading manufactures of the realm, and to twenty years' value of all the exported produce and manufactures of the country. It would also absorb, for about the same period, all the public revenue of the United Kingdom. To state this is surely sufficient to show that there must be some error in the text, or in our apprehension of it. Some of our ingenious arithmetical readers may, if they please, carry out the calculations further, by reckoning how many wagons, how many ships would be required to carry all this metal,—what would be its cubic contents?—what extent of surface would it pave with sovereigns, flat or set on edge?—for how many miles would it extend a golden line?—and whether it would not take a man a century of constant employment to count it out in sovereigns?

These estimates must be admitted to be simply impossible, after allowing to the utmost extent the opportunities which David possessed of acquiring wealth by his conquests of the neighboring nations. The plunder of the richest country in the world, though regarded even in the East as most amazing, did not furnish Nadir Shah with a twentieth part of this amount; and it may safely be affirmed, that the treasures of all the kings in the world, do not even at a far distance approach it. It therefore becomes necessary to seek some explanation. This is not difficult to find. The stated numbers are found in the Book of Chronicles, which was written after the Babylonish Captivity. Now it is reasonable to suppose that the people, most of whom were bred and born in Chaldea,

used the weights and measures of that country—of which we have, indeed, a singular proof in the fact, that the Persian and Chaldean gold coin called the *daric* is mentioned in the computation of the donations of the nobles, although the coin was assuredly unknown in David's time.* Then the value of the Babylonian talent was greatly less than that of the Hebrews; that of the talent of gold being 3500*l.*, and of silver 218*l.* 15*s.*, which would reduce the entire amount to about six hundred millions. This, though an immense reduction, seems still to be far too large, and some therefore think the Syriac talent to be intended, which was but one fifth of the Babylonian. This would bring it down to the comparatively reasonable, and not absolutely impossible, sum of 120,000,000*l.* There is an independent corroboration of this in the fact that Josephus, whether by so reading in the original text as then extant, or by reducing the talents into talents of accout, produces nearly the same result, by making the talents of gold not more than ten thousand, and of silver a hundred thousand. Even this sum seems far too large, in comparison with anything known to our experience; but we have no determinate data on which it may be further reduced, without supposing a corruption of the text of Chronicles. This is possible, from the facility with which numbers are corrupted in the course of time, from the circumstance that the numbers of Chronicles repeatedly differ from those of the same account in the Book of Kings, and are always in excess; which hence may be the case here also, where there is no parallel text in Kings to supply the means of comparison. It is certain that the details in Kings, so far as given, are favorable to a lower estimate. For instance, it is stated in 2 Chron. iii. 8, that the gold consumed in overlaying the interior of the temple was 600 talents, which, by the usual computation of the Hebrew talent, would make 3,600,000*l.* The remaining consumption of gold upon the utensils and furniture, could scarcely have more than doubled this; and if all the other materials—the brass, iron, stone, and timber, with the ex-

* It is that which is rendered "dram" in 1 Chron. xxix. 7.

pense of skill and labor in the construction, not only of the central building, but of all the courts, walls, gates, corridors and towers, added another similar sum,—the whole expense, on what seems to us a liberal calculation, would not much exceed ten millions. This is of itself an enormous sum, only to be explained by the extraordinary consumption of precious metal. This estimate, based on what is the most tangible item afforded in the Book of Kings, also happens to be in accordance with other particulars which are given to us of the wealth of Solomon, who was proverbially said to have made gold and silver as common as stones in Jerusalem. He appears to have had more opportunities of acquiring wealth than David; and yet, when the accounts transmitted to us are examined, the millions come before us in units, not in tens, in hundreds, or in thousands. The largest sums that came to him were from the distant three-year voyages to Ophir, from king Hiram, and from the queen of Sheba.

It is stated in 1 Kings x. 14, that the weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year (besides that by inland traffic) was 666 talents—equal to 3,996,000*l*. This was probably the year which in the Ophir fleet returned from its three years' voyage with 450 talents of gold, equal to 2,700,000*l*.; another three years' voyage produced 420 talents, equal to 2,520,000*l*. These are comparatively moderate sums, especially when the expense of the ships, the mariners, and their victuals for three years, comes to be deducted. The queen of Sheba, coming from a gold-producing country, made Solomon a present of 120 talents of gold, equal to 720,000*l*. The same quantity Solomon obtained from Hiram—doubtless for an equivalent consideration; and his want of so small a quantity of gold, as if to complete his works in that metal, strongly corroborates the impression that the amount left by David could not be so large as is usually supposed. Let it always be remembered that the gold was only wanted for ornamental work, and not as money. It does not therefore represent the *cost* of the works, but the actual metal worked up in them. Gold was a valuable property, but was not

money—not the representation of value, as a medium of exchange. And this fact—its not being used as money—accounts for the great quantities thus expended. Had gold been a circulating medium, the use of such immense quantities in this manner would have been foolish, if not impossible. Silver was the standard of value; and hence it is that, although ten times as much silver as gold was accumulated for the undertaking, we read of very little being used up in the works of the temple. It has perplexed some to guess what became of it. The answer is easy: it was used to pay the workmen, and in the purchase of materials. It is very likely that Solomon may have bought gold with silver.

The fact is, that we who regard gold as a circulating medium, err greatly in transferring our own ideas of value to its ancient applications. Not being the medium of exchange, it was not diffused in small portions throughout a country, but, like jewels and other valuables, was accumulated in large masses in the hands of princes and individuals, who, not regarding it as available for money, though it was money's worth, wrought it up in various forms for the ornament of their palaces and temples—considering justly, that they might as well do this as store it up in unwrought masses, in vaults and jars. Had it been possible, as now, to employ gold profitably, or to render the possession of it a source of income, in the shape of interest, no such vast collections of gold as we meet with in ancient times would have been heard of.

FORTY-FIRST WEEK—THURSDAY.

WORKING IN METAL.—I KINGS VII. 13-51.

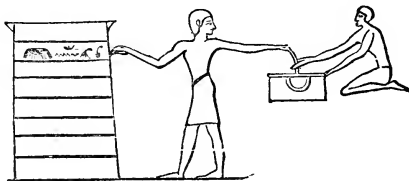
SOME have thought that the covering of the interior of Solomon's temple with gold was simply *gilding*, which, from the extraordinary ductility of gold, would have been a comparatively inexpensive operation. The only objection is, that

it would have been too little expensive. It is expressly stated that six hundred talents, or 75,000 pounds troy, of gold were consumed in this overlaying, which shows that it was not laid on very thinly;—indeed any reader, whose taste lies in that direction, may calculate how thickly the gold was spread, for he knows the space required to be covered. The phrase in 2 Kings vi. 35, that “the gold was fitted upon the carved work,” agrees also with overlaying better than with gilding. Besides, we have no right to lower the magnificent terms of description and wealth in the sacred narrative to this extent, bringing the whole down to a piece of gilding. The considerations advanced at the close of yesterday’s illustration show that the economical use of the metal could have been no object.

Apart from this view of the case, we should have preferred the gilding to the overlaying,—at least in those parts in which the gold covered figures and ornaments carved in wood. The sharpness and delicacy of the carving would also have been certainly better seen through the gilding than through a layer of metal. It would seem that the art of chasing in simple gold was not practised upon any large scale, or was not judged expedient in this case. It was rather chosen to carve the wood, and to force the overlaid gold into the shape of the carvings,—the surface of the gold being probably touched up with graving tools to bring out the sharpness of the carving. Unless this had been the process, it would have been absurd to carve the wood at all, seeing that it was afterwards to be covered with gold. But that the carved wood was to form the base of the enchasement explains all; and although economy was not the object, the process was more economical than a surface enchasement in solid gold; and if left hollow inside, the raised parts would have been more liable to injury than when backed, and the hollows filled by the wooden carvings behind. This was, perhaps, the principal object of these carvings.

Of the existence of the art of *overlaying* with gold, from the most ancient times, in Egypt, the most satisfactory evi-

dence is furnished by the actual remains of overlaid work, which is by no means of infrequent occurrence. We might also point to the overlaying with gold in some of the works of the tabernacle, such as the ark and altar of incense, by the Israelites, immediately on their departure from Egypt. Among the examples of this work derived from that country, there is in the British Museum a small figure of the god Amun, in silver, having the head-dress and the lower part of the body represented by plates of gold laid over the silver. There is also, in the same collection, the finger of a mummy overlaid with silver. A few years ago, a mummy was found in the necropolis of Thebes, entirely wrapped in plates of gold. It was unfortunately broken up by the Arabs, on its discovery, for the sake of the metal; and the only remnant of it is a signet-ring bearing the name of Pharaoh-Mœris. There are, likewise, in the Museum of the Louvre several small female figures in wood, of exquisitely beautiful workmanship, having the hair and parts of the dress represented by plates of gold or silver overlaid. In one of the tombs at Beni-Hassan there is indeed found what appears to be a representation of the very operation of overlaying. We see a kind of press or chest, in-



scribed "the gold chest." The person engaged with it is called "the giver out of the gold." He hands out to the

workmen bars of gold, or more probably thin slips of gold-latten, which they are fixing by strong manual pressure, without any apparent aid from tools, upon a block, bearing



some general resemblance to an ark or sacred chest. The hieroglyphic inscription over their heads signifies “fixing,” or “fastening on.” It is very clear that the representation is that of overlaying with gold, though the details of the process cannot be clearly made out.

Much is said of the *casting* of metal by Hiram,—particularly as regards the casting of the great brazen laver, with the oxen on which it rested, and of the two pillars, Jachin and Boaz. The former, at least, seems, as a work of art, to have been worthy of all the praise it drew forth, and clearly evinces the perfection to which this branch of metallurgic art had been carried. The basin, and the oxen on which it was to rest, were, we should suppose, cast separately. It was cast on the plain of the Jordan, between Succoth and Zaratán, for which, considering the distance, and the difficulty of the road for the subsequent conveyance of the work to Jerusalem, there must have been some potent reason; which is furnished by the fact that it was a “clay ground,” and therefore suited to these extensive operations in the casting of metals.

There are paintings in one of the tombs of Thebes which throw light on this operation also. One group represents the blowing up of the furnace, preparatory to melting the metal. A workman on each side of the fire is working the double bellows, an implement similar in principle to that now in use, but very different in construction. It consisted of two boards, connected by a leathern collar. Each man stands



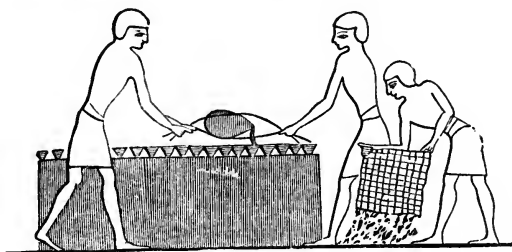
with his feet on two such bellows, and holds in each hand a cord fastened to their upper boards. He works them with a seesaw motion, pressing down one of them with his foot, and at the same time inflating the other by raising the upper board with the opposite hand. They communicate with the fire by means of reeds coated with clay at the end next the fire. A third workman at the same time stirs the fire; and behind them is a heap of fuel, and a vessel containing the metal to be fused. A second picture exhibits a further stage



of the process. The metal is in a state of fusion, and the workmen have left the bellows, and are removing the crucible from the fire by means of two rods or thick wires, the ends of which are coated with clay. This mode of removing the crucible would require great caution and dexterity on the part of the workman, as was the case with all the operations of ancient art.

A third picture carries the operation still further. It represents the rough exterior of a large mould of baked clay, with a row of many earthen funnels at the top of it, into all of which the fused metal was poured successively, for the purpose of diffusing it equally over the entire internal sur-

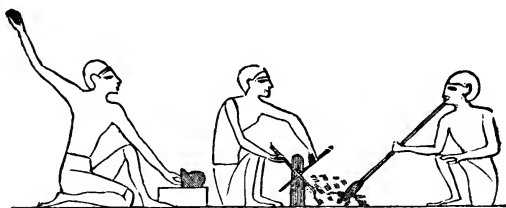
face. Two workmen are depicted in the act of pouring metal into one of them. In founding large casts, the metal is



poured into many apertures by the Arab workmen at the present day. The objection that, by this piecemeal application, a part would cool in the mould before the remainder could be introduced, is met by a third figure, who is emptying fuel, apparently charcoal, from a basket, for the purpose of kindling a fire around the mould, in order to keep it at a high temperature for some time after it has received the metal. This process greatly improves both the delicacy and beauty of the cast, and the temper of the metal. It is used for bronze-castings in China, and is said to be one of the causes of their great superiority over those of European artists.

It is not said that any of the works were of "beaten gold," or other metal. Yet neither is it said that any was "cast," or founded, except the brazen sea, the lavers, and the pillars,—all of which were of brass. All the rest is said simply to have been "made;" and probably all was beaten, only those larger works being cast. The golden candelabrum of the tabernacle was, we know, of beaten gold; and no doubt the ten candelabra of Solomon were similarly constructed. But although this is not distinctly stated, it is, from the nature of things, almost as certain as if it were. Indeed, at a much later period, the ancients seem only to have resorted to casting when the work was too large to be conveniently executed by any other process. And that this

common mode of operation was in use at least in the time of Solomon, in application to works that admitted of it, incidentally transpires in the statement, that the shields and targets subsequently made for this magnificent king were of "beaten gold." We conceive that, with the known exceptions, all the vessels and utensils of the temple were thus made; and, indeed, what was the overlaying of the interior of the temple but an application of beaten gold? Of this



process there is also a representation in the same tomb at Beni-Hassan which exhibits the overlaying. It represents a workman engaged in the fabrication of a brazen vessel, something like a crock. The process is the same as that in use at the present day;—the man places the material on an anvil, and shapes it with a hammer. It almost passes belief, however, but is the fact, that the hammer has no handle,—the workman holding *in his hand* the piece of metal with which he operates. Mr. Osburn well remarks on this:—"The jar occasioned to the nerves of the hand by this violent contact of metal with metal, without the interposition of a wooden handle or other deadening substance, would be intolerable to a modern workman, or if he had resolution to persevere, would probably bring on tetanus. Long practice, from an early age, had habituated the robust frames of the ancient mechanics to these rude concussions." We might also indicate the loss of power in the strokes by the absence of the lever which the handle furnishes. This matter seems so strange, that we have looked through copies of Egyptian figures engaged in various arts, as we find them in

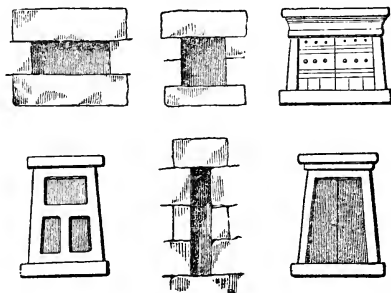
different works, and have been unable to find a handled hammer in any of them. Accompanying the hammerer are two figures engaged upon the process of heating some object in metal which they are manufacturing. The one blows up the charcoal fire with a blow-pipe, while the other holds the metal to the flame. The application of beating to the fabrication of many delicate and elaborate works in gold, is shown abundantly in the Egyptian tombs. The tools employed seem to have been small pieces of metal, like chisels of various shapes, held in the hand, and struck upon the gold to produce the required pattern. Notwithstanding that the lack of mechanical means which modern workmen possess, rendered the task upon the skill, precision, and patience of the individual workman very great, very beautiful works were completed by the goldsmiths of ancient Egypt, as some existing remains of them testify, and as is still more completely evinced by the richly ornamented and elegant vases represented in the tombs of the kings and elsewhere.

FORTY-FIRST WEEK—FRIDAY.

WINDOWS.—I KINGS VI. 4.

“WINDOWS of narrow lights” are assigned to the temple in the text of the authorized version, while the margin affords the alternative of “windows broad *within* and narrow *without*, or *skewed and closed*.” “Skewed” means “slanted;” so “a-skew,” *i. e.*, aslant. None of these versions give much information; and their variety only shows the obscurity of the original term. The one that seems most intelligible and distinct—“broad *within* and narrow *without*,”—is only obtained by inserting the words in italics, which are supplied to complete the sense, the words being thus indicated as not existing in the original. Divested of these interpolations, the phrase would be, “windows broad and narrow,” which cer-

tainly, if really found in the original, which is not the case, would need something to make sense of it. This idea is, however, founded on the statement of Josephus with respect to Herod's temple, and is reasonable, by its intrinsic probability—this form of window being best calculated to radiate the light into the interior through thick walls, and is hence very general in our own churches, as also in ancient sacred buildings—"partly," as an old writer observes, "for the strength's sake of the building, partly for devotion, which is much distracted by great and glaring windows,*—much like, it seems, they were to the windows of some of our ancient British churches; as particularly that of Saint Paternus, now Llan-badern-vawre, in Cardiganshire, in Wales, or some of the more ancient Saxon churches in this land." We know nothing, however, positively of the form or position of the windows, except that they must have been high up—at least fifteen cubits above the pavement—because the "chambers" on the outside of the temple reached as high, if not higher. As to their shape, no better probability can be suggested than they resembled some one of the kinds of windows found in ancient Egyptian buildings and representations,



which in fact offer such forms as among them answer to all the various conjectures which have been offered. We know

* *Orbis Miraculum*: or, *The Temple of Solomon Portrayed by Scripture Light*. [No author's name on title, but the preface subscribed "Samuel Lee."] Folio. London, 1659.

that one of Solomon's later buildings—his palace—called “the house of the forest of Lebanon,”—had three rows of square windows, in which light was opposite to light on the different sides of the building.

A curious question has been raised as to the way in which they were closed, so as to exclude birds and bats, and rain, while admitting the light. We know from experience that, in the East, bats will enter through windows affording any apertures that will admit them, and establish themselves, clustered to the ceilings of even inhabited rooms, through all the day-time, only leaving the place at night in search of food; and, whatever may have been the case with private dwellings, means must have been found of preventing such incidents in a structure so sacred.

The learned old author lately quoted, asked whether it might not be that glass was employed, “seeing the Phœnicians, the first inventors of it, were neighbors to the people of Israel, and gave great assistance to this glorious work. Besides, it is sufficiently known that the glassy sands of the river Belus were within the territories of the tribe of Asher.* But whether the discovery was so ancient as the time of Solomon, I have not yet read.” This information is now in part supplied. It would seem, however, that the manufacture was long in the hands of the Phœnicians, its principal seats being at Sidon and Sarepta—and so long it was accounted a precious commodity, and esteemed an article of luxury,—which may the rather lead to the supposition of its having been used in the temple, if at all known at this time to the Phœnicians. For a long time after it became known, glass was not in very common use. A modern author† infers this from the small number of the glass houses ascribed, even so late as the time of Pliny, to the Phœnicians; and seems to imply that much use for it was not found. “While the

* This alludes to the alleged accidental discovery of glass from the vitrification of the sands beside this river, by a fire kindled by some travellers.

† HEEBEN. *Researches*, vol. ii. p. 88

mildness of the climate in all southern countries, as well as all over the East, rendered any other stoppage of windows unnecessary, except that of curtains or blinds, goblets of the precious metals or stones were preferred as drinking vessels." To the first statement we demur; for the winter cold is often severer in the countries in view than this writer assumes; and in summer, it is always desired to exclude the birds, bats, and many large and troublesome insects which abound in the East. But he is right in supposing that glass was not, even after it became known, generally used for the purpose—nor is it now, even where it might be obtained at no great expense.

Herodotus* states that the Ethiopians were wont to deposit their dead in sarcophagi hollowed out of masses of crystal, which is dug in abundance in their country, and which was so transparent that the bodies enclosed within were perfectly visible. Dr. Lee regards this as a datum for the antiquity of glass, but remarks that there is no intimation as to what earlier age its use may have extended. But he forgot that the Greek word (*ὑαλος*), which is indeed used for glass, also means any transparent material, as crystal, various kinds of stones, and the like—and the statement of the mode in which it was obtained, shows that certainly it was not glass, whatever else it may have been. It was doubtless of much more ancient use than the time to which the statement refers, and might have been applicable to windows, if such use for it had been thought of. But from the manner in which it is mentioned by the historian, it seems to have been confined to Ethiopia, and to the use which he indicates.

Pursuing his inquiry after glass, Dr. Lee remembers "the Arabian story of the pyramids, recited by the learned Mr. Greaves, that the king which built the pyramids, put in the westernmost of them glass that might be bended, and not broken. All which story is by him counted little less than a romance. Yet possibly there might be rocks in Ethiopia

* *Thalia*, xxiv.,—confirmed by Strabo, *Geog.* xvii., and Diodorus, ii. 15; iii. 9.

like those in Muscovia (Russia), mentioned by M. Fletcher in his history, whose scalings might be transparent and flexible and not so fragile as our artificial glass, and which we use for ship lanthorns and other ends." This may have been talc or scaly mica; which, if known, may have been very well used for windows in the absence of glass. The want of transparency would have been no objection—but rather a recommendation, for temples at least. Translucency was the only quality desired, and the lack of transparency would have availed to prevent irreverent persons from looking into the interior from the roofs of the collateral buildings. Still, we do not imagine that such substances were used, whatever be the value of Mr. Greaves' Arabian tale about the pyramids.

The earliest indication of real glass which can be found in ancient writers, is that of Theophrastus (320, B. C.), who, in his Greek work on Stones, speaks of it—but, as it seems to us, as of a matter not within the range of his own observation and experience. "If glass be made, *as some affirm*, of the Uëlitis—a vitrifiable sand, it owes its production to the extreme force of fire. The best is that in the making of which flints have also been used; for, besides that they melt and mix with the general mass, they have a peculiar excellency in the making of glass, insomuch that they give the differences in the clearness of the color." Some of the editions of this author have "brass" for "flints"—and are doubtless wrong. Sand was certainly the first ingredient ever used or thought of for the making of glass, and for many ages there was no other sand used than that found clean washed on the banks or in the beds of rivers, and this from its use might very probably acquire the name of Uëlitis, or "glass-sand." That the further improvement of using flint was so well known to this old author, implies a much remoter antiquity of the original invention.

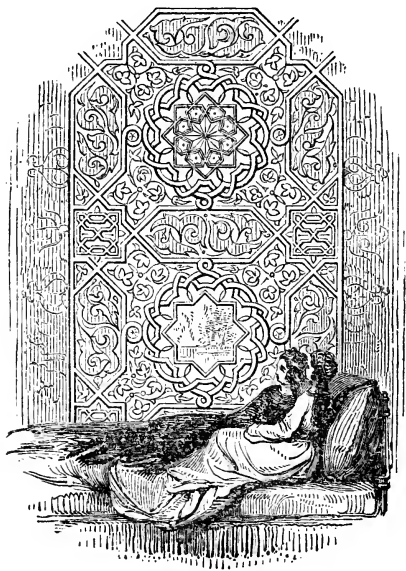
In the Old Testament there is no explicit mention of glass. All our readers know that the "looking-glasses" of the women, mentioned in Exod. xxxviii., were not of glass. It

is clear, like the other ancient mirrors, they were of polished metal—in this case of brass. So, also, where Job compares the expanse of the heavens to “a molten looking-glass.” In both places, the word “mirror” would have been better in the translation. We must not, however, neglect to request the reader’s attention to the remarkable text where, in the relation of Joshua’s victorious pursuit of his enemies, it is stated that he pursued them “even unto Sidon and Misrephoth-maim.” Josh. xi. 8. Taken in connection with the fact, that the chief manufacture of glass was at Sidon, the name of Misrephoth-maim has attracted much attention. The versions vary in the translation of it. In the marginal reading of our Bibles, we have “burnings,” or “saltpits.” One Latin version makes it to mean “burnings of water.” Another has, “the conflux of waters.” Another, “the place of hot baths.” Another, “the saltpit waters.” John Rogers’ translation (1539) has “whotte waters;” and the margin of the Bishops’ Bible (1572) has “bryne or salt-pits.” But Junius translates it, “to the place of the glass furnaces.” The original words *literally* agree to the first translation, and the others are *interpretations* thereof. It has been well conjectured, that we should take the words to mean “burnings *by* water”—not “of water,” and this a great Hebrew scholar (Gesenius) is inclined to understand of either lime-kilns or smelting furnaces situated near water. But there is no apparent reason why these should be near water—whereas there is an obvious one in regard to glass furnaces, on account of the sand. Certain it is, that this alternative much engaged the fancy of the no less learned than valiant Sir Walter Raleigh, who thought that the passage might furnish ground for a good conjecture, that the glass sands of the river Belus were in demand for this use as early as the time of Joshua.* This is not impossible nor incredible; and although it cannot be *proved* from the passage in view, the fact that glass is really of as ancient, or still more ancient date, is proved from the monuments of Egypt,

* *History of the World*, i. 2, § 1.

in which the process of glass-blowing is represented in paintings whose date reaches up to the time of Joseph ; and actual specimens are extant of glass ornaments manufactured about the time of the Exodus.

Our own opinion is, that the windows were filled with close lattice-work, which was probably in this instance gilded. This is still the favorite mode of filling widows in the East—even where glass is in partial use, as being better suited to a warm climate, for it admits not only light but air, and as completely as glass excludes bats and birds, and almost as effectually insects, for it is well known that few insects will pass through lattice or net-work, even when the interstices are much larger than their own bodies. They are preferred also for this—that they allow persons within to view distinctly all that passes without—while no one on the outside can see the persons within. In winter, the cold is excluded by curtains or translucent coverings inside the lattice.



In confirmation of this, it may be stated that lattices are indicated in Scripture long before and long after this period. The mother of Sisera watched through "the lattice" for the return of her son;* Ahaziah "fell down through the lattice;"† and the bride in Solomon's Song "shows herself through the lattice."‡ But what is more to the purpose, the very passage which we noticed at the outset, with regard to the temple windows, may very well signify "windows with closed (fixed) bars," which is a very good indication of lattice-work. The art of forming the patterns of such lattices is much studied, and often carefully and elaborately executed, in the East; and the oriental craftsmen frequently produce really beautiful specimens of joinery in this department.

FORTY-FIRST WEEK—SATURDAY.

THE CHERUBIM.

"THOU shalt not make unto thee any graven image, nor any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the waters under the earth."§

These were among the words which the voice of the Lord was heard to utter amid the thunderings and the lightnings of Mount Sinai; and which were afterwards engraven upon the tables of stone. Yet only five chapters farther on, the same voice commands Moses to "make two cherubim of gold on the two ends of the mercy-seat, and the cherubim shall stretch forth their wings on high, covering the mercy-seat (the ark) with their wings, and their faces shall look one towards another; towards the mercy-seat shall the faces of the cherubim be."|| Here were creatures having at least wings and faces, whatever their general form may have been. But it is remarkable that no description of their figures is given,

* Judges v. 28.

† 2 Kings i. 2.

‡ Solomon's Song ii. 9.

§ Exod. xx. 4.

|| Exod. xxv. 18.

in a document which minutely describes less essential particulars. The inference is, that the figure of the cherubim was, from the traditions of Eden, too well known to Moses and to the Israelites to require minute description—although it became of importance to define the place they were to occupy amid “the shadows of good things to come,” which the tabernacle service embodied.

Solomon not only preserved the original cherubim, but the most holy place in the temple being much larger than the corresponding portion of the tabernacle, he made two colossal cherubim, which were placed, one on each side of the ark, with expanded wings, so that two wings touched each other over the ark, while the other two reached the opposite walls. Besides this, the figures of cherubim were multiplied in the golden enchasements which lined the temple. Not only so, but there were images of oxen supporting the brazen sea, and figures of lions designed upon the bases of the ten lavers in the court of the temple; while there were within, among the interior adornments of the fretted gold, figures of palm-trees, lilies, and pomegranates.

Was the commandment transgressed by this? Certainly not as to the cherubim, seeing that the original introduction of this figure was by Divine direction. As to the other matters introduced by Solomon, there has been difference of opinion. Josephus, and the Jews generally, seem to think that these were unlawful; and that they opened the way to that idolatry which eventually proved the king's ruin. But it does not seem likely that he would transgress a recognized prohibition in the construction of the very temple itself; and as it is stated that David left the pattern of everything to Solomon, it would appear that there was no harm in them, even in his zealous eyes, nor in those of the priests, who would not have failed to point out the error. We are not, in fact, to interpret these things by the rigid constructions of a later age, which refined upon the most simple ordinances, and carried them out to the utmost possibilities, far beyond their original intention. Even Mohammed, who enforced the pro-

hibition of pictures and sculptures with great rigidity, and declared that artists should be punished at the last day, by being required to infuse life into their paintings,—and again, who said—“Every painter is in hell-fire; and God will appoint a person, at the day of resurrection, for every picture he has drawn, to punish him; and they will punish him in hell,”—even he added, “Then if you must make pictures, make them of trees and things without souls.” And so the matter is understood by his followers, who object only to the representation of the human figure—and not always to that—or to pictures designed to represent celestial or infernal intelligences. It appears that the intention was to obviate the remotest occasion of idolatry, by forbidding the representation of any object with the view of rendering worship to it; and this seems to be rendered clear enough, by the significant addition to the prohibition found in the words—“Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them.”

With regard to the objects besides the cherubim, they certainly were representations of things “in the earth beneath.” If, therefore, unlawful, it must be urged that they were not like the cherubim, sanctioned by a Divine command; and that, in introducing them into the sacred building, Solomon exceeded the pattern received from his father, and for which that father seems to advance some claim to a divine inspiration. Yet it is obvious, that these objects could not be in the same degree liable to idolatrous abuse as the cherubim, which *had* the Divine sanction, and which occupied the place of honor in the sacred structure. It has been urged, indeed, that these figures, being symbolical combinations, represented creatures not existing in heaven above, in the earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth. It may be so; and yet, although such creatures might be non-existent on the whole, they were composed of parts separately familiar. And this argument, if pressed, would go to legalize the dog-headed and hawk-headed idols of Egypt, seeing that they represented objects existing only in separate parts; and in fact,

exhibited that very form of idolatry to which the Israelites, when fresh from Egypt, would be particularly prone.

But it is time to ask, What was the form of these cherubim ?

In the first chapter of his prophecy, Ezekiel, a captive in Syria, describes certain "living creatures" that he beheld in a vision. He does not say there that they were the temple cherubim; but they certainly were so; for in another vision a little further on, in the tenth chapter, he is transported in the spirit to Jerusalem, and set down in the precincts of the temple, then still standing. There he beheld, among other objects, *the same "living creatures,"* and the throne previously described, standing in the inner court. "Then," he goes on, "the glory of the Lord (the Shekinah that rested above the cherubim in the inner sanctuary) departed from off the threshold of the house, and stood over the cherubim; and the cherubim lifted up their wings, and mounted up from the earth in my sight. . . . *This is the living creature that I saw* (in the former vision), *under the God of Israel by the river of Chebar*; and I KNEW THAT THEY WERE THE CHERUBIM." He then gives a description of them in conformity with his previous account, but somewhat less particular. It is clear that he did not at first recognize the temple cherubim in the living creatures he beheld in the first vision; but now, from the position of the same creatures in the temple, he knows that the figures he had previously seen were the cherubim. Let us therefore turn back to his description. There were four of them, and they all "*had the likeness of a man.* And every one had four faces, and every one had four wings. And their feet were straight feet; and the sole of their feet was like the sole of a calf's foot, and they sparkled like the color of burnished brass. And they had the hands of a man under their wings on their four sides; and they four had their faces and their wings. Their wings were joined one to another; they turned not when they went, they went every one straight forward. As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion on

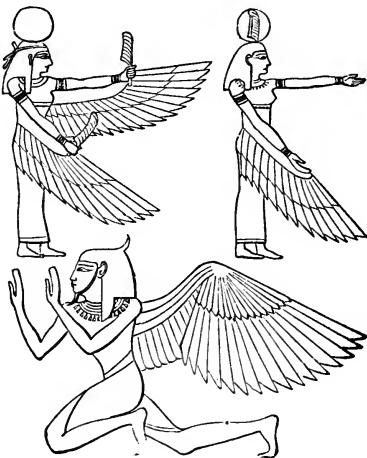
the right side; and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle. Thus were their faces; and their wings were stretched upwards, two wings of every one were joined one to another, and two covered their bodies."

This information respecting the figures of the cherubim throws light upon what has seemed a difficulty to many—the introduction of the figures of oxen and lions in the temple court, as supporters of the brazen sea, and on the lavers. The heads of these animals being combined in one figure in the cherubim, Solomon might have felt there could be no impropriety in employing separately creatures composing that figure. They were therefore separate parts of the cherubic figure, and as such lawful, although representations of living objects. Solomon may have felt some scruple about using the entire compound figure anywhere but within the temple itself, and therefore thus embodied the parts separately. The connection between them and the cherubim, though not at the first view obvious to us, must have been clear to the Israelites, and this could not but tend to obviate that danger of idolatry which might have existed in the absence of any such connection.

This is not the only instance of the separation of the cherubim into their component parts; for there can be no question but that, as the four "living creatures" of Ezekiel are identical with the cherubim, so are the "four beasts," which make so eminent a figure in St. John's apocalyptic vision. "Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were *four beasts*, full of eyes before and behind. And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast was like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle. And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him: and they were full of eyes within, and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." Here we have a winged man, a

winged ox, a winged lion, a winged eagle. In the figure of the cherubim we have the four combined—that is all the difference. Yet not all; for each of these figures has *six* wings, whereas the cherubim have but four. We may reach the reason for this difference, by recollecting that of the four cherubic wings, two were for flying, and the other two for dress, forming a kind of screen or skirt for the lower part of the figure—as in Isaiah's *six* winged seraphim (which were also essentially cherubic), "with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he did fly." The two additional wings may therefore be meant to denote, that as the cherubim in this view are nearer the throne and the incumbent majesty than in the other, it was proper that their persons should be more completely veiled from the glance of that Holy One, in whose sight the heavens are not clean.

It will, no doubt, be recollected that figures more or less analogous to the cherubim have been found in Egypt, and among all the nations of south western Asia—in Assyria, in Persia, and in Asia Minor. Some exhibit the same combination as in the temple cherubim; but we have the separate parts of the same, just as they were separable even under the Hebrew symbolization. Symbols the cherubim assuredly



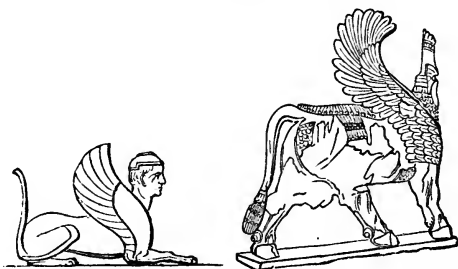
were, and not representations ; and the heathen figures doubtless belonged to the same system of symbolization, if they did not symbolize the ~~same~~ things,—which may partly have been the case, if all were founded on dim traditions, common to all the races of men, of the cherubim stationed to keep the way of man's lost paradise.

We are at once reminded of the winged human figures of Egypt, Babylon, Nineveh, and Persia,—of which the last were remarkable, as known to be representations of disembodied souls, and the one below, to the left, as a portrait of

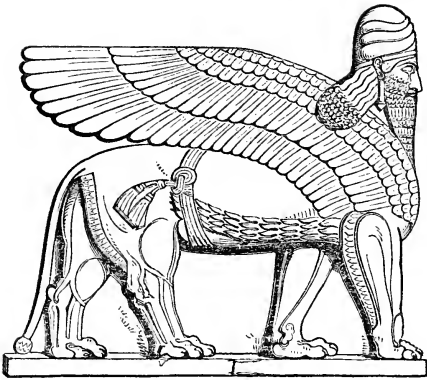


the great Cyrus, winged, to show that he is no more of this world—a fact to which there will be occasion to refer. Opposite to it we place a figure, analogous in form, from the sculptures recently discovered at Nineveh. There are others of the kind, as elaborately carved in the wings and raiment, and all holding what appears like a fir cone in the right hand, and a sort of basket in the left. They are little distinguished from each other, except one which, upon the winged body, exhibits the head of an eagle. The import of these Assyrian images has not yet been determined ; but will probably prove to be the same as those of the Persian figures of the like kind. The middlemost in the group of Babylonian figures seems much to resemble this.

Still more does it bring to mind the human heads attached to the bodies of winged lions and oxen in the sculptures of the same countries and Assyria, as in the sphinx of Egypt—



too well known to need description,—a like figure at Babylon,—and the same combination of beast, bird, and man, at Persepolis. In this case the beast is a bull ; so it is also in the Assyrian colossal figure lately brought to this country from Nineveh, in which it is remarkable that the ears of the human head are those of the bull. In another like figure from the same quarter, the body is that of a lion instead of a bull. These figures may suggest the question, whether the bulls and lions of Solomon were not likewise winged, to indicate their connection with the cherubim, and to show that the images were symbolical. The latter figure (of the lion), which we introduce, is that, the discovery of which excited



a strong sensation among the natives, as recorded by Layard. It is in admirable preservation. The expression is calm, yet majestic. The cap has three horns, which seems to be especially worthy of notice, as pointing to an intended combination of the man, the lion, the bull, and (in the wings) the eagle.

In other instances, in the same countries, we have the heads, and sometimes the wings, of birds, generally eagles, attached to human bodies. This is frequent in Egypt; where, also, we find the rare example of a human head affixed to a bird's body. Of the eagle's head and wings attached to a human body, a remarkable example has been found at Nineveh;* and one very similar occurs in a Babylonian cylinder.



In other cases, the heads of birds, usually the eagle, are mounted on the bodies of animals,—and, more rarely, the head of one animal upon the body of another. In all these combinations any other creature than the four combined in the cherubic symbol scarcely ever appears. In none of them are



* Layard, i. 125.

the four combined in one figure, as in the cherubim; and in the highest combinations—as those in which man, beast, and bird are united—the combination is so far different, that separate parts are taken to make one body, and none have more than one head; whereas, in the cherubim, four *faces* (not necessarily *heads*) appeared upon one body. We apprehend the common representations err in giving the different heads instead of merely different *faces*, to the cherubim, and also in bestowing upon them the lower limbs of oxen. It is clearly stated that the human figure predominated, and even hands are mentioned; but, lest it should be supposed that it had human feet also, it is added that the feet were like those of a calf. We infer that all the body was human, excepting the head, which had four faces, and excepting the feet, although the legs may have been human; the wings were partly a vesture, and partly instruments of motion.

Forty-Second Week—Sunday.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHERUBIM.

WE may be reasonably anxious to inquire into the meaning of the figures to which a place so eminent was assigned, in the tabernacle first, and in the temple afterwards. That they were representations of objects actually existing in the “heaven above,” has been supposed by very few. They were, therefore, symbols; and the question is, What did they symbolize? On this question every conceivable variety of opinion has been entertained. By various expositors the cherubim are made to signify either the four covenants; or all the creatures; or the four cardinal virtues—justice, wisdom, fortitude, and temperance; or the four faculties in the soul—rational, irascible, concupiscible, and conscience; or the four chief passions—joy, grief, hope, and fear; or the

four great monarchies; or the four elements; or the four evangelists; an opinion, this last, which seems to have been entertained by those who assigned the symbols usually in paintings connected with Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. We shall not waste upon these crudities the space which may be better given to more received opinions.

One of these is, that the cherubic figures were intended to symbolize the Divine Persons in the sacred Trinity,—the figure of the lion being associated with the human form to indicate the promised incarnation. This opinion was warmly and ably maintained by the learned but fanciful Hutchinson, and by others who more or less leaned to his opinions,—such as Parkhurst, Bishop Horne, Julius Bates, Romaine, and Cuming. It has not, however, stood the test of criticism, and has now few supporters. In the first place, it would have been in direct opposition—and that, too, by divine authority—to the stringent prohibition of making any similitude of God—of aught designed to represent Him. “Take ye good heed to yourselves,” said Moses to the people, “for ye saw no manner of similitude in the day the Lord spoke to you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire; lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure.” It would surely be monstrous for this to be followed by an injunction to make a representation of the Trinity to be set in the most holy place. Besides, the Divine presence—the Shekinah—is always spoken of as distinct and separate from the cherubim,—it “dwelt between the cherubim.” So, in Ezekiel’s vision, the four “living creatures,” or cherubim, are “*under* the God of Israel;” and, in Rev. v., the four *zoa*, “beasts,” “living creatures,” or cherubim, rendered thanks to him that sat upon the throne; they, with the four-and-twenty elders, *fell down* before the Lamb, and sang this new song, “Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood.” It is surely unnecessary to point out the incompatibility of these incidents with this view of the cherubic symbols.

Another opinion, and, indeed, the general one at this day,

is that which represents the cherubim to be holy angels, and the figures of them in the sanctuary to be symbolical representations of their nature and ministry. But how would angels, or any order of angels, say, as in the Revelation, that Christ had redeemed them to God by his blood? and their appearance in that vision is clearly distinguished from that of the angels. The number of the angels was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, and they all stood around the *zooa*, or “living creatures”—which is incompatible with the latter being any order of angels. These considerations seem to compel us to withhold our assent to the ingenious arguments which have been produced in favor of a notion, which is at the best only a conjecture, and which its warmest supporters admit to be incapable of direct proof from Scripture. We need not state the arguments; for since, as the engineers say, no fortress is stronger than its weakest part, if these weak points clearly exist, the strength of all other arguments and illustrations must count for nothing. It is true that the opinion is very ancient, and probably may be traced as having originated among the Jews themselves; and to have been inherited from them by the Christian church. But it has been forgotten that this is almost the only opinion they would be likely to reach, in the want of that better light into the hidden mysteries with which we have been favored; and, having that clearer light, we needlessly, and sometimes dangerously, limit ourselves, by carelessly adopting the narrow views which the Jews entertained of their own symbols and institutions.

It was shown lately that the cherubim of the tabernacle and temple were the same that Ezekiel saw, and the same that were seen in the apocalyptic vision. What is therefore declared of the latter is equally applicable to all; and this being the last and the New Testament revelation on the subject, might be expected to furnish some further disclosure in regard to this mystery than had in old times been possessed. This appears to be furnished in their new song: “Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seal thereof: for

thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth." Can this possibly be the language of angels?—especially when we hear the apostle's doctrine, "For verily he took not upon him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham,"—Heb. ii. 16,—and when, moreover, in the context here, the angels are expressly distinguished from the four beasts? It can only be the language of human beings—of the multitude of the redeemed from among men, out of every nation,—not of any section of the church, nor of any class of its members, but of the great body of the believers in the atonement, throughout all ages, countries, and nations. In the immediate application of this symbol, it may be said that, when the high priest entered the most holy place of the tabernacle—*which he never did without the blood of atonement in his hand*—and looked upon the ark of the covenant with its cherubic appendages, with the Shekinah, enthroned between, he beheld, in fact, but a miniature model of what he saw on a large scale without, when standing amidst the many thousands of Israel abiding in their tents. *Here* were the cherubic symbols resolved into their constituent multitudes; and over the host rested in calm majesty the pillar of cloud, the visible *external* token of the Divine presence permanently residing among the tribes. And even this was, as our further light indicates, but a type of that which the Israelites could not see, and would not like to have seen, of multitudes redeemed to God, out of all nations, by the blood of atonement, forming the church of God, among whom He should dwell.

When this clue to the meaning of the symbol is once apprehended, a multitude of circumstances come to the recollection in confirmation of it. We recall the assurance of *Ezekiel* that the human figure predominated in the cherubim, and that they possessed the hands of men. We may also call to mind that, although the etymology of *cherubim* is uncertain, the word "*living creature*," is often used as a noun of

multitude, and is so translated in the English version ; and as the living creatures and the cherubim are the same, this idea must be common to both. So, “thy congregation,” in Psalm lxviii. 10, is, in Hebrew, “thy living creature ; and 2 Sam. xxiii. 41, “the troop,” is, in Hebrew, “the living creature.” We shall also note that the presence of the cherubim is always more or less connected with the idea or practice of sacrifice and atonement. We see this constantly in the tabernacle and temple ; we see it in the live coal (the efficient atoning power of sacrifice) wherewith one of the seraphim (the same as cherubim) purified Isaiah’s unclean lips ; and we see it still more plainly in the Apocalypse.

We regret that space does not allow us to follow out this idea fully—to enforce it by further illustrations, and to vindicate it from possible objections. Aware, however, that many readers will wish to appreciate the fitness of the strange, anomalous, and it may be almost said monstrous diversity of forms and faces of which the symbol was composed, supposing the cherubic *men*—men standing in a covenant relation to God—men possessed of renewed spiritual life, and thus enjoying the Divine favor,—we may reasonably conclude that this singular combination of forms represents some remarkable attributes in the character which the symbol adumbrates. Taking this view, it is asked by Professor Bush—“What, then, are distinguishing traits in the character of the people of God which may be fitly represented by emblems so unique ? How shall the hieroglyphic be read ? The face of the ox reminds us of the qualities of the ox ; and these, it is well known, are patient endurance, unwearied service, and meek submission to the yoke. What claim has he to the title of a man of God who is not distinguished by these ox-like attributes ? The lion is the proper symbol of undaunted courage, glowing zeal, triumph over enemies, united with innate nobleness and magnanimity of spirit. The man, as a symbol, we may well conceive as indicating intelligence, meditation, wisdom, sympathy, philanthropy, and every generous and tender emotion. And, finally, in the eagle, we recognize the imperso

nation of an active, intelligent, fervent, soaring spirit, prompting the readiest and swiftest execution of the Divine commands, and elevating the soul to the things that are above.”* It must be confessed that the symbolization of qualities by animal representations is not congenial to the European taste in its present state of cultivation. It is, however, frequent in the Bible, and we must not forget how well it was calculated to impress the ancient and oriental imagination. It is merely a kind of embodied imagery, and all ancient literature—as well as all modern eastern literature—is full of it. Even our austerer taste still tolerates this kind of impersonation in poetry, and the language of the least educated classes still avouches its former predominance, and its present convenience in giving expression to the ideas entertained of the intellectual, spiritual, and physical qualities of men. It is the language of simple nature, which is full of material imagery: and in this language God often speaks to men.

Dr. Layard, speaking of the Assyrian symbols (which he takes to be representations of the Deity), says: “I used to contemplate for hours these mysterious symbols, and muse over their talent and history. What more sublime images could have been borrowed from nature, by men who sought, unaided by the light of revealed religion, to embody their conceptions of the wisdom, power, and equity of a Supreme Being? They could find no better type of wisdom and knowledge, than the head of the man; of strength, than the body of the lion; of ubiquity, than the wings of the bird.” †

* *Notes on Exodus*, p. 100. New York, 1843. The writer takes substantially the same view we have stated as to the nature of the symbol—which has also been very ably advocated by Mr. George Smith, F.S.A., in his recent work (1850) on the *Doctrine of the Cherubim*. This interpretation is not, however, a new one, for we have traced it in several good old authors, English and foreign.

† *Nineveh*, i. 70.

FORTY-SECOND WEEK—MONDAY.

THE ROYAL MERCHANT.—I KINGS IX. 26-28.

It was probably from the exhaustion of the ample means left by his father, and the inadequacy of the ordinary sources of revenue, for his vast expenses in sacred and regal building, as well as to sustain the great expense of his magnificent court and vast household, that Solomon was led to turn his attention to commerce. His intimate connection with the Phœnicians could not but indicate to his sagacious mind, that commerce was the sole foundation of the extraordinary prosperity which that small nation had attained, and the great wealth which it possessed. He saw not why similar advantages might not accrue to himself from the like sources. But his people had no knowledge of the sea, or of ship-building; and he perceived that he could not act without the co-operation of Hiram. Now, Hiram was his very good friend; but aware of the commercial jealousy of the Phœnicians, he could not but see that he must not reckon upon their assistance, if his plans or his line of operations interfered with theirs, or unless he could propose to them advantages unattainable to them without his assistance. They monopolized the maritime traffic of the west—the coasts and isles of the Mediterranean—and of the nearer Atlantic shores. With this he had no wish to interfere. But he possessed the ports at the head of the Red Sea, which opened up to maritime enterprise the treasures of the rich south and east, to which they could have no access but by him. He was, therefore, in a condition to make what terms he judged equitable to them; and there can be no doubt that Hiram listened eagerly to proposals, which allowed him to participate in the advantages of this line of traffic—so full of promise—and which in no wise interfered with the commerce of his own people. Perhaps the Phœnician zeal may have been quickened by the knowledge that, although Solomon preferred their assist

ance as upon the whole the best and the most safe, he was not altogether dependent upon it. The Edomites, at this time subject to his crown, had been accustomed to navigate the Red Sea, and probably to some extent beyond ; and although we know not that they ever reached the shores to which, under the experienced guidance of the Phœnician mariners, the fleets of Solomon penetrated, it is very probable that they might, with adequate encouragement, have been the instruments of his designs. Probably it was as much from policy, and from regard to the greater experience of the Phœnicians in long voyages, that the sage king of Israel was induced to prefer the co-operation of a people who had no territorial connection with the shores of the Red Sea. It may be, indeed, that we err in ascribing the credit of the plan to Solomon. It is quite possible that the Phœnicians were themselves the first to perceive how the possession of the Red Sea ports by their powerful ally, might be turned to account, for the benefit of both nations ; and it may appear to some, that the idea was more likely to occur to an enterprising commercial people like them, than to a king who had no previous experience of shipping or commerce.

Be this as it may, the co-operation was readily entered upon, and presently the port of Ezion-geber resounded with the strokes and cries of the multitude of wrights, busy in building such ships as those with which they navigated the length of the Mediterranean to Tarshish,* and which, although now having a very different destination, were still called “ships of Tarshish”—just as our ships built for the Indian voyage, are called Indiamen. The interest which Solomon felt in the enterprise, may be judged of from the fact, that he went in person to Ezion-geber to hasten the preparations, and to witness the departure of the fleet—a sight at all times beautiful, and altogether new to the eyes of a Hebrew king.

It was three years, or as we may understand it, the third year,† before the ships returned from a most prosperous

* Supposed Tartessus in Spain.

† This is from the fact that the Hebrews in popular computation

voyage, laden with costly and rare commodities, and with objects, such as foreign beasts and birds, suited to gratify the philosophic zeal of the king in the study of nature. These were no doubt procured by his order, and it is not too large a stretch of conjecture to suppose, that he had been careful to send some like-minded man with the expedition, to secure such objects as might appear worthy of the king's attention. The journal of the naturalist of this expedition, would have been a most interesting and useful book to us ; and no doubt king Solomon read it eagerly, and found in it rich materials for his own writings on animals and plants. At all events, so wise a king was little likely to leave to the rude appreciation and random judgment of mariners, the selection of the objects worthy of being presented to his notice. The objects named are—gold and silver in vast quantities, various kinds of valuable timbers, notably that of the alghum-tree (supposed the white-sandal wood), ivory, and various curious animals, instanced by monkeys and peacocks, probably as being the most remarkable, or as the most different from the forms of animal life with which the Israelites were previously acquainted. There is no mention of plants, and perhaps the skill was not possessed in that age of transporting living plants with safety from a great distance. Yet, considering the king's love for botany, there can be no doubt that his naturalist had instructions to bring the seeds of any plants that appeared worthy of attention from their use or beauty ; and we may probably, therefore, refer to this reign the introduction of various plants into Palestine, which had not been known there in former times. It is a curious fact, that in the grounds hard by "the fountains of Solomon," near Bethlehem—which exhibit manifest traces of an ancient garreckoned parts of years and days as whole ones—so that, to apply this mode of reckoning, a ship of ours that sails for India in December, 1849, and returns in January, 1851—returning in the third year, may be said to have been absent "three years"—though actually little more than one year. So our Saviour is said to be three days in the tomb, though actually one day and two nights, from Friday evening to Sunday morning.

den, and where the intimations of Josephus would lead us to expect that Solomon had a rural retreat, are still to be found a number of plants, self-sown from age to age, which do not exist in any other part of the Holy Land. This is indeed, in ecclesiastical tradition, the *Hortus Conclusus*—the “Enclosed Garden,” to which there is an allusion in the “Song of Songs.”

But whither went this fleet? When or where were these commodities obtained? The answer is, to Ophir—at least this seems to have been the most distant point of the voyage, in the course of which these things were procured. And where was Ophir? *That* is a question—one of the *quæstiones vexatissimæ* of sacred geography, respecting which many volumes and treatises have been written. This is scarcely the place for the adequate discussion of such a question; but as the matter is one which often comes under notice in one shape or another, we shall to-morrow endeavor to state some considerations which may assist the reader to some probable, if not certain, conclusions.

FORTY-SECOND WEEK—TUESDAY.

OPHIR.—I KINGS IX. 28; X. 11.

IF you take away the O from OPHIR there remains PHIR, or if you like, PIR, which contains all that is essential of the name PERU. Or, still further, if you retain the O and place it at the end instead of the beginning of the word, you have PIRO—which is, we may say, the very same word. Moreover, Ophir was famous for its gold, so is Peru. What more do you require to prove that Ophir was Peru—what more is needed to prove that America was discovered under the commission of Solomon and Hiram, and not under that of Ferdinand and Isabella?

Now, seriously, this argument, or something very like it,

has been used to prove that Peru was the Ophir of Solomon; and arguments of the same kind, and not stronger when strictly analyzed, have been used in favor of places not *physically* so improbable. In this case, the physical improbability of the allocation, makes us sensible of the absurdity of this process of argumentation; but surely the *argument* is not less inconclusive when the *allocation* is less certainly impossible, if that argument is all that can be produced in its favor. Yet this sort of reasoning, as applied to more possible sites, forms the basis of two thirds of all the attempts which have been made to identify the Ophir of Solomon.

It seems to us that the way to a correct, or rather to a proximate, solution of the difficulty, is to look to the practical results of the expedition, and deduce from the commodities it brought the countries it had visited. This process is obvious. There is scarcely a ship that comes into the port of London from a distant voyage, whose cargo does not indicate the quarter from which it comes—even though the diffusion of commodities and products, which has arisen from the intercourse of nations, renders the process less easy now than in former times, when products, animal or vegetable, were more confined to the countries in which they were indigenous. If the ship is laden with tea, we know it comes from China; if with sugar, from the West Indies; if with cotton, from North America; if with silver or gold, from South America; if with figs, from the Levant; if with spices, from the India Sea; and so on. Still, the conclusion may not be quite certain in every case—seeing that some of these commodities may, in small quantities, come from other quarters than those from which they are principally received,—and it is possible that the cargo may have been taken on board at some intermediate commercial port. But if we find curious animals on board for the Zoological Gardens, our conclusions are materially assisted, for these have assigned habitats,—and not being objects of commerce, are all but invariably, even now, and still more in ancient times, brought direct from the countries to which they belong. If there be a hip

popotamus, we conclude that the ship comes from the mouth of the Nile; if a lion, a zebra, a gnu, or a koodoo, from the Cape; if a tiger, or zebu, from India; if a reindeer, glutton, or white bear, from the Arctic Seas; if a bison, or raccoon, from North America; if a macaw, or humming-bird, or kinkajou, or llama, or armadillo, from South America; if an orang-outang, a paradoxure, or a napu, from Borneo, Sumatra, or Java; if a kangaroo, or ornithorhynchus, from Australia; if a babiroussa, from the Molucca Isles; and so of any others who inhabit definable localities.

Now, we must apply this to the case in hand.

A favorite opinion of late is, that Ophir was on the east coast of Arabia in Oman—because the name of Ofor has been found there, and because it can be made out that gold was once yielded in that quarter. This makes the great voyage a mere creeping round the Arabian coast—and affords *only one* of the products, gold. Granting that gold was got here—where else, where further, did the fleet go to get ivory, apes, peacocks, and algum wood—none of which were ever found in any part of Arabia?

Another hypothesis sends the fleet not eastward at all, but southward along the African shore. Now, certainly, had the fleet taken this direction, a very large proportion of the objects named—gold, apes, ivory—might have been obtained, and even some kinds of spices in the ports of Abyssinia. But in this quarter could not be found the peacocks or the algum-trees; and so long as any one creature or object is on board the fleet which cannot be ascribed to the assigned country, we are bound to seek another. The one or two things wanting, then, become the tests for the true country—the more valuable inasmuch as the scope of the inquiry becomes more limited and distinct,—and the more important according to the degree in which the object in question becomes more singular, distinct, and remarkable. For the purposes of this inquiry, it may be well to dismiss the algum-trees for the moment, for two reasons—because the tree is of disputed identification, and because it cannot *with cer-*

tainty be affirmed that it was not a tree growing in Africa or Arabia. There is, then, nothing left but the peacock; and on this we must take our stand.

But, first, are we sure that the word in the Hebrew text, which is THUKYIM, does really denote peacocks? We think it certain. There is hardly any bird named in Scripture, respecting which there is more general agreement among interpreters; and there is some strong objection to every other bird which has been indicated. Then, where is the native country of the peacock? It is in India; and it could have been found both wild and domesticated by navigators upon the coasts from Camboge to Ceylon; and, which is of great importance, the bird would, better than any of its congeners, or, indeed, than any other bird which has been suggested, bear a long voyage in such crowded ships as those of the ancients. Moreover, the name itself, THUKI*—which is evidently not Hebrew, but a foreign name imported along with the bird,†—has much analogy to the native name of the peacock, as found in those parts—which is in Malabaric *togei*, in Sanscrit *sikhi*. Now, we would not contend that this is the region of Ophir; but we do contend that the voyage to Ophir, wherever that lay, although it may not necessarily have been the remotest point of the voyage,—must have extended to the place where peacocks were found; and we have indicated the *nearest* place where they might then have been obtained—though not bound to do so, for peacocks might be found at remoter parts of India and its isles; we might even, if we liked, go as far as the peninsula of Malacca—the Aurea Chersonesus of the ancients, where we find that the inhabitants to this day call their gold mines *ophirs*,—and where, most certainly, *all* the products brought to Solomon might be found in rich abundance. But they might all likewise be found at the nearer point we have indicated; and therefore we prefer this, for the sake of the tender consciences which

* The final *im*, as above quoted, being the sign of the plural.

† Probably imitated from its note or cry; but we do not know, for we never heard it.

not shrink from the longer voyage. But, for our own part, we find no difficulty even in that; for we know that an intercourse even with China was open not much later, and probably much before, the age of Solomon—articles of China manufacture, with legible Chinese characters upon them, being at this day found in the ancient tombs of Egypt.

But, adhering to the nearer parts of the Indian coast, we find that these would furnish all that was obtained. This includes even the algum-trees; for although we have declined to rely upon it, for the reasons stated, we consider that it has been satisfactorily shown by Dr. Royle* to have been the fragrant white sandal wood,† so highly prized in the East, which is a native of the mountainous parts of the coast of Malabar, where large quantities are at this day cut for export to China, to different parts of India, and to the Persian and Arabian Gulfs.

We therefore think the fleet went so far as India—touching, perhaps, at Arabian and African ports on its way. This also agrees with the length of the voyage; for although, as we showed yesterday, the indication of time is not necessarily to be understood of *three* years, we think it could not have been much less in this case; for the time consumed is mentioned as something extraordinary, which would scarcely have been the case with anything less than two years under the slow processes of ancient navigation.

Yet, as we have said, we do not contend that Ophir was a place on the Indian coast. Nay more, we do not insist that it was ANY particular place. It seems to us that Heeren is quite right in his remark that “Ophir, like the name of all other distant places or regions of antiquity—as Thule, Tarsessus, and others—denotes no particular spot, but only a certain region or part of the world, such as the East and West Indies in modern geography. Hence Ophir was a general name for all the countries lying on the African, Arabian, or Indian Seas, so far as at that time known.”

* Cyclop. of Biblical Literature, art. ALGUM. † *Santalum album*.

FORTY-SECOND WEEK—WEDNESDAY.

TADMOR.—I KINGS IX. 18.

AMONG the cities built by Solomon was "Tadmor in the wilderness." All our readers know that this Tadmor was Palmyra, whose magnificent ruins still fill European travellers with wonder. We shall not describe these ruins—which belong to a much later age than that of Solomon—though it is possible that some of the substructions may belong to the more ancient city, on that spot of which he was the founder. We feel more interest in the inquiry, What could have been Solomon's object in establishing a city so important in this remote and inhospitable region? It is reasonable to suppose, that he was influenced by a clear perception of the relations and circumstances which could not but render a city in that quarter of great commercial importance—of such importance as it actually possessed, and to which its prosperity was wholly owing, in ages long posterior to that in which Solomon flourished. This object on Solomon's part is not clearly stated, but it is easily collected from a consideration of the facts, and from the comparison of some intimations which do transpire.

His commerce with Egypt, and his maritime traffic, evince the king's wakeful attention to his commercial advantages. As he possessed all the territory to the Euphrates, and held the fortified towns which commanded the places of passage over that river, he possessed the means of entirely controlling the great caravan trade, which from ancient times existed between the regions east of the Euphrates on the one hand, and the emporiums of Syria and Egypt on the other. The site of Tadmor is an oasis in the midst of an arid and sandy desert, being rendered such by the abundance of water. This circumstance compelled the caravans to pass in this direction—the water being essential for the refreshment of the cattle in the passage across the desert.

There can, therefore, be no doubt that this was an important watering station for the great caravans, from the very earliest period, in which were transported in long files of camels the products of the East across the great Syrian desert. It could not but occur to the sagacious Hebrew king, that here was a most proper station for a commercial town. It was doubtless fortified, and adequately garrisoned, so that while it enabled him to maintain the region in complete subjection, and to prevent the passage of the trade without his concurrence (which, indeed, would otherwise have been impossible for the want of water), put him in a position to give complete security to the caravans against the predatory Arab tribes, which formerly, as now, invested this region, and rendered the passage either positively dangerous, or purchasable only at a fearful sacrifice, which, as it must fall on the ultimate consumer, helped to render the products of this traffic exceeding costly by the time it reached the shores of the Mediterranean. As Solomon held the fortress of Thapsacus at the place where the caravans crossed the Euphrates, he could afford an escort of troops thence to Tadmor, and thence again to the western coast, if required ; and for this, as well as for the aid and assistance at Tadmor, and for the advantages of its stores and khans, a toll might reasonably be required ; and this would cheerfully be paid, as a return for actual benefits, and as a most gratifying exchange for the harassing, irregular, inordinate, and greedy exactions of the Arab tribes.

But we apprehend that Tadmor was more than this—that it became under Solomon what we know that it was in later times, an actual emporium for the products of the East, at which the caravans did not merely rest on their journey, but where they terminated it, deposited their ladings, transacted their sales with the factors from the West, who then took charge of the commodities, and bore them away thence to the western markets at their leisure—or whither the dealers repaired to purchase such of those commodities as they required from the consignees. This is the usual mode in which

the goods brought by distant caravans are disposed of in the East, almost always at some border town, and rarely at the ultimate market. More than this, we see little room to doubt that Solomon himself took up, by his agents, the greater part, if not the whole, of the goods thus brought into his territories, and kept them in his stores—eventually selling them at a profit to such of the western merchants as required them. This would in fact amount to a monopoly of the Eastern trade. But such is the custom of Eastern kings, when they take any interest in commercial undertakings. And not only so, but such royal merchants are very much in the habit of taking such commodities from the caravans *at their own price*—which the merchant dare not refuse to accept. This, however, has a *practical* limit, and must especially have had such in the case of Solomon—for had he oppressed the trade, by compelling them to dispose of their goods at a price *essentially* less than they might have obtained in the ordinary course of business, the result might have been to direct the traffic into some other channel, which might have been found by crossing the Euphrates more to the north, and so proceeding westward. But this would have been an expensive and fatiguing course, not to be adopted without more serious cause than so prudent a king as Solomon would be likely to give.

That this, in substance, was the course taken by Solomon, seems to us to be proved by the fact, that it was really the policy on which he conducted his trade with Egypt; and from the fact that we read of “store cities” which he built—and as this is mentioned in connection with his building of Tadmor, it is obviously suggested that these towns were intended to be places for the deposit and sale of the products of this great eastern land trade—so ancient, so important—and which now seems to have been chiefly in the hands of Solomon. Among other cities held by the king in connection with this trade, was very probably Baalbek (or Heliopolis), which may have been included among the “store cities” of Hamath, even if it be not expressly named under the

designation of Baalath—1 Kings ix. 18—about which there is some difference of opinion.

It is a most important fact in evidence of the truth of the conjectures we have hazarded, that all our information respecting this place, under its name of Palmyra, transmitted through heathen writers, exhibits it as a city of merchants—the factors of the eastern trade, who sold to the Romans and others the valuable products and precious commodities of India and Arabia, and who were so enriched by the traffic, that the place was proverbial for its luxury and wealth, and for the expensive habits of its citizens.

FORTY-SECOND WEEK—THURSDAY.

TRADE WITH EGYPT—THE HITTITES.—I KINGS X. 28, 29.

It was under Solomon also, that for the first time we read of a commercial intercourse with Egypt—which perhaps, if fully investigated, might be found of more real importance than the seemingly larger commercial proceedings to which our attention has been given. These derive apparent magnitude from distance of space, and length of interval in time, which necessarily gave an extensive and massive character to each distinct operation,—while the intercourse which neighboring nations may carry on with each other from week to week, or month to month, needs no such extensive organization or imposing circumstances, and though smaller in each separate act, becomes in the aggregate of far greater consequence. To us, however, the contemplation of this branch of Solomon's traffic, is scarcely of less interest than that with Ophir.

We are informed of the articles which Solomon imported from Egypt through his factors, but not of the commodities he gave in exchange. This, however, it is not difficult to discover, seeing that there are certain products of Palestine

which were not produced, or not adequately produced, in Egypt, and which must in all times have found a welcome in the markets there. Of the staple productions of Palestine, corn was one that Egypt did not want; but in regard to oil and wine the case was different.

The inhabitant of northern Europe can scarcely form any adequate conception of the important uses of oil in a warm climate, in which animal fat, or any solid substance capable of being melted by the natural temperature of the climate, cannot be used. It serves instead of butter, instead of lard, instead of tallow. This constantly appears in Scripture. Of all oils, that of the olive is most valued, and the tree that afforded it did not flourish in Egypt, but was native to Palestine, and grew there to its utmost perfection, shooting even from the crevices of the rocks, where scarcely any soil appears. Hence "oil out of the flinty rock," Deut. xxxii. 13, was among the blessings of the land promised to the chosen people. So of wine. It is not true that the vine did not grow in Egypt, or that wine was not made there. This old notion is oversei by the evidence of the mural paintings. Yet the nature of the climate—as unfavorable to the vine from heat as our own climate is from cold—shows that it must there have been rather an object of amateur culture, than a natural and extensive production. The wine also, although made in some limited degree, as formerly in this country,* was probably of inferior quality, and not greatly prized. But in Palestine the vine attained its perfection, affording excellent grapes, which yielded the finest wine. This wine was prized even by the Phœnicians, who had access to the vines of Lebanon. Much more, therefore, must it have been valued by the Egyptians; and these two commodities, olive oil and wine, alone, must have afforded Solomon ample means of return for whatever he required of the Egyptians. Another commodity afforded by his kingdom in large abundance, and but scantily produced in Egypt, was honey. The frequent mention of this in Scripture is apt to

* There is evidence that wine was formerly made in Devonshire.

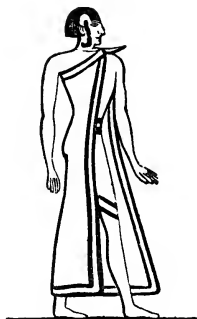
perplex the reader, who forgets that *sugar* was unknown, and that honey was used for all the purposes to which sugar is applicable. Some have thought “the sweet cane” mentioned in a later age, was the sugar-cane; but the *sweetness* of that was its *fragrance*,—“the fragrant reed”—*Calamus aromaticus*.

We are, however, at no loss respecting the commodities which the Hebrew king obtained from Egypt. They were horses, chariots, and linen yarn. There were probably many other articles; but these are named as the chief. The Egyptian breed of horses is shown by the paintings to have been exceedingly fine,—like a more powerful Arab,—from which it was doubtless derived. Its somewhat heavier build well qualified it for chariots, in which it was chiefly employed. It was therefore, as we gather, much in demand among the Syrian princes, who affected this kind of force; and, as it was impossible for them to be brought from Egypt without passing through Solomon’s territories, he availed himself of this circumstance to monopolize the trade, purchasing the Egyptian horses by his agents, and selling them at a profit to the northern princes. The compact, light, and yet solid fabric of the Egyptian chariots, is seen also from the paintings. When we recollect that the use of springs was unknown, it is easily apprehended that the construction of these vehicles was a peculiarly difficult art. It is an interesting fact, that the price which Solomon gave for a horse and for a chariot is particularly stated, by which we find that the cost of a chariot was four times that of a horse. A horse cost 150 shekels, which, according to the lower or higher value assigned to the shekel (2*s.* 3½*d.* or 2*s.* 6*d.*), would be from 17*l.* 2*s.* to 18*l.* 15*s.*, while that of a chariot was 600 shekels, being from 68*l.* 9*s.* to 75*l.* It is to be remembered, however, that an Egyptian chariot usually had two horses, so that a chariot with a pair of horses would together cost about 112*l.* of our money, at first hand. But we have no means of determining whether, with reference to the cost of commodities, this was of less or more value at the time than

the same amount now; perhaps more, but probably not much more, considering the great quantities of the precious metals that seem to have been about this time in use.

It is said that in this way Solomon provided out of Egypt horses and chariots "for all the kings of the Hittites, and for the kings of Syria." Who were the kings of the Hittites? One would have supposed that these, being among the doomed nations in Palestine, had been rooted out or destroyed long ago. Indeed, the Hittites are expressly named in 1 Kings ix. 20, among the remnants of the Canaanitish nations whom Solomon held in bondage. Instead, therefore, of finding this people as still subsisting in a state of separate regal independence among the Israelites, as some have thought, it is more reasonable to conclude, that the present Hittites were a branch of the same family, or even the descendants of those expelled from Palestine, settled among the Syrian nation beyond Lebanon, and perhaps not only there, but on the south-eastern frontier towards Arabia. There does not want some indication of such separate domain of the Hittites. In Judges i. 26, we read of a man of Bethel, formerly called Luz, who retired into "the country of the Hittites," and there built a town, which he called Luz, after his native place. Further, we read that Solomon had several Hittite women among his wives; and so late as the reign of Jehoram, we read of kings of the Hittites, named with the king of Egypt as having probably been "hired" against the Syrians by the king of Israel. 2 Kings vii. 6. The connection, and the apprehension of this which the king of Syria entertained, indicates that some branch of the Hittite family was then in a condition of power and independence. We may suppose that it was to these that the Egyptian representations, supposed to be Hittites, belong; though their origin and appearance were doubtless the same as those of the old Hittites of southern Palestine. We have them represented both in civil and warlike attire. The complexion given to them by the Egyptian artists is, though dark, rather florid than sallow, with black hair, regular features, with a

very prominent and somewhat hooked nose. The civil dress is a plain bright colored tunic, with a deep edging of lace or embroidery, gathered into a knot on the left shoulder, so as to leave the right arm at freedom. Under this was worn a kind of kilt or skirt, of similar color and pattern, but reaching only to the knees. They shaved not only the beard and mustachios, but even the eyebrows, as did many other of the nations of Canaan; besides which the Hittites had an almost peculiar custom of their own, of shaving a square place just above the ear, leaving the hair on the side of the face and whiskers hanging down in a long plaited lock. This frightful custom, and other eccentric dealings of the nations with their hair, throw some light upon the injunctions to avoid customs, which we find in the books of the law. If we want to know what is meant by "marring the corners of the beard," we have only to look at such pictures to be perfectly satisfied.*

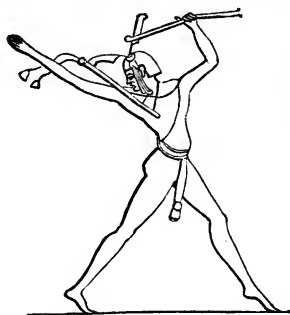


We do not often touch on matters of costume. But there is a natural curiosity to know what sort of dress was worn among the nations so often mentioned in Scripture. The intimations on this subject which may be collected from Egyptian paintings and sculptures, are of singular interest, as being the only possible source of information on the subject. There is also a common character among these different attires, which leaves a general idea of the prevalent style and manner of dress, in the times and lands of the Bible, of which that of the Israelites themselves probably partook, though it might differ in details.

It remains to notice the war dress of the Hittites. It consisted of a helmet skull-cap, extending down the neck, cut away high and square above the ear, so as to expose the

* See Lev. xix. 27; and compare Jer. ix. 26; xxv. 21-23. See also *Daily Bible Illustrations*, Thirty Third Week—Monday.

bald place, which they seem to have regarded as peculiarly charming. It was fastened by a strong band or check-string, probably like the helmet of metal. The badges of distinction were one or two ostrich feathers, worn drooping. They wore a kind of cape or short mantle, tied close in front, either by the two ends of the cloth, or by a cord with tassels at the end. Over this was the girdle, which was broad



and thick, and hung down in front with a long end, terminating in a ball and tassel. It was long enough to pass round the neck, across the breast, and thus formed a species of defensive armor, illustrative of the military use of the girdle, so often mentioned in Scripture. The only weapon assigned to the Hittites by the

Egyptian artists is the arrow. This agrees with the intimation in our text,—the arrow being pre-eminently a weapon for chariot warfare.

Chariots and horses were not, however, brought from Egypt entirely as objects of merchandise. Solomon's tastes were too magnificent to allow him to be a mere instrument of the luxury or power of others, without retaining some portion thereof in his own hands. He established a new species of military force, strongly discouraged by the law of Moses, and from which all previous rulers of this people had abstained—that of chariots and horses. Of the former he had 1400, and of the latter 12,000. Apart even from the prohibition, this was an extreme and perilous extravagance for such a country as that over which this king reigned. The country was mountainous, and unsuited for cavalry. It was also a time of peace; and all the great victories of his father and other conquerors had been won in reliance upon the strength of the Lord's arm, without any such force, and over those who possessed it. David could triumphantly say,

"Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will trust in the Lord our God." However proper, such a number of horses and chariots was wholly disproportioned to so small a country; and it is likely that no act of royal extravagance was so unpopular among the people, under whose eyes it was continually present. This kind of expenditure, in the keeping of animals not for manifest use, is always more offensive to a people, and especially to an agricultural people, than any other form of expenditure, because it is a living expense. The people soon fall to reckoning that each horse consumes the food of so many persons, the produce of so much land; and when, to support such extravagance, they are oppressed with special burdens, the grievance becomes intolerable. We do not call to mind any deep popular complaint against the extravagance of a sovereign, which had not its origin in some such form of living expenditure,—that is, in the really or apparently unprofitable maintenance of persons or animals—horses, servants, functionaries, soldiers, women. Indeed, a popular complaint against even a war will, when examined, generally resolve itself into a discontent at the cost of maintaining the army—of so many consumers of food not employed in reproductive labor.

FORTY-SECOND WEEK—FRIDAY.

THE QUEEN OF SHEBA.—I KINGS X. 1-9.

THE time was when men travelled far in search of wisdom. They made long journeys and voyages,—they traversed seas, and deserts, and mountains, to visit the seats of learning, or the towns in which men famous for their knowledge abode. All ancient history, and comparatively modern Oriental history, is full of this. It may be traced even in what are called the dark ages. But this seems now to be numbered among the things that have passed away. Yet it is not

wholly so. The intercommunication of even distant nations is now so frequent and abundant, and the motives for it are so mixed, that the career of a seeker after knowledge does not stand out with that prominence which it did in old time. The differences of religion, also, have contributed to the actual diminution of such examples. The ancient polytheists found little obstacle in seeking from each other such wisdom as they were respectively reputed to possess; for, although they knew their systems to be different, they did not regard those of each other as necessarily untrue or abominable. But in our times, the Christian seeks not wisdom from Moslems or idolaters,—nor do they seek it from him, or from each other. Even within the range of the same religious persuasion, there are few nations which allow the existence anywhere of higher degrees of wisdom than may be found within its own bosom. But, more than all, the press, by rendering the best results of the wisdom and learning of all nations available *at home*, to all who understand the languages in which it is imparted—and without this travel itself would be useless—has necessarily withdrawn the principal motive for travel in search of knowledge. Yet, where adequate motive does exist, instances of this ancient practice may still be found. It is our privilege to know one, and there are others, who have travelled far and often to see for themselves, and note the differences and agreements of those ancient copies of God's word which time has spared to us, and which lie dispersed among the nations, shut up in libraries, churches, and monasteries.

Without pressing this parallel—though it seems to us the most significant and interesting which modern times can furnish, while the high object places it far above all ancient instances of wisdom-seeking travel—we have to remark, that this was eminently the form which any ancient zeal for knowledge took, and that the earliest instances of it occur in the Scriptures.

They belong to the time we have now reached; for we are told that “there came of all people to hear the wisdom of

Solomon, from all kings of the earth which had heard of his wisdom." In ordinary circumstances, the wisdom of a Jewish king would have been but little heard of beyond the immediately neighboring nations; but the extended conquests of David—the large dominions of his son—the great and magnificent works and undertakings of that son—his extensive commerce by sea and land—his connection with the Phœnicians, who, of all people, were from their position qualified to spread such intelligence far and wide—and even Solomon's too numerous matrimonial connections with foreign princesses,—all contributed to spread his reputation abroad. In some cases, foreign princes repaired themselves to Jerusalem, to view his glorious and curious works of art, and to hear his sage utterances; others sent ambassadors, to felicitate him, and to bring back all they could gather of his wisdom. This concourse of foreign princes and nobles from all parts, with their magnificent retinues, and curious and costly offerings, must have given singular liveliness and splendor to Jerusalem during the reign of Solomon. It must have supplied continual matter of admiration and entertainment to the citizens, who could not but feel great contentment, and some human exaltation, in the glory thus reflected upon them, from the greatness and wisdom of their sovereign.

The only one of such visits from these illustrious pilgrims of knowledge which has been particularly recorded, is that of a woman, the queen of Sheba, who "heard of the fame of Solomon, concerning the name of the Lord, and came to Jerusalem with a very great train, with camels that bare spices, and very much gold, and precious stones." And whence came she? Probability unites with ecclesiastical history, and with the Jewish traditions and Mohammedan accounts, in describing her as queen of the Sabæan kingdom of Yemen, and Mariaba or Saba, as the seat of its government. This point is so well established by Bochart and others, that it may be received as an ascertained fact. It is besides verified by the terms employed by our Saviour in alluding to this pilgrimage. He calls her the "Queen of the South," or *Yemen*, which is

in Hebrew, as in Arabic, the proper word for *South* ; and he speaks of her as having come “from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon,” which exactly corresponds to the Joktanite kingdom of Sheba, Saba, or Sabæ, which is terminated only by the Indian Ocean, whose waters, blending with those of the Atlantic, divide Asia from Africa. It may be added, that all the precious commodities which the queen brought to Jerusalem, were such as the region thus assigned to her was in old time famous for producing. The Abyssinians, indeed, claim this illustrious queen for their sovereign, and trace to her their ancient kings,—which may suggest, what is on other grounds probable, that the country on both shores of the southern part of the Red Sea was at this time under one government.

It was what this queen heard of Solomon in her own land, which had induced her to undertake this long and costly journey. In all probability, nay, in moral certainty, the Ophir fleet had, in its way, put into her ports, perhaps in both the outward and homeward voyage, which gave her the opportunity of acquiring this information of the great king to whom it belonged ; and the successful result of the expedition, must have confirmed the accounts she received of the wisdom of the prince by whom it had been planned.

At Jerusalem the queen was received with courtesy and attention by Solomon, who freely gave her all the required evidence of the wisdom which had been given to him. It is said she tried it with “hard questions,” generally supposed by Jewish writers to have been of the nature of enigmas or riddles ; and this is very likely, as the genius of the Orientals inclines them to test wisdom or cleverness by the solution of difficult matters. We have seen this in Samson’s riddles, and more lately in Solomon’s judgment. The reader may be entertained, if not interested, in seeing what kind of problems are conceived by the Orientals to have been submitted to the sagacity of Solomon. The Mohammedan legends on this subject are derived from those of the Jewish rabbis ; and at least afford some idea of the notions entertained in the region

from which the queen of Sheba came, of the kind of questions best suited to test the wisdom of Solomon.

No name is given to the queen in Scripture. The Arabians call her Balkis. According to their accounts, the princess sent ambassadors with a letter to Solomon before she went herself. With them she sent five hundred youths dressed like maidens, and the same number of maidens like young men, with instructions that they were to behave accordingly in the presence of Solomon. She had also a thousand carpets prepared, wrought with gold and silver, a crown composed of the finest pearls and hyacinths, and many loads of musk, amber, and aloes, and other precious products of South Arabia. To these she added a closed casket, containing an unperforated pearl, a diamond intricately pierced, and a goblet of crystal. The letter thus referred to these things : "As a true prophet, thou wilt no doubt be able to distinguish the youths from the maidens ; to divide the contents of the enclosed casket ; to perforate the pearl ; to thread the diamond ; and to fill the goblet with water that hath not dropped from the clouds, nor gushed forth from the earth."

When they reached Jerusalem, Solomon told them the contents of the letter before they presented it, and made light of their mighty problems. He caused the slaves to wash themselves, and from the manner in which they applied the water, detected their sex. He directed a young and fiery horse to be ridden through the camp at the top of its speed, and on its return caused its copious perspiration to be collected in the goblet. The pearl he perforated by a stone occultly known to him. The threading of the diamond puzzled him for a moment, but at length he inserted a small worm, which wound its way through, leaving a silken thread behind it. Having done this, he dismissed the ambassadors, without accepting their presents.

This, and the reports her emissaries brought, determined the queen to visit Jerusalem in person. When she came, Solomon, who had heard a piece of scandal about her--no

less than that she had cloven feet—first of all demonstrated his sagacity by the mode in which he tested this report. He caused her to be conducted over a crystal floor, below which was real water, with a quantity of fish swimming about. Balkis, who had never before seen a crystal floor, supposed there was water to be passed through, and therefore slightly lifted her robe, enabling the king to satisfy himself that she had a very neat foot, not at all cloven.

We should be glad to know how this idea of a crystal floor before the king's throne originated. In the Revelation (iv. 6), "a sea of glass, like unto crystal," is placed before the throne of God; and as the images of that glorious vision are necessarily combined from known objects, it may be that the tradition of a crystal floor before the throne of Solomon already existed, or that something of the kind was somewhere known to exist, or to have existed, as a piece of regal magnificence. If we could suppose this circumstance had any foundation in fact, it might form a curious addition to the considerations we have lately had occasion to offer, respecting the origin of glass.

According to the Scripture narrative, the queen of Sheba found evidence of the wisdom of Solomon, not only in his words, but in his works. His magnificent palace, "the house of the forest of Lebanon;" the manner in which meat was provided for, and served at his table; the ordering of his courts and audiences, with his ministers and high officers standing according to their rank, in their gorgeous apparel; his cup-bearers, with their precious goblets; and above all, the viaduct whereby he crossed the valley which separated his palace from the temple of the Lord; all these things were objects of special admiration to this foreign princess, and drew from her the striking declaration:—"It was a true report that I heard in my own country of thy acts and thy wisdom. Howbeit, I believed not the words until I came, and mine eyes have seen it; and, behold the half was not told me. Thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard." There is a general belief among

the Jewish writers, that the queen was turned from her dumb idols to worship the living God, under the instructions of Solomon. There is nothing unlikely in this. Indeed, the words which connect "the name of the Lord," with the wisdom of Solomon, give much sanction to the opinion that the search for religious truth, the true "wisdom," was the main object of her journey,—as are the words which closed her address to Solomon:—"Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, which stand by and hear thy wisdom. Blessed be Jehovah thy God, which delighteth in thee to set thee on the throne of Israel; because Jehovah loved Israel forever, therefore hath He made thee king, to do judgment and justice."

FORTY-SECOND WEEK—SATURDAY.

THE KING'S CRIME.—I KINGS XI. 1-7.

WE must not suffer our eyes to be so dazzled by the magnificence of Solomon's commercial operations, as to preclude ourselves from discerning the unsoundness of their principles, and the hollowness of the prosperity which they appeared to create. Although it may be, that no cause so directly contributes to the material prosperity of a nation as commerce—to ensure that result, the commerce must be national, not regal. It must be the effect of the natural development of the nation's resources, or of the direction given to its tastes and habits. It must be in the hands of the people, open to all who can command the needful capital, or possess the required commodities—and so diffusing by numerous channels throughout the land its enlivening influence. Without this, commerce can have no really beneficial existence, and although it may gild the head of the state, it can impart no quickening life to its frame.

Solomon, with all his wisdom, did not discern this. Though a wise man, he was an Oriental prince; and his sagacity

failed to carry his views in this matter beyond the influences and circumstances belonging to his position. To seek *first* the prosperity of the people subject to his rule, and to wait for his own harvest of profit and renown, through and from their prosperity, was a reach of thought and patriotism to which even Solomon could not attain. An Oriental prince generally seeks *first*, as he did, his own glory and advantage, and the welfare of the people may or may not result from it. If it does, and it seldom does, and never does to the extent in which it might do so under right principles—if it does, so much the better—it is a fortunate accident, forming no part of the design, which is nothing more nor less than to fill the royal coffers, and to supply the means of regal outlay. Nothing is clearer than that the commerce of Israel in all its lines, was, in the great reign of Solomon, a monopoly of the crown. In the maritime traffic this was absolute; and although it may be, that all the land trade was not in the hands of the king and his servants, and that dealers and chapmen were within certain limits tolerated, and allowed to send their camels in the royal caravans, it will appear that permission to do this could only be obtained at a cost, by the payment of dues, which went far to secure all the profits of individual enterprise. Besides, it has always been the rule in such cases, that all goods, *except those imported by the crown*, are subject to heavy duties on entering the country; and this is a dead loss to the merchants, for they cannot find purchasers unless their goods come into the market at the same price as those which are not subject to any such charges and imposts.

One advantage may accrue to the people through such monopoly of trade in the hands of the crown; and this is, where the wants of the court are thus so far supplied as to render the ordinary source of revenue, the taxation of the people, more light than it would otherwise be. The Israelites did not reap this benefit from their wise king's undertakings. Either his traffic was such that, notwithstanding its magnificence, or, perhaps, by reason of its magnificence, the

expenses nearly or quite devoured the profits; or else the costliness of his buildings and improvements, and the splendor of his court, were so wholly beyond proportion to his means and position—were so much more suited to the sovereign of a vast empire than to the ruler of a state small at the largest—as to render all his traffic and tributes from without unequal to his wants. Certain it is that the Israelites were never so heavily and exactly taxed as during the latter part of his reign. The amount of this taxation might not, if stated, seem heavy to *us*; but almost any amount of taxation must at this time have appeared onerous to the Hebrews, who, during the reign of David, had seen the tributes of conquered kings far more than adequate to the moderate expenses of the government, and who, during the early part of Solomon's own reign, had beheld the expenditure of the state sustained from the treasures left by David, which were in the end exhausted, and from sources of outer revenue, which fell off as the king advanced in years. Solomon had to learn that taxation, really or relatively heavy, unless for great public objects which touch the national heart, is incompatible with popularity. And this he did learn, from the deep discontent which his exactions occasioned throughout the land, and which was with difficulty, and only through the Lord's special purpose, restrained during his lifetime, from that violent outbreak which, in the next reign, rent the kingdom in twain.

The discerning eye may detect other errors in the conduct of this wise man. Some of them are oriental miscalculations—mispolicies—for which, in regard to the notions of his time and country, we may hold him excused. But others were of a different nature—scarlet sins, for which as a man, as a king in Israel, as one who knew the Lord, and was his covenanted servant, no excuse is to be found.

He had a numerous harem—700 wives and 300 concubines, or wives of a lower order; a thousand in all. This was an enormity. In the simplest view, the sexes being nearly equal, it deprived a thousand men of wives, that one

man might have 999 more than he required. Still, this was not strictly unlawful. Polygamy was not absolutely forbidden, although, with a view to the very danger into which Solomon fell, kings were forbidden to *multiply* wives unto themselves. From convenience, and from regard to economy, few men had more than one wife; and when that is the only consideration that keeps a man from a form of indulgence which he holds to be lawful—whether in wives, in horses, in chariots, in servants, or in palaces—his wealth and importance become proportioned to the number he possesses. It is a piece of state; his greatness is estimated by it. Hence, at the present day in the East, the extent of a man's harem rises with his rank; and usually the king (unless he be a man of ostensibly ascetic profession, as is sometimes the case) considers it a sort of duty, a piece of necessary state, to have most of all—more than any of his subjects can afford to maintain. It is, therefore, often not so much with regard to sensual indulgence, as with reference to the consequence which the possession of a large harem imparts, that some eastern kings are found to have establishments as great as that of Solomon. The king who reigned in Persia in the early part of this century, was reputed to possess wives and concubines scarcely less numerous than those of the Hebrew monarch. In fact, the analogy incidentally stated just now is substantially correct. The same consideration of state which leads a western prince or noble to multiply horses, leads an eastern prince to multiply wives—with often as little of personal consideration in the one case as in the other. We can conceive the possibility of an eastern king conceiving himself bound to maintain a hundred wives, who, so far as his own wishes are concerned, thinks he might be happier with one. This view of the case is one excuse that may be urged for Solomon—but how far it may have been really in his case available, it is impossible to tell. It is right, however, to put the best construction upon his motives that circumstances will allow; and certainly his manifest and even inordinate taste for regal state and magnificence, may be

some encouragement to us in placing his harem on the same footing as his other great and stately establishments.

There is yet another excuse suggested by the fact, that the "wives"—that is, we suppose, the majority of them, were women of high rank—"princesses"—which may suggest that many of them were taken, as is still the usage in Persia, as virtual hostages for the good behavior of their fathers—the lords or chieftains of the numerous small tribes and states subject to his sway, and which were for the most part ruled internally by their native chiefs under conditions of tribute.

But although the mere fact of possessing so many wives may thus variously be accounted for or extenuated in an eastern king, nothing whatever can be urged in excuse of the woful fact, that "in his old age" he suffered his wives "to turn away his heart." Turned it away from what? From God, and from the simplicity of his faith and worship. His strong mind, like the strong body of Samson, lay besotted and enthralled in the lap of the "fair idolatresses" with whom he had filled his house from the nations around, and from whose blandishments he rose another man, shorn of his glory, shorn of his strength. He tolerated their corruptions and worships; this soon grew into active patronage and participation. Presently, upon the high hills overlooking the temple of the Lord at Jerusalem, arose the shrines, the altars, and the images of Chemosh, of Molech, of the Ashtaroth, and the other gods of his wives; and the heart of every holy man fainted within him, to behold the son of David, himself so highly favored of God, sanctioning, by his presence and active co-operation, the degrading worship of the grim, the bloody, and abominable idols of Moab, of Ammon, and of Zidon, in the very presence of that "holy and beautiful house," which in his younger days he had reared to the glory of the Lord.

Forty-Third Week—Sunday.

THE WISE FOOL.

WE have seen many strange sights in our time—many horrible sights ; but none so strange, none so horrible, as that of a wise man making himself a fool. Solomon did that ; and he was a wise man, even the wisest of men. If the deep sagacity of Solomon—if his keen discernment—if his strong reason—if his profound knowledge of human life and character—if even his intimate acquaintance with the law and counsels of the Lord—did not preserve his name from that stamp of “foolishness” which we find impressed upon so many of the great names and great acts of men, who is there that can hope to stand ? Not one, as of himself ; but there is without us and above us a power that can exalt even the lowly to high things, and can sustain them in all true wisdom, so long as they rest upon it, and think not that the light which shines upon their path and glorifies their way, shines out of themselves, and not into them. Solomon was wise : Solomon was foolish. Astonishing contradiction and contrast of terms ! Yet it does not astonish. It may astonish angels, but not us. We are used to this kind of experience. We see it—the same in kind, if not in degree—every day ; and that which would amaze us from any other point of view than that from which we look, becomes familiar to our thoughts. Look around. We see men who are foolish without being wise ; but we see not one who is wise without being also foolish. It is “foolishness,” and not wisdom, that “is bound up in the heart of a child.” Foolishness, which every man certainly has, is his nature ; wisdom, if he has it, is a gift bestowed upon him—bestowed as freely upon him as it was upon Solomon. The wisdom does not suppress or drive out the foolishness, but is a weapon—it may be a staff, it may be a glittering sword—given into his hands to fight against it.

to keep it under ; a weapon to be used with daily and ever-watchful vigilance, and not to rest idly in the scabbard. This was king Solomon's fault. Having been victor in many a deadly fray, until victory became easy and habitual, he forgot that the enemy of his greatness and peace still lived—was not mortally wounded—did not even sleep. He suffered his weapon to rest until its keen edge was corroded—until it clung in rust to the scabbard, and could not be drawn forth.

If there be on earth one sight more sorrowful than that of wisdom become foolishness—or, rather, suffering foolishness to be victorious,—it is that of the fall of an old man whose youth had been promising, and whose manhood glorious and beautiful. Yet this also was the case of Solomon, and the thought of it is enough to draw forth most bitter tears. The fall of an old tree, or of some noble old ruin, is beheld with some regret, but it occasions no rending of heart. It was their doom. Age ripened them but for their fall ; and we wondered more that they stood so long, than that they fell so soon. But man is expected to ripen in moral and religious strength—to harden into rock-like fixedness as his age increases. He whom we have looked up to so long,—he whose words were wise as oracles, and from whose lips we had so long gathered wisdom,—he who had borne noble testimonies for the truth,—he who had labored for the glory of God, who had withstood many storms of human passion and many temptations of human glory, and in whose capacious mind are garnered up the fruits of a life's knowledge and experience,—for such a man to fall from his high place fills the most firm of heart with dread, and makes the moral universe tremble. It is altogether terrible. It is a calamity to mankind : it is more than that ;—it is a shame, a wrong, and a dishonor. The righteous hide their heads, and the perverse exult ;—hell laughs.

There is something more : the grace of God is blasphemed. To see a man set forth as one specially gifted of God—as endowed with a surpassing measure of wisdom from above, to fit him to become a king and leader of men,—

for HIM to fall, is, with the unthinking, an awful scandal upon the gifts of God. If he who ascribes heaven-given powers to the influence of demons commits, as most suppose, the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost, of what sin, think you, is he guilty, who *gives occasion* to that blasphemy by his misconduct and his fall?

Yet amid this dreadful scene of wreck and ruin something profitable to our own souls may be gathered up.

Let it teach us not to rely too implicitly upon any past attainments or present convictions. Let us never think that the time of danger to our souls is past, or that the great troubler of spirits is wholly discomfited, and despairs of all advantage over us. There is no time wherein we can be safe, while we carry this body of sin about us. "Youth is impetuous, mid-age stubborn, old age weak,—ALL DANGEROUS." In the conviction of this ever-present peril, and of the sleepless vigilance of the enemy, may we be led to look out of ourselves altogether for strength and sustainment. When we are the strongest, it is best to be weak in ourselves; and when at our weakest, strong in him in whom we can do all things. "If God uphold us not, we cannot stand; if God uphold us, we cannot fall." Then, why did he not uphold Solomon, that he might not fall? There can be but one answer,—Solomon did not want to be upheld. He thought he could stand alone—he relied upon his own strength—he trusted in his own heart; and we have Scripture and experience to tell us, that "he who trusteth in his own heart is a fool." He, in the pride of his intellectual wealth, was like the rich man in the parable with his material goods,—*"I am rich, and increased in goods, AND HAVE NEED OF NOTHING."* It was at that moment, when he had realized the conviction that he had need of nothing, that the word went forth against him—"Thou fool!" So also, assuredly, was it then—when Solomon thought himself perfect in wisdom, and that he had need of nothing—that the word went forth—"Thou fool!" and he became foolish indeed.

"So fallen ! so lost ! the light withdrawn
 Which once he wore !
 The glory from his gray hairs gone
 For evermore !
 Of all we loved and honored, naught
 Save power remains ;
 A fallen angel's pride of thought,
 Still strong in chains.
 All else is gone ; from those great eyes
 The soul has fled :
 When faith is lost, and honor dies,
 The man is dead.
 Then pay the reverence of old days
 To his dead fame ;
 Walk backward with averted gaze,
 And hide the shame."—WHITTIER.

Did Solomon repent ? Scripture says nothing positively but it may be hoped that he did. If the book of Ecclesiastes be correctly ascribed to Solomon—and we are of those who think that it is—it is most natural to suppose that it exhibits his maturest convictions and experiences ; and although there are no such direct expressions of repentance as we find in the Psalms of David—no such lamenting cries for sin, it may be considered that the framework of the book did not well admit them. But there is much in the warnings against the vanity and vexation of spirit by which the wicked and profligate are deceived and tormented, to remind us of the sad and sorrowful experience which the history ascribes to the latter days of Solomon.

FORTY-THIRD WEEK—MONDAY.

OUTER TROUBLERS.—I KINGS XI. 21–25.

THE sin of one so gifted and favored as Solomon, required such punishment as should remain to all generations a monument of the Lord's displeasure. He was that servant who,

knowing his Lord's will and doing it not, required to be beaten with many stripes: and if judgment be required according to what a man hath, an awful severity of judgment was needed here; for to whom had more of light and knowledge been given than to Solomon? Yet, in judgment the Lord remembered mercy. Solomon had sinned; but David could not be forgotten; and to him a sure house had been promised. But for that, doubtless, the house of David had been, like that of Saul, utterly cast down. But this extremity of judgment, this utter degree of forfeiture, was not exacted. Still the house should reign—but reign only over one part of a divided realm; and even this mitigated doom was, with paternal tenderness in punishment, spared the aged king in person. It was announced to him, but was not to be executed while he lived; yet his last years were not suffered to pass without heavy troubles, which must have brought down his kingly pride very low.

Enemies one after another appeared, who had in his early years been kept down by the memory of David's victories, and by the show of substantial strength which the government of his son presented. At length, however, they ventured to try its texture, and finding it more vulnerable than even they had suspected,—that there was nothing very terrible to resolute men in its showy greatness; and having found that the king had really no power to make any effectual opposition to their assaults, far less to put them down, they became emboldened to further measures, until some established their independence, while others offered the passive resistance of withholding their tributes,—so that his power became shorn at the borders, and eventually shaken at home, where the discontinuance of many outer supplies of revenue, and probably the interruption of his various lines of trade—no longer in his undisputed possession—urged him, not to economy and retrenchment, but to make good the deficiency by the taxation of his subjects.

The principal foreign disturbers of Solomon's repose were Hadad, prince of Edom, and Rezon, king of Damascene

Syria. Of Hadad, and his escape in childhood into Egypt, when his country was ravaged by Joab, we have already had occasion to speak.* When he reached to riper years, the keen remembrance of his native land, his lost kingdom, and the slaughter of all his house, gathered strength within him; and all the ease and princely honor which he enjoyed in Egypt, availed not against the claims of ambition, vengeance and patriotism. He dreamed of recovering the throne of his fathers; he dreamed of wresting the hard yoke of Jacob from Esau's neck; he dreamed of exacting stern vengeance for the blood of his kin and country; he dreamed of making to himself a name, like unto the names of the great ones that were upon the earth. These things he dreamed, and

“Dreams grow realities to earnest men.”

And he was earnest. It was not without difficulty that he obtained leave of the Egyptian king, by whom he had been so generously entertained, to take his departure. It does not appear that he ventured fully to disclose his real objects—for which a reason may be found in the fact that this king was in amicable relations with Solomon, and the same, apparently, whose daughter had been espoused to the Hebrew king.

Proceeding to Edom, the attempts which Hadad made to recover his kingdom seem to have given considerable trouble to the Hebrew government; but the strong garrisons which David had left in the land, and which Solomon maintained there, prevented them from being successful. Seeing that his case was for the time hopeless in that quarter, Hadad, instead of returning to Egypt, determined to push his fortunes in another direction. He therefore went and joined himself to Rezon, who had already given a considerable disturbance to Solomon's power in Syria.

This Rezon had some command under that great Hada-dezer, king of Zobah, whose overthrow formed one of the most renowned military acts of David's reign.† It seems that,

* See Thirty-Seventh Week—Saturday.

† See Thirty-Seventh Week—Friday.

on the defeat of the Syrian host, Rezon succeeded in drawing off the force under his command, and directed the power thus acquired to the advancement of his own ambitious views. At first the wilderness afforded shelter to his troop, which there subsisted for a time by that wild life of predatory warfare, of which, in the like cases, there are many examples in Scripture—and which seems, indeed, to have been the usual resource of fugitive military chiefs in that age and region,—on the borders of the Syrian and Arabian deserts. Gradually, however, he acquired a sort of fixed power over a portion of Syria nearest to the desert, and eventually established a kingdom, of which Damascus became the capital. All this could not have been effected without much loss and disadvantage to the Hebrew king—especially by interrupting his communication with Tadmor and the Euphrates, and by harassing, if not destroying, the important trade established on that line of route.

It was to this prince that Hadad carried his sword, when he found that he could not employ it with any advantage in Edom. Hadad seems to have been a very engaging or very plausible person, for he is well received and wins high favor wherever he goes. Rezon gave him and his followers a most encouraging reception, and afforded them assistance in establishing themselves in another and neighboring portion of Syria, where Hadad seems to have had ample opportunities of disturbing the peace of Solomon. Nor is this all: for when Rezon died, Hadad added his dominions to his own; and thus became the virtual founder of that important kingdom of Damascene-Syria, which we afterwards find in powerful and often successful warfare with the Israelites. Hadad was, on account of his success and his royal qualities, so much honored by his successors, that Ben-Hadad, “son of Hadad,” became a common name among them, if, indeed, it was not made an official title, like that of Pharaoh in Egypt.

The reader must not expect to find all this in Scripture. The intimations respecting Hadad and Rezon, and, in particular, respecting the connection between them, are brief

and—seeing that they refer to historical circumstances of no common interest—tantalizing. That which we have given is the most consistent and intelligible account we are able to collect from the intimations in Scripture and in Josephus. These intimations, so far as Hadad is concerned, afford glimpses of what would probably be a most instructive and interesting story, were all its particulars fully understood.

FORTY-THIRD WEEK—TUESDAY

THE RENT MANTLE.—I KINGS XI. 26–40.

WAS there no priest—no prophet—to warn the besotted king of the evil of his ways, and of the danger that hung over him? Gad the seer was, no doubt, long since dead, and Nathan the prophet could not well be alive; but there could not have been wanting faithful and true men in Israel whose hearts trembled for him, and the echoes of whose discontent and apprehension must have reached him, even in the curtained recesses of his harem. But we read not of any commissioned and authoritative warning to him, previous to that which denounced his doom and the forfeiture of the largest and fairest portion of his realm. Perhaps there was no such anterior warning. When God has given to a man sufficient inner light to guide his path, he does not often deem the same measure of warning from without needful, as where light is more dim, and knowledge less perfect.

By what agency this awful message of judgment was conveyed to him we do not know, nor is the manner in which the king received it clearly indicated. It must have been a terrible stroke to the kingly pride which he had by this time contracted. He had, no doubt, rested in the impression that, whatever else might happen to him, the royal domain of the house of David had been secured under the promise made to his father, and the possibility of a divided empire had proba-

bly never crossed his thoughts; although, to us, such an event has been foreshadowed by significant antecedents in the latter part of David's reign. But now he finds himself doomed, like another Saul, to have ten twelfths of his domain rent from his house, and "given to his servant." Little as he was prepared for this stroke, there were probably thousands in Israel who looked for nothing less; and both he and they must have waited with eager anxiety for some indication of the man on whom this high lot should fall.

They waited long. In this case, as in that of David, the appointment came upon one of no high station or influence. It was thus, therefore, the more signal act of the favor of the Divine King. Apart from this, and the possession of certain engaging qualities which captivated the hearts of men, there was no resemblance between David and Jeroboam: that was his name. He was a young man of Ephraim,—the son of a widow. He was a person of great capacity for public business—of high parts; and as he is said to have been "a mighty man of valor," he must have had some opportunities of distinguishing himself. Solomon had marked the talents of this young man, and made him overseer of the persons of his own tribe who were engaged on the public works. And here we note another grievance of the Israelites. It had been the boast of the early part of Solomon's reign that no Israelites—only foreigners—were employed in compulsory labor. That this had now ceased, and that Solomon had, like other oriental despots, assumed the absolute right to such services from his subjects as he might need for them, is clear from this fact. That they were classed according to their tribes, with officers of the same tribes, evinces the nature of this service. Except where distinctly marked castes exist, voluntary service is never subject to such classification.

While thus employed in government service, Jeroboam was flaunting about one day in a fine new mantle, when he encountered a rough and venerable man, who, to his great consternation, rent the mantle from his shoulders, and tore it into pieces. He knew, however, that this was the prophet

Abijah,—the same, perhaps, who had conveyed the Lord's judgment to Solomon; and instead, therefore, of resisting this rough treatment of his cloak, he stood still to hear what it might mean. The pieces were twelve into which the prophet divided the robe. Two of them he reserved; but the other ten he presented to Jeroboam, with the words—"Take these ten pieces: for thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, Behold, I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee."

It is uncertain whether or not it was intended that this fact should transpire. From the privacy sought by the prophet, it may be conceived that it was designed to be secret for the time. Jeroboam was, however, too much exalted by his good fortune to keep it to himself. Hitherto, the chief restraint upon the people had lain in the notion that the Lord had guaranteed the throne over all Israel to the house of David, and the most turbulent spirits had been kept under restraint by the fear of resisting the purposes of God. The intimation of this nomination, under Divine authority, fell like a spark upon fuel. The important principle involved—freedom from a restriction which had become intolerable—at once raised the agent, in whose person it had been set forth, to the height of popularity among the tribes under the influence of the house of Joseph; and although he had been warned that no change was to take place until after the death of Solomon, he found himself driven, by the force of circumstances, if not by the promptings of his own ambition, into some immediate demonstrations. The movement was not attended with the result he expected; and, finding that he had become a marked man to Solomon, he deemed it prudent to evade the storm he had raised by retiring into Egypt, and there awaiting the progress of events. Egypt seems to have become, in this age, the common resort of political refugees. For the attention which Hadad received there we can account, by recollecting that he was a child and a prince; but the consideration with which Jeroboam was treated—seeing that the king of Egypt would not, if he could

understand it, recognize the authority of the nomination he had received, and that in his eyes the young man was merely a rebel against his master—will not be very easily understood, without recollecting that the throne of Egypt was now occupied by a king of a family different from that with which Solomon had contracted affinity in his youth, and that the signs of declining power, which the Hebrew government already evinced, had probably already directed the attention of the king to the far-renowned treasures of the temple and palace, as his future spoil. It thus became his policy to weaken the power of resistance, and promote whatever might tend to lame the greatness of a power, which had of late become more formidable than a king of Egypt could regard with perfect satisfaction.

So Jeroboam remained in Egypt till the death of Solomon. During his stay he noted, with a curious eye, the institutions and strange worship of the country, which had been the scene of ancient bondage to his people. It is to be feared that there was much that met his view, which could only be abhorrent to a true Israelite, but which inspired him with no disgust—much which he regarded with admiration—some things that he deemed worthy of imitation, and that he treasured up what appeared to him useful hints, which might be applied with advantage when his predicted destinies were fulfilled. But whatever were the immediate safety found in this Egyptian refuge, he lived to rue that his steps had not turned some other way. The visit was ruinous to him, by filling his mind with ideas wholly alien to the Hebrew constitution, and the attempt to work out which, brought ruin upon his house and dishonor upon his name.

FORTY-THIRD WEEK—WEDNESDAY.

REHOBAM.—1 KINGS XI. 43; XII. 1.

ONLY one son of Solomon appears in history, and it is generally supposed that he had no other. On this Hall

quaintly observes :—" Many a poor man hath an housefull of children by one wife, whereas this great king hath only one son by many housefulls of wives." And this one son was, as Ness remarks, " none of the wisest, but a silly child when at the age of forty years." It should seem to be in the course of nature, that sons brought up under the nurture of wise fathers, should be themselves wise. But it is not always seen—perhaps not often seen—that wise fathers have wise sons. How is this? It may be that the wisdom of the son—the formation of his character—depends more on the mother than the father, and that a wise mother is even more essential than a wise father to the formation of a wise son. It is probably for this reason that the sacred historian is careful to record that Rehoboam's mother was an Ammonitess, and being such, was, we may presume, one of those women who seduced Solomon into idolatry; for the gods of the Ammonites are specified among those he worshipped. As the mother of his only son, or at least of his heir, the influence of this lady, whose name was Naamah, must have been paramount in the harem; and in a matter respecting the worship of her gods, no other woman could have had any influence comparable to hers; nor would he have gone into this Ammonitish idolatry in direct opposition to her wishes. At any rate, she could hardly have been a wise mother in the Hebrew point of view, if in any other.

The importance of a wise mother to the bringing up a wise son, is not obscurely expressed more than once by Solomon himself. He had a wise father, and he gratefully acknowledges the advantages he derived from his instructions; but he gives praise to his mother also, whom he mentions with affectionate regard, as one to whose tender counsels he owed not less. " I was," he says, " my father's son, tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother," Prov. iv. 3; and his Book of Proverbs concludes " with the words of king Lemuel, the prophecy which his mother taught him;" and from the specimen of her instruction there given, we can see that she was indeed a wise, a loving, and experienced mother,

however frail and fatal her conduct may at one time have been. Ah, with what emphasis could she pour into the heedful ears of her son the words,—“Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain; but a woman that feareth the Lord, SHE shall be praised.” She herself had that praise, and from her own son, too, when, in mature life, he looked thankfully back upon the large benefit which he owed to her early instructions. No: we may hear of foolish sons having wise fathers, and of foolish fathers having wise sons, but rarely of a wise son having had a foolish mother.”*

That Solomon was conscious of the imbecile character of his son, there can be no doubt. It is impossible to resist the conviction, that he speaks in the Book of Ecclesiastes (ii. 18, 19), on this point, from the bitterness of his own misgivings:—“I hated all my labor which I had taken under the sun; because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me. And who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man or a fool? Yet shall he have rule over all my labor wherein I have labored, and wherein I have showed myself wise under the sun.”

Rehoboam's conduct was so childish and ignorant, and betrayed such utter unacquaintance with the spirit of the age and temper of the people, as to remind us of the Oriental princes called out of the harem to reign, with all their experience, even at a mature age, yet to be acquired. And this was very probably the case. The common reason for this is jealousy on the part of the reigning prince of his heir, whether of his own ambition, or of his becoming so popular as to induce the people to call him to reign before his time. To prevent this, he is kept within the palace, beyond which little concerning him, besides the fact of his existence, is suf-

* “Several young men who were associated in preparing for the Christian ministry felt interested in ascertaining what proportion of their number had pious mothers. They were greatly surprised and delighted in finding that, out of 120 students, more than 100 had been blessed by a mother's prayers, and directed by a mother's counsels to the Saviour.”
—ARVINE'S *Anecdotes*, p. 553. New York.

ferred to transpire. This had not been the policy of David, nor was it *generally* that of the Jewish kings. But Solomon might have been led to shut up his son, by the recollection of how much his own father had suffered by the conspiracy of two of his sons. Or it may be that he did it from the desire of concealing the deficiencies of that son from the knowledge of the people. It is impossible to say whether the imbecility of Rehoboam was the cause or the effect of his being kept in the seraglio; but that he was shut up there, seems altogether probable. It is charitable to him to suppose, that his utter ignorance of public affairs and public principles, arose less from natural incapacity than from the seclusion in which he had lived. In confirmation of this conjecture as to the previous seclusion of Rehoboam, there is a passage in Ecclesiastes (iv. 14), describing a king as coming out of confinement to reign; which at least shows that the mind of the author was familiar with the practice. This, coupled with the fears of his son's foolishness contained in the same book, seems to evince that he did not keep him in seclusion from any interested motive, but merely to prevent any prejudice being conceived against him before the time came for him to reign. We cannot question that in this seclusion, Solomon attempted to impart to his son such knowledge and instruction as his station required. But probably he gave up the attempt at length, for nothing discourages one more than the endeavor to fill a leaky vessel.

When the death of Solomon became known, the chiefs of the tribes assembled at Shechem, an ancient and venerated place of convocation, to which on that account, as well as from its central position, Rehoboam could not object, although he would doubtless have preferred that the assembly should have been held at Jerusalem, rather than in the chief town of a tribe so disaffected as that of Ephraim, and so notoriously adverse to the predominance which the tribe of Judah possessed through the rule of David's house. It will be remembered, that both Saul and David had received the crown under certain covenants with the people, and with

certain limitations, which had been overlooked under the peculiar circumstances of Solomon's accession. To this neglect the people appear to have ascribed the despotic tendencies and oppressive exactions of Solomon's later government; and they felt that their consequent inability to lay to his charge the neglect or contravention of personal covenants, had deprived them of a powerful weapon of constitutional opposition, and had laid them comparatively helpless at the foot of his throne. They resolved that this mistake should not again occur; and that the new king must accept the throne under stipulations for redress of grievances, and of reigning in accordance with the principles of the old covenants. This course was perfectly constitutional. Even Rehoboam—high as were his notions of royal prerogative, and of his divine rights as the heir of David—had sense enough to see that it was such, and therefore proceeded with his court to Shechem, to accept the crown in the presence of the assembled states. So far, both parties acted guardedly; and although the place of meeting, and the sending for Jeroboam out of Egypt to take a leading part in the transactions, bear some indication of a foregone conclusion on the part of the tribes, it is impossible not to respect their determination to keep within the forms of the constitution, in resisting those marked tendencies to absolutism which the government had of late years manifested.

FORTY-THIRD WEEK.—THURSDAY.

WHIPS AND SCORPIONS.—I KINGS XII. 1-24.

It strongly shows the fearlessness of Jeroboam's character, that he not only hastened from Egypt at the call of the malcontents, but appeared before the king at their head, as their representative and spokesman in demanding redress of grievances. The demand made seems in itself reasonable

and just: "Thy father made our yoke grievous: now therefore ease thou somewhat the grievous servitude of thy father, and his heavy yoke that he put upon us, and we will serve thee." The manner in which it was put forward, however—in the person of Jeroboam, a known pretender to the crown, and lately a fugitive rebel—could not but have given it an aspect most offensive to the pride of the king. The presence of Jeroboam in fact supplies the threat, the alternative, the "or if not ——!" to which utterance was not given. It must be admitted that this thrusting forward of Jeroboam at the outset, and before the disposition of Rehoboam in regard to their claims had been ascertained, has much the aspect of an act of intimidation, and an uncalled for affront. We must therefore couple the manner of the demand with the words which contain it, in order to realize the entire force of the case as it presented itself to Rehoboam. It was a critical moment for him; it was a moment for prompt and decisive action—to which Saul or David would have been equal, but to the requirements of which the son of Solomon could not reach. Humanly speaking, and setting aside our knowledge that the result was fore-ordained, it is open to us to fancy how different the result might have been had the king been equal to the occasion. May we not suppose it likely that, if he had at once met the boldness of Jeroboam by the greater boldness of seizing him on the spot, and in a few strong and kindling words declared his hearty purpose to relax the burdens of the people, and redress their grievances, he might have turned the tide in his own favor, and have roused the crowd to enthusiastic shouts of "Long live the king!"

To hesitate in such a crisis is ruin. Even a prompt refusal had been less dangerous than delay. But Rehoboam could not trust his own understanding. He asked three days for deliberation. Even consent after such delay would lose the generous aspect of spontaneous grace, and would have the appearance to the people of having been extorted from his fears. And it rendered refusal doubly ruinous. The indication of reluctance gave warning of the result that might be

expected, and afforded time for the disaffected to mature their plans and preparations for revolt. We cannot doubt that these three days were among the busiest of Jeroboam's life.

The first impulse of Rehoboam was good. He sought the advice of the reverend councillors who had "stood before his father." Their counsel was good—unreserved and cheerful acquiescence in the wishes of the people—kind and gracious treatment of them now, in order to win them forever. It is clear that this counsel did not suit the king's humor, or he would have acted upon it without seeking further. But it is manifest that he was in search of such advice as would afford a sort of sanction to the course he was most inclined to follow, and such as would bring in others to share the responsibility with him. He resorted to "the young men who had been brought up with him"—those who had been chosen for his associates, and who, by the fact of their having led the same kind of life as himself, were doubtless quite as inexperienced in state affairs. Their thought was all of royal prerogatives and imperial rights; and their advice was that he should give to the audacious varlets, who dared to exact conditions from their sovereign, such an answer as would teach them to know their master.

Accordingly, at the appointed time the king made his appearance before the assembled states of Israel; and, in a voice intended to be stern and awful, he stated their demand, and gave this answer, which reaches to the sublime of simpleness,—“My little finger shall be thicker than my father's loins. For whereas my father put a heavy yoke upon you, I will put more to your yoke: my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.” This is to say—if we are to explain the simile—that whereas his father had scourged them with simple whips, he would scourge them with twisted lashes armed with sharp and lacerating points; for to such the name of “scorpion” was given.

The almost insane fatuity of the man who could expect any good effect from an answer like this to an aggrieved and

exasperated people, whom the mere fact of Jeroboam's presence must, to an ordinary understanding, have shown to be ripe for any ulterior consequences,—can scarcely be explained but on the interpretation that the king was subjected to judicial blindness—that wisdom and common sense had been withheld from him, in order that the doom which had already gone forth against the house of David might be accomplished.

The king's answer was received with indignation and scorn by the people, to whom it indeed supplied a cause and justification for the course to which they were already well inclined. They at once renounced their allegiance to the house of David—indeed, cast it off with mingled wrath and derision as a worthless and abominable thing. Rehoboam could, however, not easily comprehend the extent of his misfortune : that a revolt could be so real and general—that it was indeed a fact accomplished, without its reality having been evinced by blows given and taken—was incomprehensible to him. Kingdoms are not usually broken up and divided in this quiet fashion ; and the son of Solomon suffered himself to believe that he still reigned. There was clearly no disposition to subject him to ill treatment ; and he still remained at Shechem, in the very heart and head-quarters of the revolted district ; and he might, perhaps, have remained there for some time longer, cherishing his delusions, had he not taken it into his head to set the most obnoxious person in the land (if we may judge from analogy rather than from document)—one Adoram, the head tax-gatherer—to collect in this very place the burdensome taxes which had brought things to this pass. This was too much for the forbearance of the naturally turbulent Shechemites. They rose upon this unlucky comptroller of the taxes, and pelted him with stones, till he died of the injuries he received. This very broad hint opened the king's eyes ; and he lost no time in mounting his chariot, and driving off full speed to Jerusalem, which he reached in safety.

Judah remained, as might be expected, faithful to the

house of David; and since the establishment of the royal court and the temple at Jerusalem, the interests of Benjamin had become so much intermixed with those of Judah, that it naturally, and almost inevitably, adhered to the same side. Thus of the twelve tribes, only two remained to the house of David, and these not two of the highest importance—for although the one was the greatest of the tribes, the other was the least. Among the revolted tribes were those beyond the Jordan—so that all that extensive region was also lost, and with it the tributary nations in the eastern and north-eastern borders. But although lost to Judah, it is not probable that any of these, except Moab, were preserved to Israel. These tributaries had been falling away in the time even of Solomon, and were not likely to neglect taking advantage of the further weakening of the realm which this division both occasioned and indicated. On the side of Judah, the only foreign possession that remained in some kind of dependence, was Edom; but it may be doubted if this dependency added much to the strength of the kingdom, though it enabled the sovereigns of David's house, for some generations, to claim a dominion extending to the Red Sea, the ports of which must have become an unprofitable possession, now (if not before) that another realm was interposed between this kingdom and the Phœnicians.

Rehoboam was not likely to abstain from some efforts to regain the important portion of his dominions which had thus been rent from him. He called out an army—and with the ready resources of an organized state at his command, the two tribes might have been at that time more than a match for the ten. But when the army was about to march, a prophet appeared, and, in the name of the Lord, forbade them to go forth to fight against “their brethren,” seeing “the thing was from Him”—had been in conformity with His will and declared purpose. The king has received some compliments for his submission to the Divine mandate on this occasion—when he stood in all his kingly pride, with his arms and banners, ready to march forth against the rebels,

and make a stroke for the heritage of his house. We have no wish to take this credit from him. But it seems to us, that there was more necessity than virtue in his resignation. The words of the prophet were addressed not only to the king but to the assembled warriors, and were imperative upon the latter—"Return every man to his house;" and, we are immediately told, "They hearkened therefore to the word of the Lord, and returned to depart." There is no reason to suppose that they would have remained under arms after such a command, however much Rehoboam had wished them to do so. They obeyed the prophet, and he could not but do the same.

FORTY-THIRD WEEK—FRIDAY.

THE SCHISM.—I KINGS XII. 24-33.

JEROBOAM being chosen king by the revolted tribes, soon found his throne not without anxious cares, nor his crown without a thorn.

Shechem he fortified and made his capital. But he soon perceived that Jerusalem, as the seat of the temple and of all ritual service, was the real metropolis of the whole nation, and would remain a centre of union to all the tribes, notwithstanding the political separation which had taken place. Thither, to the metropolis of the rival state, his subjects would repair at the yearly festivals, and thither convey their dues and offerings. This alone would give an immense superiority of dignity and prosperity to Judah; and was it to be expected that the ten tribes, continually thus reminded of their separated state, and of the disadvantageous position in which it placed them, would be long content to remain in this condition of religious inferiority and separation? Unless some means can be found of counteracting this influence, and of rendering his kingdom independent, not only in govern-

ment, but in ritual worship, was it not to be feared that the coincidence of a popular king and prosperous reign in Judah, with an unpopular king and unprosperous reign in Israel, might in some future, and perhaps not remote day, induce the ten tribes to return to their allegiance to the house of David ?

Thus Jeroboam reasoned—and the danger seemed to him so serious that no means were to be neglected in order to avert it. It appeared clear to him that no effectual remedy could be found but in such alterations of the law—or rather in a departure from so much of the ritual law, as was based on the unity of the nation. This he determined to do—scrupling at nothing that might in his judgment tend to the establishment of his kingdom. We have no right to suppose that he reached this conclusion without hesitation ; but having once decided upon it as his only means of safety—having once committed himself to this policy, he carried it out with that unshrinking boldness which is indicated in most of his doings. He was perhaps the more stimulated to this by observing that in Egypt the king himself was high priest, and exercised the priestly functions, with the supreme power in ecclesiastical matters. This seemed to him a covetable power to possess, as it may have appeared to him that the priesthood as established in Israel, with an independent high priest, possessed a degree of power which might prove an inconvenient check upon that of the crown.

Under these views, Jeroboam concluded to establish two places of ritual worship, one in the north, and the other in the south of his kingdom—at Dan and Bethel—under the plausible excuse to his people, that Jerusalem was inconveniently distant for their visits at the annual festivals. In the absence of ark and cherubim, he set a golden calf or young bull at each place, as a symbolical figure consecrated to Jehovah, and not, as we may be apt to imagine, as an idolatrous representation of any other god. In this point of view, it might have seemed to him as lawful as the cherubim,—and indeed it may have been intended as a partial substitute for the com-

pound cherubic figures of the temple and tabernacle. But the words that he employed in inviting the attention of the people to this image—being the same that Aaron employed in the wilderness with regard to the golden calf—“This is thy God, O Israel, that brought thee out of the land of Egypt,” show that he had that case in view, and knew the history connected with it, and how severely that act had been condemned and punished. The views under which that symbol was adopted in the wilderness, apply equally here, and it is not necessary to repeat what has been already stated in reference to it. It was not idolatry as to the worship of strange gods, and hence is not mentioned with such strong condemnation and burning resentment by the prophets, as the subsequent introduction of foreign gods under Ahab. But it was an infraction of the law, which forbade any representation or symbol of Jehovah. It was a degradation “to liken the glory of the invisible God to an ox that eateth grass;” and it was a step towards that direct idolatry against which the law so sedulously guarded. This applies to the representation merely; but in Jeroboam’s case there was the added sin of schism, brought in among a people intended to be religiously united beyond any other, and whose most important institutions were framed with reference to that object. We may do this man the credit of believing, that he did not mean to go further with his innovations, than might seem to him barely necessary to secure his object. It was probably his design merely to establish local shrines to Jehovah, with little alteration in the mode and circumstances of worship. But having begun in this evil way, he felt compelled to proceed farther than he had contemplated, unless he would abandon his object altogether, and for this he was not prepared. As many of the Levitical cities were in his dominions, he concluded that many priests and Levites would be found to conduct this worship, rather than abandon all they possessed in the world. In this, like other worldly calculations upon the weakness and corruption of human character, he was mistaken. The world was not quite so bad as he

thought it, and men were a little better and more honest than he judged. The Levitical body repudiated the whole concern, and refused to lend it the prestige of their name and influence; and when, in resentment for this, Jeroboam forbade them to attend in their regular courses to discharge their duties at the temple of Jerusalem, they abandoned their cities, their fields, and pleasant homes, where they had been born and brought up, and shaking the dust of a polluted land from their feet, departed to the southern kingdom. The accession of so large a body of learned and religious persons and teachers, and of the numerous right-minded and conscientious persons who followed them, added materially to the fixed population, and more to the moral strength and character of the southern kingdom, while it in the same degree weakened that of Jeroboam.

He was at first confounded by this movement, which at once doomed his establishment to the stamp of inferiority by its ministers. He had to abandon his project, or to seek other priests out of the non-clerical tribes. But he found no persons of character willing to undertake the office; so that he had to ordain priests from "the lowest of the people,"—persons in such condition in life, that the emoluments of the office were an inducement, and the credit of even a degraded priesthood an honor to them. To keep them in countenance, at least at first, Jeroboam himself assumed the office of high priest, and as such officiated in the solemn ministrations when present at Dan or Bethel at the three yearly festivals.

Perhaps the most generally popular and best frequented of these festivals was that of autumn—the Feast of Tabernacles; being held at the close of the agricultural year, after the vintage came, when men were at leisure and disposed to commemorate enjoyments.

The time of this festival was changed by Jeroboam to a month later,—a most unauthorized and high-handed innovation, for which it is difficult to account, but by supposing that he was at length led on to wish to widen the difference as much as possible. The distinction produced by a difference

in the time of observing a great festival is very serious indeed, —and may be partly illustrated by the less considerable difference, exhibited in the Holy Land at this day, between the time of observing Easter, and indeed (through the Gregorian reform of the calendar) of Christmas, by the eastern and western churches. It has at times occurred to us, that Jeroboam may have partly been influenced by the consideration, that the agricultural labors of the year were not nearly so soon over in some parts of his dominion as in the territory of Judah, and that hence he might in this also allege public convenience as the ground of the alteration. It is at all events certain, that both harvest, ingathering, and vintage, are two, three, and even four weeks later in the northern parts of Israel than in the southern parts of Judah.

We must not conceal from ourselves that there are many persons who, at the bottom of their hearts, will think that Jeroboam acted wisely in the course he took, and cannot see how he could have got over the serious difficulty in his path but by some such course as that which he adopted. How could he otherwise have managed? The answer is,—he need not have managed at all. He had been appointed king under the Divine sanction. He held his crown under the condition of obedience; and on that condition the continuance of the crown to his house was pledged to him. Nothing was wanted on his part but unreserved faith in that promise. If Jeroboam had that faith, he would have been free from any anxiety on the subject; he would have felt that it was safer to incur an apparent danger in the career of duty and right-doing, than to seek exemption from it by unlawful doings and tortuous policy. The Lord had given him every reason to trust in the sufficiency of His protection, when He had compelled king Rehoboam to dismiss the forces with which he was prepared to fall upon him in his comparatively helpless condition. If it be asked *how* he was to be secured from the danger which stood so distinctly before him, we can only answer, “We do not know.” Jeroboam had no need to know. God knew; and it was his clear course to do right, trusting all the rest to God.

FORTY-THIRD WEEK—SATURDAY.

THE TWO PROPHETS.—I KINGS XIII.

JEROBOAM's offence was rank, and it suited not the honor of God that it should pass undenounced. It was denounced, and that in a truly remarkable manner.

Bethel, from its vicinage to Judah, seems to have engaged the particular attention of Jeroboam, though, in fact, his sacerdotal establishment there, so near to Jerusalem, was alone sufficient to apprise observant persons of the hollowness of his alleged object; for this place being but little to the north of Jerusalem, it was absurd to allege the inconvenient distance of the latter city as a ground for setting up his golden calf at Bethel.

On a day of high festival, Jeroboam himself, censer in hand, was officiating at the altar of Bethel,—when a stranger, with the marks of recent travel on him, stood forth, and in the name of the Lord prophesied against *the altar*, declaring that a time should come when a child named JOSIAH should be born to the house of David, who should burn on that very altar the bones of its dead priests. To accredit his word, the altar was on the instant rent, and the ashes scattered around. Without this sign, the prophecy of an event which did not take place for three hundred and fifty years, would have wanted authority with those who knew not the utterer; and therefore was it given.

Probably a prophecy against Jeroboam's own person, instead of against the insensate altar, would have touched him less nearly. It showed that his policy would come to naught, and that the power he was establishing with so much solicitude would be utterly subverted, while the house of David would still subsist in its strength; for only so could a king of that house be able to do this upon that altar in his dominions.

The king grasped the full meaning of this message, and it filled him with rage against the man who had dared to deliver it then and there. He stretched forth his hand to seize him; but the limb suddenly stiffened, and he could not draw it back again. The prodigy, which touched his bone and flesh, humbled the king a little; and he implored the prophet to intercede with the Lord for him, that his arm might be restored. The man of God did so; and, at his supplication, vigor was restored to the arm which had been raised against him. Grateful for this, Jeroboam said to the prophet, "Come home with me, and refresh thyself; and I will give thee a reward." But he alleged that the command had been laid upon him to deliver his message and return, but not by the way he came, without making any stay, or eating bread, or drinking water, in that place. So he remounted his ass, and commenced his journey home.

He had come out of Judah, but who he was we are not told, and must be content not to know. The Jewish commentators generally suppose that he was the same with Iddo the seer, who is recorded in 2 Chron. ix. 29 to have had visions against Jeroboam. But as Iddo lived to write the history of Rehoboam's son Abijah, who died but little before Jeroboam,* the conjecture is only tenable on the supposition that the incident, although recorded here, really happened near the very close of Jeroboam's reign. Shemaiah—the same whose mandate stayed the march of Rehoboam's army—has also been named; but the like objection applies, as this prophet lived to write the history of Rehoboam, who died in the eighteenth year of Jeroboam.†

The good man was plodding homeward with the satisfying consciousness of having becomingly discharged an important and perilous duty, when evil came upon him from a quarter he could little have suspected.

There was in Bethel an old temporizing "prophet," of Balaam's cast, who, although he had sufficient regard for appearances to be absent from the king's sacrifice, allowed his

* 2 Chron. xiii. 22.

† 2 Chron. xii. 15.

sons to be there. From them he heard what had passed, and avouched the verity of the prediction which the man of God had delivered. Yet, with this conviction on his mind, he formed the resolution of going after the stranger, to induce ~~induce~~ him to come back and accept the hospitalities of his house. We cannot allow him the excuse of thoughtless hospitality, which some have urged in his favor. As one having himself his eyes opened, he must have felt that the stranger had alleged a true and valid reason for his departure, and could not but know the imperative nature of the obligation under which he acted. His determination to bring him back must, therefore, have had some proportionate ulterior object, although we entirely acquit him of intending to involve the man of God in the disastrous consequences which ensued. He may have had a vague impression that his disobedience would not escape some kind of punishment; but had he been aware how awful and immediate that punishment would be, he would probably have paused. It is our own impression that this man was one of the numerous class who

“Know the good, but still the ill pursue;”

and that his single but guileful object was to lay his king under an essential obligation, by making the man of God contradict himself in a matter, which he alleged to be most binding and urgent upon him, and of thus reducing the moral weight and authority of the message he had delivered, and weakening its impression upon the minds of the people.

He soon overtook the home-bound prophet, and his invitation having received the same answer as that before given to the king, the profane old reprobate urged, that he also was a prophet, and had received a counter-command from God, to follow and bring him back. The poor prophet was too guileless himself to suspect that any one of this venerable appearance could be daring enough to fabricate such a statement, and he therefore turned his ass's head, perhaps not unwillingly, back to Bethel.

It was while they sat at meat in the house of the Bethelite prophet, that a true word from God came to the latter, which, we are willing to believe, he received with real concern, and delivered with reluctance. It was, that inasmuch as the prophet from Judah had "disobeyed the word of the Lord," in coming back to the place where he had been forbidden to rest or to eat bread, "his carcass should not come unto the sepulchre of his fathers." This amounted to a declaration, that he should not reach his home alive or dead; for if he did, he would of course come to the sepulchre of his fathers. We read of no accusation or reply on the part of the seduced prophet, or any excuse on the part of his seducer. The matter was too solemn for bandying words; and both understood too clearly where the real pinch of the matter lay. The beguiled prophet, being himself in the direct receipt of divine intimations, had no right to act upon a contradiction to the mandate imparted to himself, on any less direct authority than that from which he had received it; and his easy credulity had brought discredit upon the high mission entrusted to him, and marred much of the good effect it might have produced upon the minds of the king and people. For this he must die, while the guiltier man incurs no punishment,—even as a soldier on high and responsible duty, suffers death for offences which would scarcely incur blame at another time, and in other men. It is the responsibility, the breach of duty, less than the act, which constitutes the crime.

As one doomed to death, but not knowing in what shape it was to come, the stranger set forth. Was he to be smitten with disease or lightning? Were robbers to set upon him and slay him? Were walls to fall down and crush his devoted head? Of a thousand deaths which lurk ambushed for the life of man, which was the one destined to smite him down? He knew not—perhaps he cared not; but he could scarcely guess that which really came to pass. A lion came forth against him and slew him; and the brute so acted, as to evince to all beholders that he also had a mission, and

that his native instincts were under control. It is said that lions like not to fall on man when they have other prey; it is also said, that an ass is choice food to a lion; and it is certain that a lion destroys to eat. Yet here the lion assails the man, and leaves the ass unmolested; and having inflicted the appointed death, the beast attempts not to devour or carry off the carcass, but leaves it in the road, and stands watching by, along with the trembling ass, as if to guard the corpse from other beasts, until witnesses should come to avouch what had been done, and to take away the body. Truly this was the finger of God. The old Bethelite thought it so, when he heard what had happened. He felt that it devolved on him to remove the body and give it sepulture. He went, therefore, and beheld the lion still keeping guard over the corpse; but the fierce creature suffered him to remove it without molestation, and then slowly retired as one whose work was done.

The old Bethelite deposited the corpse in his own grave "and they mourned over him, saying, Alas, my brother!" Believing the prediction of the stranger to be certain of fulfilment, he directed his sons to bury his own corpse in the same grave; and the bones of the seducer and the seduced being thus intermingled in the tomb, it so happened, as the former probably intended, that his bones thus escaped, at the appointed time, the defilement to which they would otherwise have been subjected. The tomb of the prophet that came out of Judah was then recognized, and for his sake the contents were spared from dishonor.

Forty-Fourth Week—Sunday.

THE DISGUISED PRINCESS.—I KINGS XIV. 1-18.

THIS quiet place, apart among the enclosing hills, is Shiloh. It was once the seat of the Lord's tabernacle, his altar, and

his ark, and was then replete with holy activities and solemn sounds. But since these departed, it has been well nigh forsaken, and has relapsed into a silent village, or a small rural town. Yet still holy things are here—holy men, who have found here a sort of refuge from the wickedness of the time—a quiet retreat, favorable to sacred memories, and to the nourishment of holy thoughts. Among them is Ahijah, that old prophet who rent the new cloak of Jeroboam, and promised him the largest share of the divided kingdom. He is now blind. Upon the outer world, made foul by man's abominations, he has closed his eyes, and sees and lives by the light that shines within.

Now observe that woman stealing down the street, and seeking the old prophet's house. By her guise she is of the peasantry, and she bears a basket. Yet her gait scarcely befits her garb; and the quick furtive glance she casts around under her coarse hood-veil, betrays some conscious concealment, some fear of recognition, some purpose she would not wish to have known.

This woman, mean as she seems, is the lady of the land; and although her basket contains but a few cakes and biscuits, and a little honey, she might, if she pleased, have filled it with precious and costly things. She is the wife of Jeroboam—as far as we know, his only wife,—the mother of his heir; and therefore, if he had a score of wives, the chief of them all. That heir, by name Abijah, is alarmingly ill; and, at the instance of Jeroboam, and impelled by motherly love, that royal lady has come all the way from Tirzah, in this disguise, that she may learn of the prophet what is to become of her son; and the things in her basket are gifts for the man of God, suited to the condition she had assumed. The disguise was thought necessary to conceal this visit from the people, and partly in the idle hope of obtaining, in the semblance of another, the desired answer, unmixed with the reproof and denunciation, which Jeroboam knew that his conduct had been calculated to draw down, from the prophet who had foretold his exaltation. He thus foolishly thought

to cozen the Lord, through his prophet, out of an answer of peace, and slyly to evade the judgment he feared might be connected with it; and he idly calculated that the prophet, whose view could extend into the future, hid in the counsels of God, could not see through a present matter wrapped up only in the thin cover of a woman's hood. "There was never," says Dr. Hall, "a wicked man who was not infatuate, and in nothing more than in those things wherein he hoped most to transcend the reach of others."

All this fine contrivance was blown to pieces the moment the wife of Jeroboam crossed Ahijah's threshold; for then she heard the voice of the blind prophet—"Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam; why feignest thou thyself to be another? for I am sent to thee with heavy tidings." He then broke forth in a strong tide of denunciation against Jeroboam, because he had sinned and made Israel to sin; and the voice which had proclaimed his rise from a low estate to royal power, now, with still stronger tone, proclaimed the downfall and ruin of his house—quenched in blood—its members to find tombs only in the bowels of beasts and birds. There was one exception—only one. The youth of whom she came to inquire—he only should come to his grave in peace, by dying of his present disease, because in him only was "found some good thing towards the Lord God of Israel in the house of Jeroboam."

Woful tidings these for a mother's heart; and scarcely, perhaps, intelligible to her stunned intellect. Here was beginning of judgment upon Jeroboam, and upon her, because she was his. Judgment in taking away the only well-conditioned and worthy son; and judgment stored up in and for the ill-conditioned ones who were suffered to remain. God, when it suits the purposes of his wisdom and his justice, can afflict no less by what he spares than by what he takes.

Yet there was mercy in this judgment; mercy, strange as it seems to say,—to him on whom the sentence of death was passed. It is so stated; and it is more intelligible than it

seems. It was because there *was* some good thing found in him that he should die. Death was to be for him a reward, a blessing, a deliverance. He should die peaceably upon his bed; for him all Israel should mourn; for him many tears be shed; and he should be brought with honor to his tomb. More than all, he would be taken from his part in the evil that hung over his house; and the Lord's vindictory justice would thus be spared the seeming harshness of bringing ruin upon a righteous king for his father's crimes. Alas! how little do we know the real objects of the various incidents of life and death—of mercy, of punishment, and of trial! In this case the motives were disclosed; and we are suffered to glance upon some of the great secrets of death, which form the trying mysteries of life. Having the instance, we can find the parallels of lives, full of hope and promise, prematurely taken, and that in mercy, as we can judge, to those who depart. The heavenly Husbandman often gathers for his garner the fruit that early ripens, without suffering it to hang needlessly long, beaten by storms, upon the tree. Oh, how often, as many a grieved heart can tell, do the Lord's best beloved die betimes—taken from the evil to come,—while the unripe, the evil, the injurious, live long for mischief to themselves and others! Roses and lilies wither far sooner than thorns and thistles.

Doleful were the tidings the disguised princess had to bear back to the beautiful town of Tirzah. All remoter griefs were probably to her swallowed up in this—which rung continually in her ears in all her homeward way,—“When thy feet enter into the city the child shall die.” It is heavy tidings to a mother that she must lose her well-beloved son; but it is a grievous aggravation of her trouble that she might not see him before he died. They who were about him knew not that he was to die to-day, and therefore could not estimate the preciousness of his last hours, and the privilege of being then near him, and of receiving his embrace. She knew; and she might not be near, nor pour out upon her dying son the fulness of a mother's heart. Knowing that her son lay on his

death-bed, her first impulse must have been to fly home to receive his dying kiss ; but her second to linger by the way, as if to protract that dear life which must close the moment she entered the city. Never, surely, before or since, was a distressed mother so wofully torn between the contrary impulses of her affection !

At last her weary steps reached the city ; and, as she entered its gate, her son died, and she was only just in time to press to her arms the heart still warm, although it had ceased to beat.

FORTY-FOURTH WEEK—MONDAY.

HIGH PLACES.—I KINGS XIV. 22-24.

It seems that king Rehoboam, in Judah, profiting by the chastisement he had received, conducted himself reasonably well for three years, during which he employed himself vigorously in strengthening his kingdom, by collecting arms, and depositing them in a large number of cities which he fortified. "When Rehoboam had established his kingdom and strengthened himself, he forsook the law of the Lord, and all Israel with him." The iniquity into which the Judahites fell, is described as greater than had been in former times committed—perhaps not greater than individuals in authority had committed, Solomon, for instance, but greater than any part of the nation had before concurred in. Indeed, from all that appears, the sin was for the time greater than that of Jeroboam ; but there was this essential difference, that Jeroboam's sin was not repented of, and that of Rehoboam was. The form of this great offence is thus described :—"They built them high places, and images, and groves, on every high hill and under every green tree." We remember the time when we used to be perplexed about these high places and groves. What is the harm in worshipping upon a high

place or in a grove? Are they not, on the contrary, very proper places of worship? And, what is more to the purpose, did not the patriarchs worship upon high places and in groves? And the fact of their doing so is mentioned, certainly without blame, if not with approbation; while in later ages we find these practices severely condemned, and calling down divine punishments. The way to get at the cause of this is to consider, that things indifferent, or even good, in themselves, may become evil in the lapse of time, from the considerations that come to be associated with them. If a British consul or governor upon the African coast sets up the union jack over his house on Sundays, there may be no harm in that; but if the barbarous people around come to the conclusion that, since he does this on the day set apart to his worship, this flag is the white man's god, and begin to treat it with superstitious reverence, or assemble to render it worship, the practice of setting it up becomes a sin. But we need not travel out of Scripture for an illustration. What could be more proper and seemly than the feeling which led Moses to preserve in the tabernacle the brazen serpent, which had been lifted up in the wilderness for the healing of the nation? But when the people came to regard it with superstitious reverence, and manifested a disposition to render idolatrous honors thereto, it became an abomination, and as such was most properly destroyed by king Hezekiah.

Now we read in the book of Genesis, that Abraham, on entering the promised land, built an altar upon a mountain between Bethel and Hai. At Beersheba he planted a grove, and called there upon the name of the everlasting God. It was to a mountain (Moriah) that he was directed to go, there to offer up his son Isaac; and it was upon another mountain (in Gilead) that Jacob and Laban offered sacrifices before they parted in peace.* So far, therefore, as appears from the book of Genesis, there was no harm in worshipping in high places and in groves. But in a later age, when the Israelites had departed from Egypt, and approached the

* Gen. xii. 7, 8; xxi. 33; xxii. 2, 4; xxxi. 54.

same land to take possession of it, we find something had arisen to cause high places and groves to be regarded with disfavor. The people are strictly enjoined to cast down and destroy all those belonging to the Canaanites they might find in the land.* It might be supposed, that this was because *these* had been consecrated to the worship of idols; but did not involve any prohibition of high places and groves to the Israelites. But, first, the Israelites by the law of Moses could worship by sacrifice only at one place, that is, at the tabernacle altar; and therefore, because not anywhere else certainly not in high places; and, further, it was expressly enjoined, that near this sole altar no trees should be planted.† This last restriction is very remarkable. Apart from that, the limitation of the Israelites to one place of ritual worship, would suggest a perfectly sufficient reason for the destruction of the Canaanitish [altars upon the] high places, and the demolition of the consecrated groves; for there would be a danger that the Israelites, in taking possession of the localities in which they were found, would retain their use as local places of worship. But the intimation, that even at the one altar any approximation to a grove was to be carefully avoided, compels us to look a little further.

One great object of the Mosaical dispensation was to maintain, in the persons of the Israelites, a living testimony against the polytheism which had overspread the nations; and whatever might directly or indirectly tend to worship many gods, or to associate other gods of man's devising with the only real God, Jehovah, the Creator of heaven and earth, was carefully guarded against and discouraged. When, in the process of time, the high places and groves of primitive worship became consecrated to divers idols, the danger was, that, in adopting the use of them, the Israelites should retain some lingering recollection of the god to whom they had been set apart; and this, gathering strength, would insensibly lead them into idolatry, and to the association of other gods with Jehovah.

* Exod. xxxiv. 13. Deut. vii. 5; xii. 2, 3.

† Deut. xvi. 21

Before the erection of temples, or before temples became general, groves and high places were the usual places of worship. Hence we do not find any order to the Israelites to destroy the *temples* of the Canaanites, for there were none to destroy. The order to demolish their groves and high places was, therefore, an order to destroy their places of worship, as well as their objects of worship, if any such materials existed. This was important in an age when the entire tendency of the human mind was towards polytheism—the multiplication of gods; so that the demolition of a place of worship was equivalent to the demolition of an idol, and the setting up one, in its ultimate results, almost equivalent to the setting up of an idol. The result dreaded and guarded against in these directions was the multiplication of gods; and how wisely this was ordered, and how imminent the danger was, is shown by the fact, that the very evil which the law sought by its interdiction to prevent, did arise from the neglect of that interdiction by Rehoboam and subsequent kings of Judah,—so that, at the time the nation was ripe for the overthrow which it sustained, Jeremiah could exclaim, “According to the number of thy cities are thy gods, O Judah!” Jer. ii. 28.

But it may be asked, Was not the danger equally imminent at the times when the patriarchs worshipped in groves, and set up their altars upon high places? Perhaps not. There is no indication throughout the book of Genesis that the Canaanites had yet gone far, if at all, into the corruptions of polytheism, and it is expressly stated that *their* iniquity was “not yet full.” Moral iniquity abounded; but that they had as yet gone into gross idolatry, is more than we know. The only hint we have respecting the religion of the land, sets before us one king (Melchizedek) who was a worshipper, not less than Abraham, of “the Most High God, Creator of heaven and earth.” All mankind were at first His worshippers; and in the different places of their dispersion the nations of men varied in the time and extent of their corruptions of original truth. The country out of which Abraham came seems to have been far more gone in polytheistic error

than that into which he entered. *There*, probably, nothing was found to point out the kind of danger which afterwards became connected with groves and high places; and if there had been something of the sort, the danger, which might be great to a nation composed of people of different habits of mind and varied depth of religious feeling, would be but small in the case of the single family of the faithful Abraham, abiding in one locality. The danger arose when the nation lay dispersed over a wider country,—and if high places and groves were at all tolerated, they would have had many in simultaneous use in different parts of the land.

It is remarkable with what inveteracy the Israelites clung to the worship in high places. Such were even tolerated by monarchs who exerted themselves to root out idolatry, and of whose zeal for the purity of the worship of Jehovah no doubt can be entertained. As they were not for this subjected to any such judgment as that denounced on Rehoboam, it seems as if some peculiar enormity was found in his case. This is discovered in the connection of “images” with them; for these must have been symbolical representations either of Jehovah or of strange gods—most likely the latter; whereas the others were merely sanctioned as places for the local worship of the Lord, and, so far as tolerated, did not present an immediately idolatrous aspect. This toleration of an acknowledged irregularity the sacred historian indicates as the only blot upon the character of some truly right-minded kings, who certainly would not have allowed anything that seemed to them to savor of idolatry. It probably arose from the known indisposition of the people living at a distance from the temple, to be limited to the altar services at that spot, in which they could only at distant intervals participate; while their earnest wish to have places for the chief ritual acts of their religion—sacrifice and offerings—near to their own homes, may have suggested the fear that, unless they were gratified in having in their own neighborhood places of religious assemblage and of offerings to the Lord, they might be led to make their offerings to idols. Under

its first aspect, the wish has the appearance of an excess of religious zeal,—which, apart from its latent dangers, may account for the hesitation the kings felt in putting down this abuse, and for winking at an irregularity contrary to one of the first principles of the theocratic institutions. It is worthy of note, in corroboration of this view, that we hear no more of worship in high places and groves, after the establishment of synagogues in the towns afforded an adequate and ready vent to the craving of the people to localize their religion. They were then enabled to have near their homes so much of their religious observances as admitted, without danger, of being separated from the grand ritual solemnities for which the great common centre at Jerusalem was still preserved. Besides, the tendency to idolatry had then passed away, and perhaps groves and high places would then not have been refused had they been desired. But so it was, that the people craved to worship upon high places and in groves when it was really dangerous and seducing for them to do so, but ceased to care about them when the danger no longer existed.

FORTY-FOURTH WEEK—TUESDAY.

THE EGYPTIAN INVASION.—I KINGS XIV. 25–28; II CHRON. XII. 2–12.

OUR own house here, in this “wicked London,” is safe, though defenceless, and with small protection of bolts and bars, because there is little in it to tempt the spoiler; whereas the great house of the old lady in Threadneedle street is never deemed to be safe without a company of dreadful bear-skin-capped grenadiers within its walls, because of the great riches it contains. Now we should not be over glad to have all that gold down in our own cellars, without the grenadiers also, to keep guard over it. What a perilous life it would be to

have it, without adequate means of protecting it from the envious hands ready to clutch at it, and whose endeavors would be excited by our obviously defenceless condition :

This was the case of Rehoboam. The immense treasures in gold which the temple and palace contained—the accumulations of David and Solomon—were known far and wide, and were such as required a strong power to protect from the neighboring princes, who could not but calculate, from time to time, upon the glorious spoil which might be obtained by the rapid pillage of Jerusalem alone, even apart from any views of territorial aggrandizement. Such power Solomon had possessed ; and grievously as the strength which Rehoboam inherited from him had been impaired, it was still sufficient, under the judicious measures which had in the early years of his reign been adopted for putting the country in a state of defence, to withstand any attempt of the small neighboring states. Of these, the new kingdom was alone to be seriously dreaded ; and the alienation had not yet become such as to render it probable that the ten tribes would dare, even if Jerusalem were in their power, to pillage the temple of the Lord.

There was, however, in the distance, a more powerful and dangerous enemy, not to be restrained by any such considerations, and who had for some time beheld with longing eyes the treasures of the sacred city. This was the king of Egypt. As long as Rehoboam continued in a right course, this powerful prince was restrained by the Lord from the measures he contemplated ; but no sooner had the king, with his people, sinned against Jehovah, than the hands of the Egyptian monarch were loosened, and he proceeded to invade the land with a mighty host levied from the different African territories subject to his sceptre. This was the first time the Egyptians had appeared in the sacred land with hostile purposes against the Hebrews ; and it is probable that so formidable a body of chariots, horsemen, and infantry had never before invaded the country. The appearance of this new enemy, whose power and resources they knew, must have

filled the Judahites with dread,—the rather, as their unfaithfulness had disintituled them to the right of looking to the Lord for his protection. Probably, in the first instance, the king placed some hope in the strong fortresses he had built towards the southern frontier; but these fell, one after another, before the might of the invaders,—and the Egyptians, having cleared their rear from obstruction, marched direct upon Jerusalem.

At this juncture, the same prophet Shemaiah, who had before interposed to prevent Rehoboam's army from marching against Jeroboam, again appeared, and delivered to the king and his princes the short but awfully emphatic message,—“Thus saith the Lord, Ye have forsaken me; and therefore have I also left you in the hands of Shishak.” At this they were conscience-stricken, and acted exactly as became them, and as was best suited to turn the Lord's anger aside. They admitted the justice of the punishment they had brought upon themselves, and they humbled themselves, and said,—“The Lord is righteous,”—an admission as brief and significant as the reproof.

This humiliation was graciously received in heaven; and it was intimated that for this they should be spared some portion of the ignominy they had incurred. This seems to have meant that their lives would be spared, and that the city would not be destroyed by the Egyptian host; yet they should for a time feel that these overbearing foreigners were their masters, that they might know the difference between the service of the Lord and that of strange princes.

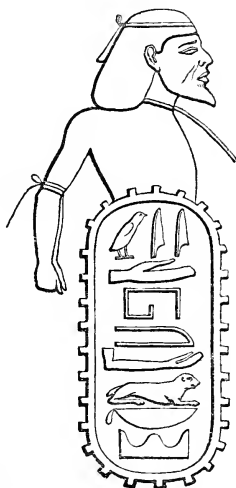
It was probably as an act of submission to this doom that no defence of Jerusalem was attempted; and He in whose hand is the heart of kings so mollified the stern purposes of Shishak, that he was content with the spoils of the temple and the palace, without molesting the inhabitants, or damaging the city, or attempting to retain the country in subjection. Indeed, recollecting the prodigious quantities of precious metal lavished by Solomon on these buildings, this spoil must have been amply sufficient to fulfil the greedy

expectations of the invaders, and satisfy the wishes of their nation. It has indeed been urged that no such spoil could have proved an adequate return for the costs of the expedition, and that it was unlikely that its objects should be satisfied by the plunder of a palace and a temple. But it may be answered, that, under ancient military arrangements, an army was a less costly instrument than—happily for the peace of the world—it has now become; and that the balance of profit and loss, in expeditions furnishing an immediate access of plunder and glory, was less nicely calculated in former times than it is now,—although, indeed, modern history has furnished examples, not few nor far between, of expeditions costing millions of money being employed upon objects not worth as many shillings. Besides, to allege that the plunder of a temple is not an adequate object of military action is against the facts of history, and is to forget that riches equal to the wealth of a nation were often in ancient times lavished upon or treasured up in temples. The reader will call to mind the celebrated temple in Elymais of Persia,—the rich treasures of which were the objects of attention to two of the greatest of the Seleucidian kings of Syria, one of whom (Antiochus the Great) lost his life in a commotion created in the attempt to seize them; and whose son (Antiochus Epiphanes) was engaged in the same distant quarter, quelling the disturbances created by the actual plunder of the temple to recruit his exhausted finances, when he received the news respecting the Jewish successes over his officers, which made him hastily quit the place with horrid purposes of vengeance against the Jews, which he lived not to accomplish.

It may also be observed, that Shishak was not allowed to accomplish all the purposes of his expedition, as is clearly shown by the promise given on the repentance of the king and the princes. What that intention was it is difficult to see. The fact that he did not march into the territory of the territory of the ten tribes, coupled with Jeroboam's previous sojourn in Egypt, and his favorable reception there, may suggest that he acted at the instance of Jeroboam, with the

view of weakening the rival power, if not of adding the dominions of Rehoboam to those of the sovereign of the ten tribes—or of holding them as a dependency of his own Egypt. The subsequent reflection which led him, under Divine influence, to alter his views, and to be content with the treasures of the palace and temple, may have been found in the consideration that it might not be good policy for Egypt to push its frontier in this direction—thus destroying politically the desert barrier which separated it from other nations,—and still less to reconstruct and render once more formidable the kingdom which had been weakened by separation into two; for although, perhaps, he might count on the subserviency of Jeroboam, he could not know but that the united kingdom might in no long time acquire such strength, and lapse into such hands, as might render its neighborhood inconvenient to Egypt. In old times, as in our own, thinking politicians—and there *were* thinking politicians even in those days—must have seen the futility of basing political arrangements on personal considerations. Men die, and men change; but political action has permanent effects, which survive the men by whose hands it was wrought.

That the result was not inadequate to the extent and importance of the expedition—that it was, in fact, regarded as a memorable event in Egypt—is shown by the circumstance that the successful results of the campaign are celebrated in a series of sculptures on the north external wall of the temple at Karnak. The king, as usual, presents his prisoners to the deity of the temple; and to each figure is attached an oval, indicating the town or district he represents; one of which is concluded to be Yooda



Melchi, or "kingdom of Judah." It is not to be supposed that Rehoboam was actually carried captive to Egypt, but that the figure is a symbol of the king's triumph over him.

Whether the figure be a portrait or not, is uncertain; but, as the Egyptian artists were used to make as near a likeness as they could of the objects they intended to represent, it doubtless presents a general resemblance, if not of the king, of as much of the Jewish physiognomy and costume as it discloses. We introduce it, together with the head of Shishak himself.

The preservation of this figure is a notable circumstance, especially as the picture is so much mutilated that nothing remains but three captives bound to a stake, which forms, as usual, a sort of title-page at the beginning, and a portion of the triumphal procession at the end, which is so much mutilated that only the names of the captives are legible. This defaced condition of the monument is much to be deplored, as it might very possibly have presented details, not only confirmatory but illustrative of the sacred narrative.



FORTY-FOURTH WEEK—WEDNESDAY.

ABIJAH.—II CHRON. XIII. 1-20; I KINGS XV. 1-9.

It is observable, that although Rehoboam had fewer wives than his father—*only* eighteen wives and sixty concubines, he had a far more numerous progeny—no less than twenty-eight sons and sixty daughters,—a somewhat singular disproportion of sexes. Even this comparatively modern harem was adverse to the judgment and habits of his subjects; for the historian remarks that he “desired many wives,”—implying that so far he contravened the restriction imposed by the law against a king “multiplying wives unto himself.” Of all Rehoboam’s wives, the one who had most influence with him was Maachah, who appears to have been a grand-daughter of Absalom by his daughter Tamar, who married one Uriel of the house of Saul. This special attachment to the mother induced Rehoboam to determine that her son Abijah (otherwise called Abijam) should be his successor; and the solicitude he is described as evincing in this matter, and the means he took to secure this object, seem to show that Abijah was not his eldest son. To obviate the competition of his brothers, and to prevent them from forming an interest in rivalry to his at the seat of power, Rehoboam took much the same course as Abraham took to secure the undisputed heritage to Isaac. He provided for them, and gave them employment during his life-time, by making them governors of cities—thus dispersing them through his dominions for their own advantage, while preventing them from any combined operations to the detriment of the heir. This is an early scriptural example of the same kind of policy which has only within the present age been adopted in the courts of Persia and Turkey, where the princes were shut up in the harem till the death of their father, and then either imprisoned, killed, or incapacitated for public life (in Persia by blinding), when their brother mounted the throne. Now, at least in Persia, they

are sent into the provinces, where they administer the civil and military local government for the king—collect the crown dues, and remit them to court after deducting their own expenses and the local charges. These princes, in their lesser spheres, reflect the royal dignity, maintaining courts on the royal model, but on a smaller scale; administering justice like the king, and appearing, when required, with the military force to be raised within their districts. Doubtless the sons of Rehoboam performed the same functions in their respective districts; but the smallness of the territory over which so many princes were distributed, must have given a proportionately diminished scale to their establishments; and if they, as princes of the blood, affected, as is likely, more magnificence than ordinary governors, this must have rendered the task of supporting the courts of so many royal governors rather burdensome to the people. The crown also probably found it unprofitable in the end, a large proportion of the public imposts being in such cases absorbed, before they reached the royal treasury, in the expenses of local government,—and the king being obliged to allow expenses for his sons, and to admit excuses on their behalf, which would not be endured in an ordinary functionary.

The precautions of the king were, however, successful; and at his death the son he had designated succeeded to the throne without opposition. This young man, of the same name with Jeroboam's lost son, took up the cause of the house of David with the ardor natural to a lofty-minded youth just come to the throne. He purposed to himself to re-establish the dominion of his house over the ten tribes; and no priest or prophet interfered this time to discourage the undertaking. This was not now necessary, seeing that the kingdom of Israel was now fully equal to its own defence against Judah; and now, moreover, Jeroboam had forfeited all claim to the Lord's interference, and his house had indeed been sentenced to deprivation.

Abijah took the initiative, and marched into the territory of Jeroboam, at the head of a general military levy of his

kingdom. Jeroboam was, however, too able and experienced a commander to be taken unprepared, and he met the king of Judah with a force that greatly outnumbered his own.

The circumstances of this first great action between the two kingdoms are very interesting, and well deserve careful consideration, from the light they cast upon the state of feeling with which the house of David at this time regarded the rival kingdom. This we are able to collect from the harangue which king Abijah addressed to the enemy opposed to him, before they came to blows, according to a custom which strikes us as somewhat strange, but of which there are numerous ancient examples. The staple of such harangues always has consisted, and always does consist in the East, of self-praise on the part of the orator, and dispraise and abuse of the enemy. Of this we find enough in the speech of Abijah, the tone of which seems to us not in all respects so gratifying as it has appeared to many.

The oration consists properly of two parts—political, and religious or theocratical. The political part is based entirely on the divine-right principle, which was certainly not sanctioned by the Hebrew constitution. Wholly overlooking the offence of Solomon, the judgment of Heaven, the Divine appointment of Jeroboam, the constitutional conduct of the people, the aggravating folly of Rehoboam, and the Lord's recognition of the separation,—Abijah talks loftily of the rights of the house of David, and treats the tribes as unreasonable and causeless rebels,—servants who had turned against their master when they found the opportunity in the accession of the “young and tender-hearted” Rehoboam, and whom it behooved now, at his son's call, to return to their allegiance. The egregious foolishness of all this seems to have been scarcely exceeded by that which Rehoboam himself had manifested, and must have been heard with calm disdain by the veterans of Israel. The purely dynastic and party view of the great question, was such as a hot and not over-wise young prince of the house of David was likely to take, and is in itself perfectly intelligible. But we know that there was

another side of the question which found no expression ; and the reader may do well to supply for himself the answer which Jeroboam *could* have given if he had liked.

The remainder of Abijah's harangue was, however, in substance unanswerable, although one is not over-satisfied at the self-righteousness of its tone, its inordinate appreciation of ritual observances, and the absence of more spiritual grounds of confidence than it indicates. He animadverted on the measures, the corruptions, and arbitrary changes by which Jeroboam had endeavored to secure his kingdom ; and, with not unbecoming pride, contrasted this disorder and profanity with the beautiful order in which, according to the law, and the regulations of David and Solomon, the worship of the Lord was conducted by the Levitical priesthood, in "the holy and beautiful house which the Divine King honored with the visible symbol of his inhabitation." "We keep the charge of Jehovah," he declared, "but ye have forsaken him. And, behold, God himself is with us for our captain, and his priests with sounding trumpets, to cry alarm against you. O children of Israel, fight not against Jehovah, the God of your fathers, for ye shall not prosper."

By the time he had finished, Abijah found himself, to his great amazement, surrounded by the enemy ; and that he had purchased the satisfaction of making a speech at the cost of allowing a large body of the enemy to move quietly round the hill, so as to take his force in the rear, while the main body still confronted him. This difficult and bold manœuvre had well nigh decided the action ; for the Judahites raised a cry of dismay, and a serious panic would probably have followed, had not the priests at that moment sounded their silver trumpets, at which old and inspiring signal, the more stout-hearted men raised a cry to the Lord for help, and rushed upon the enemy, inspiring by their example the more timid and wavering. The embattled host of Israel could not withstand the force of this terrible shock. Their ranks were broken, they fled, and the slaughter inflicted upon them was most awful, and can only be explained by reference to the

peculiar animosity and bloodiness of wars of kindred. Besides, the conquerors were in the enemy's country, and in numbers much the weaker party—too weak for mercy.*

Notwithstanding this decisive success, Abijah was too well advised, to pursue his original design of reducing the ten tribes, and was content to re-establish his authority over certain border towns and districts, which had originally belonged to Judah or Benjamin, but which Jeroboam had found means to include in his portion of the divided kingdom. This was but a poor result from the shedding of so much blood, and for the increased alienation which must have ensued between the subjects of the two kingdoms, which still formed but one nation. All that can be said is, that as much blood has often been shed with as little real advantage to the conquerors.

FORTY-FOURTH WEEK—THURSDAY.

THE QUEEN.—I KINGS XV. 13.

THE disproportion of daughters to sons which was noticeable in the case of Rehoboam, was counter-balanced in the case of Abijah by a preponderance of sons. Of these he had twenty-two, and of daughters sixteen. His wives were fourteen; and that the number was so much below that which constituted the harem of his father, shows an increasing deference to public opinion, which was undoubtedly un-

* A great commander of our day, Sir Charles Napier, on lately presenting new colors to the 22d Foot, in India (Dregshai), delivered a remarkable speech, full of characteristic points, in which occurs the following:—"Never can I forget the banks of the Fulailee, and the bloody bed of that river, where 2000 of our men fought 35,000 enemies!—where, for three hours, the musket and the bayonet encountered the sword and the shield in mortal combat; for on that dreadful day no man spared a foe,—*we were TOO WEAK FOR MERCY.*"—*The Times*, January 17, 1851.

favorable to this "multiplication of wives" by the kings, of which Solomon, or perhaps we may say David, had set the example. Even this number is named, with the marked emphasis which implies disapprobation; and as nothing is said of the number of his son Asa's wives, and as it appears *he* had but one child, it is to be inferred that he so far respected the national feeling and the dignity of woman as to be content with the one wife, whose recorded name is Azubah. After that reign we hear no more of the numerous wives of the kings of Judah, so that this abuse appears to have been rectified; and in the other kingdom it does not seem to have had any existence, for we do not meet with any king who is known to have had more than one wife.

King Abijah reigned but three years; but his son Asa, who succeeded him, reigned forty-one years, and beheld the close of the reign of Jeroboam in Israel, and the commencement of that of Ahab,—so that this one reign in the house of David covered the entire reigns of five, and parts of the reigns of two, kings in Israel—seven in all, including four different families or dynasties.* The contrast is striking; and there can be no doubt that this long, and, upon the whole, prosperous and meritorious reign, while Israel was torn by internal factions and revolutions, and stained with

* JEROBOAM was on the throne of Israel when Asa succeeded to that of Judah. His son NADAB then became king; and in the second year of his reign was put to death, with all his father's house, by BAASHA of Issachar, who then mounted the throne, and reigned twenty-four years. He fixed his residence at Tirzah, and was succeeded by his son ELAH, who, in the second year of his reign, was murdered, with all his family, by ZIMRI. On hearing this, the army elected their general, OMRI, as king, and marched to Tirzah against Zimri, who had there assumed the crown. He made no resistance, but fled to the harem, which he set on fire, and perished in the flames. In the mean time, some of the people had made Tibni king: but this party was at length put down, and Omri was generally recognized as king. He built Samaria, which henceforth became the capital of Israel; and, after a reign of twelve years, left the throne to his son AHAB, whose reign fills a large portion of sacred history, and will require considerable attention from us.

the blood of fallen princes, massacred by the successful competitors for the perilous crown, tended much to consolidate the strength of Judah, and to raise it to that equality with the rival kingdom, which might not in the first instance have appeared feasible when the great disproportion of territory is considered.

The mention of royal wives, in connection with this reign, may remind us of the remarkable fact, that it is in this reign the word translated *queen* first occurs, as applied to one not a reigning sovereign, as the queen of Sheba appears to have been.

If the reader reflects a little, he will see that the practice of polygamy is incompatible with the existence of the rank of queen-consort. Where there are many wives—some of them of equal or nearly equal rank—how can any one of them be queen? Hence David, Solomon, Rehoboam, and Abijah, who had many wives, could have had no “queen,” in the European sense of the word, which is that of female-king. So it is still in the polygamous courts of the East; and hence the court of the anti-penultimate king of Persia, Futtch Ali Shah, was greatly perplexed when a British ambassador appeared with a letter from queen Charlotte, addressed to “the queen of Persia,” and bearing presents for her. However, that the presents might not be lost for the want of a lady to receive them, and that the “king of kings,” known to be the husband of many wives and the father of many children, might not appear to be destitute of that which the princes of Europe appeared to consider so necessary to him as a queen, the favorite lady of the day was instructed to take the part—to receive the presents and the letter,—the latter being also answered in her name.

The fact is, that there can be no queen-consort where there is more than one wife; and, in the East, when there is no more than one, she is not a queen—she has no recognized public position in the state—she is simply the *zan-i-shah*, “the king’s wife”—that is all. There is, however, in most cases, some one in the harem who, on one account or another,

is recognized as the chief lady. This position is seldom fixed by the king's mere arbitrary will or personal liking, but is determined by circumstances which usage compels him to respect. Hence the *favorite* wife or concubine is not always, or even generally, the chief lady. The circumstances which usually fix that position are either high birth, priority of marriage, or giving birth to the heir of the throne; and if these three conditions, or the first and the last, concur in the same person, the superiority over the others becomes clear and indisputable; and, in any case, the fact of becoming mother of the future king over-rides every other consideration, and renders the happy woman so privileged the chief lady, even though she be not a favorite wife.

Now, to apply this. It is likely that the one of David's wives who was recognized as the chief, was the mother of his eldest son, Amnon,—although, perhaps, Absalom's mother, by virtue of her high rank as the daughter of a king, asserted her claim to scarcely less consideration, and had a separate establishment of her own; and when, by the death of Amnon, her son became the heir, and these two high claims were united in her person, her pre-eminence must have been beyond question or dispute. When Absalom was slain, she necessarily lost the maternal part of her pre-eminence, but retained that which her high birth conferred. So, when Solomon became the acknowledged heir to the crown, his mother became the chief lady of the harem,—though, perhaps, at first, Haggith, the mother of Adonijah,—really the elder son, made some pretensions to that enviable station. Amid these changes, arising from births and deaths of sons, the fixed position which her rank gave to king Talmai's daughter may have seemed not the least enviable, but for this—that the one who was chief lady by virtue of her maternity, had to look forward to the still higher state which she might expect to enjoy when her son reached the throne.

Solomon had among his thousand wives one of the most exalted rank, being no other than the king of Egypt's daughter. She was treated with great distinction, and had a sep-

arate palace for herself; and the only claim to be regarded as the chief wife that could at all interfere with hers, was that of the mother of Rehoboam, the heir to the throne. As, however, the rank is not one of public or official recognition, and as Pharaoh's daughter had a separate establishment, there is no likelihood that their claims came into conflict.

There was in fact one whose claim to be chief lady or "queen," was superior to either of theirs, and to which both could not but submit—and this was that of the MOTHER of the king. The chief *wife* claimed that distinction as mother of the future king; but the chief *lady* was the mother of the king himself. This is in conformity with the prevalent usage of the East, which assigns the first rank in every household, not to the wife of the master, but his mother, to whom the wife merely becomes another daughter. Thus, so far as there was any woman who could be called "queen" in the time of Solomon, it was Bathsheba who enjoyed that distinction. We see a trace of this in the ceremonious respect with which she is received by her son, who rose to meet her, bowed himself to her, and caused a seat to be set for "the king's mother" on his right hand. It was this rank, that of "the king's mother," which really constituted the distinction, making the nearest approach to the rank and dignity of a non-regnant queen.

So, now, we come to the remarkable fact by which these observations have been suggested. We have already had occasion to mention, that Rehoboam's favored wife was Maachah, the grand-daughter of Absalom. On the accession of her son Abijah, she of course became, as "the king's mother," the chief lady in the land, or "queen;" and it appears that she would have retained it under her grandson Asa, but for a cause which is thus stated:—"And also concerning Maachah, the mother (grandmother) of Asa the king, he removed her from being queen, because she had made an idol in a grove." The rights which she enjoyed as the king's mother were not lessened, but rather strengthened, by her becoming the king's grandmother—the maternal head of the

royal house. But she might lose the conventional pre-eminence and state rights (if any) which this position conferred upon her, by her misconduct ; and doubtless Asa, by this decided act, intended to express, and was understood to express, in the strongest possible manner, his abomination of idolatry, and his determination to put it down. The rank of which she was thus deprived, doubtless then devolved on the king's own mother.

The most striking analogy to this is found in the high rank, eminent privileges, and even political influence, to which the mother of the sovereign of the Turkish empire succeeds when her son ascends the throne. We hear little or nothing in Turkish history of any woman except the *validé sultan*,—or empress-dowager,—but of her often, and under various circumstances, which indicate her exalted position and high influence. It was much the same in ancient Persia, where the king's mother enjoyed a peculiar rank and title, corresponding to that of the *validé sultan*, and with privileges much higher than those of his wife. As the true distinction lay in being the king's mother, the mother of his father probably retained that title whenever—which the course of nature rendered unusual—she continued to enjoy the rank and privileges of the chief lady under her grandson, as in the case before us. It is, however, so common in Scripture for a grandmother to be called a mother, that perhaps even this explanation is scarcely necessary to account for Maachah being called the mother of king Asa.

FORTY-FOURTH WEEK—FRIDAY

THE CUSHITE INVASION.—II CHRON. XIV. 4-15.

THE zeal of Asa against idolatry, and for the purity of Divine worship according to the law, has been already intimated. He extirpated whatever appeared to him to savor of

idolatry, even to the extent of removing his grandmother from the post of "queen," on account of the encouragement she had given to idolatrous practices. In connection with the remarks we lately had occasion to offer respecting "high places," it is however worthy of special notice, that although it is said of Asa by one of the sacred historians, that he "took away the altars of the strange gods, *and the high places*, and broke down the images and cut down the groves;"* the other assures us, that "the high places were not removed," although "Asa's heart was perfect with the Lord all his days."† This apparent contradiction is obviated when we observe, that the high places he removed were those in which idols had been worshipped, whereas those consecrated to the Lord himself were suffered to remain. The historian obviously notes this as a short-coming to be deplored, yet not as a wilful or doom-bringing sin.

In such care for the interests of religion, in promoting the temporal welfare of his people, in strengthening his kingdom by fortresses, and by organizing a large force liable to, and fitted for, military service, and in repairing, so far as his means allowed, the shorn magnificence of the Lord's temple and his own palace, the first ten years of Asa's reign happily passed.

Then the clouds of an impending storm appeared in the south—from a quarter unexpected by us, but probably not so by the Judahites,—"Zerah, the Ethiopian," appeared with a countless host, in which a large proportion of Lubim, or Lybians, was included. To the less instructed reader of Scripture this suggests the idea of an army of negroes; and they are led to think of the region south of Egypt, to which the name of Ethiopia properly belongs. But the better informed will be unable to see the possibility that such an army as that of Zerah could have marched through the length of Egypt from Ethiopia, as it must have done in order to reach Palestine, in the reign of such a prince as Osorkon I., who succeeded Shishak in the throne of that kingdom

* 2 Chron. xiv. 3, 4.

† 1 Kings xv. 14.

And although the "Lubim" are undoubtedly the Lybians, he will hesitate to suppose that they could have crossed the breadth of Egypt for the purposes of an invasion, in which the king of that country took no interest. The passage of a large army through any country is a great calamity to that country, and not likely to be allowed for objects in which the king takes no part. Either Osorkon was willing, or was not, that the kingdom of Judah should sustain detriment by invasion. If he were willing, he, with the experience of Shishak's invasion before him, would be apt to consider that this was his own affair, not theirs—that, as the nearer neighbor, it was his right and not theirs to profit by the spoliation and ruin of Judah; but if he were not willing—and there are various considerations which render it probable that he was not—it is scarcely credible that he would have consented, greatly to the detriment of his own people, to their passage through his territories; and the might of Egypt would in that reign surely have sufficed to prevent a passage from being forced, against the wish of the king, through the land. In fact, it seems that little less than the previous conquest of Egypt must have taken place before this vast invading force could have reached the land of Judah from the quarters usually indicated; and this, we know, was not the case. All the difficulty seems to have been created by one of the commonest accidents of translation—that of rendering a large term by another, of more limited signification in the language into which the translation is made. In the original here, Zerah the Ethiopian is "Zerah the Cushite"—a name applicable to all the descendants of Cush, the son of Ham, and even to the inhabitants of the regions originally settled, but afterwards abandoned, by them. Now the name Cush is very rarely in Scripture applicable to the African Cush or Ethiopia Proper, but almost always to the Asiatic Cush, in Arabia. The original settlements of the great Cushite family can be traced at the head of the Persian Gulf, where the name Khusistan, or "land of Ush," still denotes an important district, anciently renowned by the classically softened

name of Susiana. From thence, all along *the coast* of Arabia, down the eastern coast, and up the western, the course of the great settling migration of the Cushites may be traced, in the continued concurrence of the *names* of the great Cushite families, as denoting localities dispersed over the peninsula in the very track which, from the antecedent probabilities created by the physical constitution of the country—a vast wilderness belted by fertile mountains towards the coasts,—a progressive colonization would be likely to follow. Hence Arabia, or certain important parts of it, would be properly called Cush, not only as originally settled by Cushites, but as still the abode of many Cushite tribes, the distinct origin of some of which can, it appears, be recognized even at this day.

It may be shown by the internal evidence of most of the passages of Scripture in which the name of Cush occurs, that it was in Arabia; and in fact this is evinced in the very passage under our consideration. It appears by the results that the invaders were a mixture of pastoral and settled tribes. They had tents and cattle—the latter in great numbers; and they had also chariots and towns. The pastoral herds inevitably fix them to Arabia, if only as confirming the improbability of their having passed through Egypt. Besides, one of their towns to which they fled, and where they attempted to make a stand, was Gerar in the southern wilderness, which fixes them to Arabia Petrea, and the parts about and between Egypt and Palestine. Many doubtless came from more distant parts of Arabia, for this “huge host” seems to have been a great gathering of Cushite and other tribes for this promising expedition, the prime movers of which were doubtless such of them as lay nearest to Palestine, who stimulated the remoter tribes to join them in this enterprise.

The Lybians were, we doubt not, such, and the descendants of such as had been among Shishak’s levies when he invaded the land some twenty-five years before, and who, finding here kindred tribes, and a country and modes of life congenial to their own habits, chose to be left behind, doubt-

less with the glad consent of Shishak, who thus got rid of them when their work was done, without the expense and trouble of restoring them to their own land. It is indeed very likely that the idea of the present expedition originated with this people—in their continual talk of the ease with which the country had been subdued in the time of Rehoboam, of the golden glories of Jerusalem, and of the rich pillage obtained there. We may fancy these rough fellows talking this matter over around their tent fires, to greedy-eared listeners. Deep, no doubt, were the retrospective murmurs at the king of Egypt, for refusing to give up the rich city to be sacked by the troops ; or for allowing it to be redeemed by the treasures of the temple, and thus depriving the soldiers of the just reward of their toils. But so much the better now. What was not then taken was there still ; and much had, no doubt, been added to repair that loss. Thus they would argue in their barbarous fashion, and stimulate those who heard them to the plunder and devastation of a country still in their view rich, and possessed, as they judged, of no strength to resist the force they could bring against it.

FORTY-FOURTH WEEK—SATURDAY.

THE CONTRAST.—I KINGS XVI. 15-23 ; II CHRON. XVI. 7-10.

THE conduct of Asa, on receiving tidings of the Cushite invasion, was in all respects most praiseworthy, and in perfect conformity with the principles of the theocratical constitution. It seems also to evince much sound judgment in a military point of view. Instead of waiting in Jerusalem the appearance of the enemy, after they had ravaged the country in the march to that city, it appeared to him better to spare his people this misery, by marching to the southern frontier, and giving battle to the enemy at one of the great

passes into the country (that of Zaphathah), where, at 1 to guard which, his grandfather had built the strong fortres of Mareshah. The situation for posting his army, at this pass, was admirably chosen. But Asa, while doing the best that circumstances allowed, and taking every advantage in his power, did not rely upon this, and was deeply conscious of his inability to resist the invaders in any strength of his own. His reliance was elsewhere, even in Him who, in taking the position of real Head of the Hebrew commonwealth, had pledged himself to the defence and deliverance of his people. Viewed from the theocratical point of view, or indeed from any point of view, nothing can be finer than the prayer which Asa uttered before he fell to mortal conflict with the enemy:—"Lord, it is nothing to 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 go against this multitude. O Lord, Thou art our God; let not man prevail against Thee."

The Israelites never, from the commencement of their history, failed to be victorious in any battle undertaken in this spirit,—evincing that faith in Him, to which the Lord, by all his covenants, had bound himself to respond. This was so much a matter of course, that the historian simply, but with a truly grand laconism under the circumstances, adds,—“So the Lord smote the Cushites before Asa, and before Judah, and the Cushites fled.” They were pursued with great slaughter to their encampments, and to their towns about Gerar; and the spoil with which the Judahites returned was prodigious, and being largely in sheep and camels, it must have made a material contribution to the substantial wealth of the country.

This victory, so signally the doing of the Lord, together with the encouragements given to the king by a prophet named Azariah, who came out to meet him on his return, greatly stimulated the king in his great work of religious reform and purification. A great festival sacrifice was held at Jerusalem, at which 700 oxen and 7000 sheep were of-

ferred, and the assembled people then and there entered into a high and solemn covenant, "to seek the Lord their God with all their heart and with all their soul."

The result was peace and prosperity for many years. This was so signal and apparent, that after a time so strong a tide of migration into this kingdom from the more troubled one of Israel set in, as excited the serious apprehension of Baasha, who was then upon the throne, and incited him to a bold measure for the purpose of preventing it, or holding it in check. He seized the town of Ramah, which lay within the territory of Judah, six miles from Jerusalem, on the way to Bethel, and began to turn it into a strong fortress. This audacious measure, which held out to Asa the prospect of having so able and resolute an enemy holding a position of great strength within so short a distance of his capital, filled with dismay the royal heart which had not quailed before the hosts of Zerah. He lost that faith which had ennobled his past career, and betook himself to miserable diplomacies, no less impolitic than degrading.

The now important Syrian power seated at Damascus, was at this time under a treaty of peace with the kingdom of Israel, to which it was naturally from its position, and had been before, and was afterwards, most hostile. Asa, knowing the really adverse temper of Syria towards Israel, thought it not unlikely, that the king might be induced to break the existing treaty, and by appearing in the north, compel Baasha to abandon his designs in the south. He tried it, and succeeded; but only received this aid from Benadad, at a most costly sacrifice; for he sent all his silver and gold, whether in the form of treasure or vessels, which he could make available, sparing neither the precious things of his own palace nor of the temple. He reckoned, probably, that it was better to give it up in this way, than to have it taken by force from him; while, if peace resulted from the sacrifice, he would be able to replace it with interest in a few years. For *this* part of his conduct, it is worthy of note, he was not blamed. The treasure which the ambassadors

brought was doubtless more effectual than their arguments in prevailing upon Ben-hadad to accede to a course so dishonorable. He did accede, and sent an army against the north of Israel, which captured and plundered many important towns, and ravaged the whole land of Naphtali, and the country about the sea of Galilee. On hearing this, Baasha at once abandoned Ramah, and went to protect his own country ; and the war between him and the Syrians being thus renewed, he found too much employment to resume his former design.

But, however successful it seemed in its immediate object, the thing that Asa had done displeased the Lord. Its offence was gross and accumulated. It was a want of that reliance upon the Lord, which once, in a really more urgent strait, had won him so much honor ; it was the tempting of another to do a dishonorable breach of faith ; and it was the bringing of a heathen destroyer into that land which was still the Lord's heritage, though it belonged not to Judah ; and upon that people who were still his, although they had strayed from him. For this—but especially for his relying upon the king of Syria more than upon the King of Heaven—a prophet was sent to rebuke and threaten him. It was intimated that, for this, he had not only lost a great victory over the Syrians, which the Lord would have given to him, but his future reign should be troubled with wars. The former intimation is worthy of notice, as being of that rare kind which indicates what *would* have occurred had a certain course *not* been taken. We understand it to mean that Baasha would have called the Syrians to his aid, and that Asa would have been afforded a signal victory over them.

To be thus rebuked in the moment when his diplomatic stroke seemed to have fulfilled its purpose so well, was more than one so little used to contradiction could bear ; and in his rage he sent the faithful prophet to prison—adding to his original fault the grievous sin of persecuting an inspired messenger of Jehovah. Here we have the melancholy spectacle of a prophet of God imprisoned—not by an idolatrous

or notoriously wicked king, but by one who has hitherto borne a noble character, and whose heart was substantially right with God. Not so did David receive Nathan's more stern rebuke. This descendant of his does that, for only attempting to do which Jeroboam had his arm palsied. But, as Bishop Hall charitably remarks: "It were a pity that the best man should be judged by each of his actions, and not by all; the course of our life must either allow or condemn us, not these sudden exceptions."

Forty-Fifth Week—Sunday.

THE WAY OF HELP.—II CHRON. XIV. 11.

"O LORD, Thou art our God, let not man prevail against Thee!" These were the words with which king Asa, full of faith, marched against the Cushite host. Great words they are, and deserve to be well considered. Observe the root of the idea from which they spring. At the first view it might seem more obvious and natural to say, "Let not man prevail against *us*;" but he says, "Let not man prevail against *Thee*." This is a bold word. It assumes that the Lord's cause and theirs was so much identified, his honor so much involved in theirs in this matter, that man's triumph over them would be triumph over him—would compromise the glory of his great name even more than it would compromise theirs. If this notion rested not on strong foundations, it were egregious presumption; but if it were well founded, it was faith. On what, then, was it founded? We are left at no loss in this matter, for Asa himself declares the grounds of this strong, we may almost say daring, claim upon the Lord's assistance.

It was the conviction of his utter helplessness, and therefore of the absolute necessity of the Lord's deliverance, and

that all the glory must therefore be his. "Lord, it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power. Help us, O Lord our God." This is something. This goes a great way. It is indispensable that we should feel our own helplessness, in order to estimate at its true value the help that may be given to us. The claim to help is not with him who thinketh that he has need of nothing, or only of a little help just to make out the "possible insufficiency of his own resources; but with him who feels that he has need of everything—that in himself he has no resources whatever—no works, no worthiness, no strength that may, so to speak, somewhat help the Lord to help him—that old delusion, that old snare, which has in all time kept so many souls from the help they might else have had from God. See that man drowning in the waters, and see that other coming forth from the shore with a strong stroke to save him. See the vain efforts of the first to help himself. He kicks, he struggles, he beats the waters, he rears aloft his arms, he will not be still. He thinks he is helping himself; but all the while he is only doing his utmost to aid his own submersion. If he would be but quiet, in the conviction of the utter impotency of all such attempts to save himself, he might float quietly upon the water until the deliverer came near.* He *is* near—he grasps the sufferer by the hair, he holds his head above the wave, and propels him gently on towards the shore. Let not the thought of helping his helper cross his mind, or he is again undone. Let him lie still in the hands of his preserver—let him have faith in his power to save, and that strong arm shall bear him triumphantly through; but if he yet struggles to help himself, and lifts himself up to catch convulsively at every floating straw, there is no help for him—down he goes.

Asa knew he was in himself helpless, and he knew where to seek an all-sufficient Helper, and he desired to know no

* A fact, that if a man lie still with his arms below the water, he may float any length of time with his face above the water. Men are drowned by their blind struggles in the effort to save themselves.

more. In this he rested—"We rest on Thee." This resting on God was both a cause and an effect. That he was enabled so to rest with undisturbed mind on God, was one of the grounds on which he expected help—"for we rest on Thee;" and so far it was a cause. But the capacity of enjoying this rest, in leaning so entirely upon the Lord, was an inevitable effect of the previous convictions which he had reached of his own helplessness, and of the boundless sufficiency of his Helper. These things belong to the life of faith, and are essentially the same, whether they have regard to our defence against the innumerable adversaries who disturb or threaten our bodily repose—or the spiritual enemies, within us and without us, that bring danger to our souls. In either case, perfect love to God, and perfect trust in Him, which trust is essential to love, gives REST—casts out all fear and doubt. "He that feareth is not made perfect in love;" and therefore he has not yet attained to perfect rest. To enjoy this rest, which is the result of perfect love and perfect faith, is a state of inconceivable blessedness, infinitely greater than that of those whom the multitude look up to with envy and admiration. It is the state of the man who can say, in the quaint language of an old poet—

"The God that made my heart is He alone
That of himself both can and will
Give rest unto my thoughts, and fill
Them full of all content and quietness;
That so I may possess
My soul in patience,
Until He find it time to call me hence.

In Thee, as in my centre, shall
The lines of all my longings fall,
To Thee, as to mine anchor, surely tied,
My ship shall safely ride.
On Thee, as on my bed
Of soft repose, I'll rest my weary head.

Thou, Thou alone, shall be my whole desire
I'll nothing else require
But Thee, or for thy sake.

In Thee I'll sleep secure ; and, when I wake,
 Thy glorious face shall satisfy
 The longing of my looking eye.
 I'll roll myself on Thee, as on my rock,
 When threatening dangers mock."—

SCHOOL OF THE HEART.

A man who has realized these convictions, and who has attained that state of rest, of reliance, of perfect freedom from all anxiety and care, who is fully clad in the armor of God—his hands are fit for war and his fingers for fight—he goes forth conquering and to conquer all the enemies of his peace, as well those who lurk in the corners of the soul's dark cottage, as those that beset him round in his open walk, and prowl, and grin, and gibber about his path. He is fearless. Nothing can harm him ; for he has that peace with him which all the world's armies could not wrest from him, which the world's terrors cannot disturb, which its foul breath cannot sully, and which the raging of its utmost storms can as little ruffle, as it can the "sea of glass" before the throne of God.

It is because that Asa had attained to the state of "rest on God," by which all these privileges became his—that he could say, "In thy name we go against this multitude." This was his might. In this might he went, and he overcame. And it was because, feeling his own weakness, knowing where help was to be found, relying, resting upon that help and in that reliance, and in no other, going forth to oppose the Cushean host, that he was entitled and authorized to regard the cause as the Lord's own, and to say—"O Lord, Thou art our God, let not man prevail against THEE."

FORTY-FIFTH WEEK—MONDAY.

PHYSICIANS.—I KINGS XV. 23 ; II CHRON. XVI. 12.

Asa was in his latter days afflicted with "a disease in his feet," which is generally supposed to have been the gout.

Here, again, the king incurs some blame for having resorted to "the physicans instead of relying upon God." We cannot suppose that he was blameworthy for taking proper means for his recovery, but he was for relying upon them instead of upon the Lord's blessing upon the means they employed. It was therefore a new manifestation of that lapse of faith, to which he had unhappily become too prone. Much had been given to him—even large capacities of faith—and much more therefore was required from him than from men less favored. It may have been something even worse. It is even probable that the "physicians" may have been foreigners and idolaters, whose practice consisted much in superstitious arts and idolatrous rites, instead of the priests, or rather Levites, in whose hands the medical practice of the Jews chiefly rested. In this case his offence was the same *in kind* as that of the king of Israel (Jehoram) in the next generation, who sent to Baalzebub, the god of Ekron, respecting the disease with which he was afflicted, and who incurred thereby a dreadful rebuke for not having rather consulted the God of Israel. This shows, that since diseases were considered the immediate act of God, so was also the cure; and it was usual to ascertain his will through the priests or prophets. It was also sought to propitiate Him by vows, by prayers, and by sacrifices. Under the same views as to the cause of the disease, the heathen resorted to their gods, and sought to win their favor or to pacify them by various strange, superstitious, and often brutal rites. In any case, certainly, under such a state of things, to apply to a foreign physician was but an indirect mode of application to the god he served.

We will take this opportunity of stating a few particulars respecting the state of medicine among the ancient Hebrews.

There have been some curious speculations among them as to the medical knowledge of Adam—founded on the idea that the knowledge of all creatures, implied in his bestowal of appropriate names upon them, must have comprised a knowledge of their medicinal properties and uses. The mere conjecture shows the extent to which animal substances were

applied in the *materia medica* of the Hebrews. In this age, where more potent medicinal agents have been found, it is hard to conceive the extent to which the parts of animals were used, not only by the ancients, but, until a comparatively recent date, by the moderns. Indeed, most of the practices as to applications of animal simples, which, where found in use among our peasantry, are cited, under such headings as "Folk-Lore," as rural superstitions, are often little other than remnants of ancient and legitimate medical practice.

The point is curious; and in proof of it we might quote largely from a work bearing the date of 1664, which sets forth the medical uses of most animals, citing ancient and medical authorities for most of the statements—including Jewish medical writers.* We wish our space allowed quotation from this book; but can only give a sample or two. The first article is "Ape,"—in which, among other things, we are told "an ape eaten by a lion, cureth his diseases"—a fact we most potently believe, having often noted a lion to seem greatly refreshed after demolishing an ape. Under "Asse" we are told, among other delectable matter, that "a little of the water being drunke, of which the cow or asse hath drunke, doth effectually help the headach." "The dried brain of an asse, being drunke daily in water and honey, helpeth the epilepsie in 30 daies."—"The heart of a black male asse, being eaten with bread, helpeth the falling sicknesse."—"The gall doth asswage the signes of abscesses."—"The flesh helpeth against the paine of the back-bone and hipps. The marrow anointed cureth the gout, and easeth the paine. The ashes of the hooves burned help the falling sickness. The dung

* ΠΑΝΖΩΟΡΥΚΤΟΛΟΓΙΑ, sive *Panzcologicomineralogia*; or a *Compleat History of Animals and Minerals, containing the summe of all Authors, both Ancient and Modern, Galenicall and Chymicall, touching Animals, viz., Beasts, Birds, Fishes, Serpents, Insects, and Man, as to their Place, Meat, Temperature, Vertues, Use in Meat and Medicine, Description, Kinds, Generation, Sympathie, Diseases, Cures Hurts, and Remedies, &c.* By Robert Lovell, St. C. C., Oxon. Φιλοθεολογιατρόνομος. Oxford, 1664.

mixed with the yolk of an egge, and applied to the forehead, stoppeth the fluxe of blood, and, with a bull's gall, curleth the haire." Of the mouse it is said,—“The flesh causeth oblivion. A mouse dissected and applied draweth out reeds, darts, and other things that stick in the flesh. Being eaten by children, when rosted, they dry up their spittle. The water in which they have been boiled helpeth against the quinsy. The ashes, with honey, used ten dayes, clear the eyes. The head, worne in a cloth, helpeth the headache and epilepsy. The liver, rosted in the new of the moon, trieth the eiplepsie. The brain, being steeped in wine and applied to the forehead, helpeth the headach. The gall, with vinegar, dropped into the eare, bringeth out live creatures in the eare. The dung, given in any liquour, helpeth the colick,” and is further stated to be good, as are other of its parts and products, for a variety of other uses, which must have rendered this little creature formerly of much more estimation in public opinion than it now bears.

The first mention of physicians in Scripture is in the time of Joseph, and with reference to Egypt, which may be regarded as the western cradle of this and many other ancient sciences and arts. These physicians were those who embalmed Jacob; and were, therefore, rather embalmers than physicians, whose profession is to cure the living, not to embalm the dead. Nevertheless, we know from other sources that the Egyptians had early made great progress in the study of medicine, and acquired high reputation; so that the aid of Egyptian physicians was much sought for even in foreign lands. Indeed, it is far from unlikely that the physicians whose skill Asa so unwisely relied on were of Egypt. It was believed that they had a knowledge of *materia medica* more extensive than any other men by whom medical science was cultivated, and that in this their great strength lay. Indeed, there is clear enough allusion to this in one of the prophets, who exclaims, “O, virgin daughter of Egypt, in vain shalt thou use *many medicines*, for thou shalt not be cured.” Jer. xlv. 11.

No one can doubt that the Hebrews must have brought

some considerable portion of this knowledge of medicine with them from Egypt. The proof of the knowledge actually possessed is strikingly manifested in the indication of the characters by which the priest was to recognize the leprosy, as well as of the sanitary measures to be taken, and the means of cure to be adopted. All this may be seen in Lev. xiii.; and it suffices to observe, that modern physicians,* who have given attention to the subject, have only found occasion to attest the exact accuracy of these indications. The knowledge thus possessed by, and required from the priests, sufficiently indicates that medicine was in all essential respects a sacred pursuit, and was, as such, in the hands of the Levitical priesthood, whose learned leisure and dispersion through the country, as well as their superior education, rendered them in these remote ages the best and fittest depositaries of medical science. Indeed, nothing is more certain than the essential identity among all ancient nations of the professions—religion, law, and medicine, which the progress of civilization has separated into three. Indeed, in our own country even, the profession of the law still bears the outward and visible marks of its ancient connection with religion; and the time is not distant when every parish priest was expected to possess some knowledge of medicine.

Among the Hebrews, leprosy, and all other diseases, were deemed to be the immediate effect of the omnipotence of God. They were sent for punishment or fatherly correction to those who had offended Him or incurred His rebuke; and they were cured when they had appeased Him by their contrition and their prayers, or when the object of their chastening had been accomplished. This true theory of disease and cure among the Hebrews will, in its application, throw much light upon all the passages which more or less bear upon the subject.

As we shall, in the Illustrations of the New Testament, have to take up the further developments of a subject which

* See, in particular, Dr. John Mason Good's *Study of Medicine*.

is most conspicuously produced in that portion of Divine revelation, we here limit our view, as much as possible, to the state of the matter before Christ. For the elucidation of this, there is a most remarkable passage in the Apocrypha, which has been much overlooked in the consideration of the question. It is in Ecclesiasticus; and as the apocryphal books are not now generally accessible, we give it entire below.*

It appears to us that this passage very exactly defines the position of the physician. It allows him honor, and gives due weight to his skill and the real use of the means he employs, but admirably refers all to God. The skill of the physician is His; the medicaments are His; and the cure is His. Even the skill of the physician is proportioned to the faculty he possesses of rendering God honor, by his knowledge and employment of the healing properties which He has imparted to various productions of the earth. In the last clause there is, however, something which would be re-

* "Honor a physician with the honor due unto him, for the uses which ye may have of him: for the Lord hath created him. For of the Most High cometh healing, and he shall receive honor of the king. The skill of the physician shall lift up his head [*i. e.*, raise him to honor]: and in the sight of great men he shall be in admiration. The Lord hath created medicines out of the earth: and he that is wise will not abhor them. Was not the water made sweet with wood, that the virtue thereof might be known? And he giveth men skill, that he might be honored in his marvellous works. With such doth he heal [men], and taketh away their pains. Of such doth the apothecary make a confection; and of his works there is no end; and from him is peace over all the earth. My son, in thy sickness be not negligent: but pray unto the Lord, and he will make thee whole. Leave off from sin, and order thine hands aright, and cleanse thine heart from all wickedness. Give a sweet savor; and a memorial of fine flour; and make a fat offering, as not being. Then give place to the physician, for the Lord hath created him: let him not go from thee, for thou hast need of him. There is a time when in their hands there is good success: for they shall also pray unto the Lord, that he would prosper that which they give for ease and remedy to prolong life. He that sinneth before his Maker, let him fall into the hands of the physician."—*Eccclus.* xxxviii. 1-15.

garded as a sarcasm on the profession if it were met with in a modern writing:—"He that sinneth before his Maker, let him fall into the hands of the physician!"

FORTY-FIFTH WEEK—TUESDAY.

OMRI.—I KINGS XVI. 23-29.

AHAB was on the throne of Israel when Asa died in Judah. He was the second king of his family. It is remarkable of his father Omri, that he was the first founder of a new dynasty, who had not come to the crown by a revolt against his sovereign, and the extermination of his house. It is true that he led the army against Zimri; but in so doing, he appeared as the avenger of the king whom Zimri had murdered, and the usurper's reign of a week, if it can be called a reign, was too short to enable his family, if he had any, to establish any influence dangerous to Omri, or to render their extermination politically expedient. However, it came to pass that Omri attained to the throne with comparatively undefiled hands. He was even spared the blood of Zimri, that guilty man having burned the royal palace over his head in Tirzah, which had by this time become the capital.

This incident had the effect of removing the metropolis to a more central and desirable situation. Instead of re-building the consumed palace, Omri concluded to build not only a new palace, but a new town elsewhere. It is much to the credit of his judgment and taste, that he perceived the advantages which the hill of Samaria offered for the seat of a royal city. There is probably not a finer or more desirable situation in Palestine; and many travellers have expressed a conviction, that the spot was in most respects much preferable to that of Jerusalem, although the special objects contemplated in the Divine wisdom, rendered it expedient that the ecclesi-

astical metropolis of the Hebrew nation should be established there.

The verdant valley which breaks through the mountains westward between Ebal and Gerizim, spreads out often three or four miles into a broad circular basin, five or six miles in diameter, and bounded on every side by beautiful mountains. From the rich plains of this glorious amphitheatre of mountains, near to the western side, rises a very high and steep hill, affording a position of impregnable strength, and of almost unapproachable loveliness. About midway up the ascent, the hill is surrounded by a narrow terrace of level ground, like a belt, below which the roots of the hill spread off more gradually into the valleys. This was the hill which belonged to one Shemer, and which Omri bought of him for about seven hundred pounds. Here he established the royal seat of his kingdom, and had the good taste to call the new town not by his own name, but by that of the previous owner of the land, in the form of Shimron—better known to us in the softened shape of SAMARIA, which it assumed in the Greek language. We are not sure, however, that the credit of this peaceful course is due to the spontaneous generosity of Omri. Considering how reluctant the Hebrews were to alienate any lands belonging to them, and that the kings had no power to compel such alienation, it is quite possible that Shemer could only be induced to part with the hill on the condition that his name at least should stand there as a memorial that it once belonged to him. This, which occurs to us at the moment of writing, seems a very probable explanation of this remarkable fact, and consonant to the known feelings of the Hebrew landholders. Without it, there does not after all appear any adequate reason why Omri should give the name of Shemer to a place which had become his by the payment of what was no doubt regarded as an adequate, if not liberal compensation.

Of Omri it is said, that, *in the eyes of the Lord*, his conduct on the throne was worse than that of all the kings before him. The particulars are not in the history directly stated,

further than that he carried out with vigor the fatal and ruinous policy of Jeroboam. But if we reflect upon the incidental facts and statements connected with his name and proceedings, we may be able to realize some clearer idea of his character and offences. If we refer to the prophecy of Micah (vi. 16), we find this remarkable verse:—"For the *statutes of Omri* are kept, and all the works of the house of Ahab." Taking this in connection with the character which the historian ascribes to him, we cannot doubt that "these statutes of Omri," which were but too well maintained by his successors, and observed by the subjects of his kingdom, were measures adopted for more completely isolating the people of Israel from the services of the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, and of perpetuating, perhaps of increasing, their idolatrous practices. His indifference to the evils of idolatry at least, if not his desire to encourage it, as tending to render the separation between the two kingdoms more complete, is incidentally confirmed by the fact, that he brought about a marriage between Ahab, his son and heir, and Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal king of Tyre.* The Tyrians were devoted to the worship of Baal; and the reigning family seem to have carried an ardor of proselytism into this worship not often witnessed in the ancient idolatries. Knowing this, and knowing, as he must have known, that the feeble character of his son would be sure to bring him entirely under the control and influence of a strong-minded woman, especially as the kings of Israel confined themselves to one wife—we cannot acquit Omri of a culpable disregard of the duty of maintaining the interests of the true religion among his people, even if he had not the sagacity to foresee, nor the wickedness to design, the consequences which actually occurred from this connection.

* In the text he is called "king of the Zidonians:" but it appears from Josephus that he was also king of Tyre. The dominion included both cities, and the people collectively are called "Zidonians" in Scripture. The territorial title in Scripture, is king of Tyre; the gentile title, "king of the Zidonians."

The circumstance is historically interesting, as showing that it fell to the kings of Israel, and not to the descendants of David in Judah, to maintain the connection with Tyre which David and Solomon had established. The house of David, separated now by the kingdom of Israel from Tyre, had no longer any interest in maintaining a political connection with Tyre, though it did not forfeit or relinquish the accustomed advantages of finding there, in common with Israel, a mart for its surplus agricultural produce. This interesting fact we learn from Ezekiel (xxvii. 17), where, speaking of Tyre, the prophet says:—"Judah and the land of Israel, they were thy merchants, and traded in thy markets wheat of Minnith, and Pannag, and honey, and oil, and balm."

With Israel the connection gradually became more close, closer than it even had been in the time of Solomon. There was not, indeed, the same interest in commercial enterprises. But even a stronger tie of common interest had at this time grown up between the nations. The active, ambitious, and encroaching power which had grown up in Damascene-Syria, could not have been regarded without uneasiness even by Tyre, which must have felt an interest in sustaining, by its alliance, the kings of Israel in possession of that portion of northern territory, which alone separated its own dominion from so dangerous a neighbor. That neighbor was about this time very active, and had made alarming advances towards Phœnicia, by wresting from Omri a considerable portion of the intervening territory. The natural tendency of this was to draw the two courts of Tyre and Israel more closely to each other for mutual support—the friendship of each being desirable to the other—Omri needing the alliance of Tyre to strengthen himself against the encroachments of Syria; and Tyre clearly perceiving that to strengthen Israel, was a measure of defence for itself. We thus behold an adequate reason—in such human policy as was now alone considered in Israel—for the closer connection which was by this marriage sought between the two kingdoms, and which, in its remoter consequences, might be expected to place on the

throne of Israel a king equally related in blood to both the royal houses. It was, we know, the duty of the king of Israel to entrust the defence of his kingdom and the safety of his people to the Lord who had given that land to them, and who had promised to maintain them in it, so long as they walked worthy of the high vocation to which they had been called. But this was a pitch of duty to which these kings could not reach. It was too high for them. They could not attain unto it.

FORTY-FIFTH WEEK.—WEDNESDAY.

AHAB AND JEZEBEL.—I KINGS XVI. 29-31.

HITHERTO the Israelites had not cast off their allegiance to Jehovah, or ceased to worship Him, although their worship was damaged by the presence of unworthy emblems, and degraded by maimed rites and an unlawful priesthood. But in the time of Ahab, and under the influence of Jezebel, although they did not formally and expressly renounce Jehovah, they did what was practically the same, by setting up other gods besides Him, and holding Him of no more account than they. Temples were built to them in the metropolis, altars were set up, sacrifices were offered, and bloody and abhorrent rites were performed, by a numerous priesthood. There were nearly a thousand of them; and their frequent presence in the town, and their diligent attendance at the royal court, gave a new and strange aspect to the streets and palaces of Samaria. It is said that there were four hundred who eat their meat at Jezebel's table; which probably means that they were sustained in the precincts of the palace at her expense. It was clearly seen that this was the fashionable and court religion; whence it would naturally follow, that the mass of the worldly-minded would adopt it also, or at least give a divided attention to it. Had this been endured,

the worship of Jehovah would still, doubtless, have been tolerated among those that followed the new religion; for polytheism was tolerant of other gods, and the worshippers of Baal or Ashtaroath would not, on principle, object to the worship of Jehovah, though for themselves they preferred Baal. Jehovah was in their view a God, but He was not *their* god; they were not his votaries, and He had no claim upon them. It was the sublime monotheism of Judaism that could not be tolerant of any other gods than Jehovah within the sacred land, and that asserted his claim to universal and exclusive worship. This gave voice to the prophets, who proclaimed throughout the land the abomination and futility of this new worship. They denounced the judgments of God upon Ahab and Jezebel, upon the worshippers of Baal, and upon the lands and cities which had been defiled by these detestable enormities, and by miracles, sometimes of judgment and sometimes of mercy, they avouched the divine authority by which they gave forth their utterances. This gave rise to fierce persecution against the worshippers of Jehovah, and especially against the prophets—faithfulness to the Lord God of Israel being by the court regarded as disaffection to the government and its measures. Or, otherwise, Jezebel was determined to maintain her own idolatrous religion in Israel at all hazards; and if, as the prophets alleged, the worship of Baal and of Jehovah could not co-exist, and there could be no peace between their worshippers, then it necessarily became a contest for exclusive and paramount worship; and since either Jehovah or Baal must give place, the hard-willed queen determined that it should not be the god in whose worship she had been brought up. These considerations gave more intensity to her zeal in the establishment of her own worship, and in the suppression of that of Jehovah. Thus, between the smiles of the court upon those who came over to Baal, and the now active hostility evinced against the worshippers of the Lord, it ere long came to pass, that the whole nation had become a nest of idolaters. So it seemed to man's eye; but the Lord had his hidden ones,

even in this time of peril ; and when the prophet deemed that he alone had kept the faith, it was made known to him that there were full seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal. Only seven thousand among the millions of Israel ! A small number, indeed, to him who counted the nation, but large to him who had deemed that nation lost in this iniquity. It was but a little flock—yet a flock worthy of the great Shepherd's care—and He did care for it.

Besides the difference in the ultimate object of worship, the worship of the golden calves had never appeared in an aspect so imposing as that now given to the service of Baal and Ashtaroth. This worship was raised up in some degree to a parallel with that of Jehovah at Jerusalem. The golden calf had been established in two provincial towns at the opposite extremities of the kingdom, without any temples, but simply with emblematic images and altars. But now the worship of Baal was centralized in the metropolis, where the temple, doubtless of considerable splendor, was erected, and ceremonial services rendered by numerous bodies of priests. Samaria could now pride itself on being an ecclesiastical, as well as regal metropolis, like Jerusalem ; and doubtless many not over-wise persons reckoned, that something the realm had hitherto wanted was now at last supplied.

And what manner of man was he—this Ahab, son of Omri, who gave his royal countenance and sanction to all these doings ? Excuse is sometimes made for him as not an essentially wicked, but only a weak man, overborne by the powerful will of a resolute woman. But

“ All wickedness is weakness ;”

and it is also true, that all weakness is wickedness, and most of all in a king. He to whose care the welfare of a nation has been entrusted, has no right to be weak. The weakness ascribed to Ahab seems to us merely indolence of character—a love of ease, an indisposition to exertion, unless when thoroughly roused by some awakening stimulus. He was such a man as would rather allow what he feels to be wrong,

for the sake of a quiet life, than take the trouble of asserting what he knows to be right. To shake off—to battle against—this sloth of temper, which made him the tool of others, and rendered him impotent for all good, was his duty as a man, and tenfold his duty as a king; and to neglect that duty was wickedness, was ruin; and it ended, as all such neglect does. in bringing down upon him tenfold the trouble and disturbance of ease which he had striven to avoid. “Anything for an easy life,” seems to have been Ahab’s rule of conduct. But a king has no right to an easy life. It is hard work to be a king. Especially it is hard work in an eastern country, where, on the person of the sovereign, devolve many duties of decision, of judgment, and of action, which in western countries he devolves upon his advisers and ministers.

Jezebel was just the woman to manage such a man; and she soon found how to manage Ahab as she pleased, and to become in fact, through him, the regnant sovereign of Israel, while on him devolved the public responsibility of her acts. It was not by imperious temper, though she was imperious, or by palpable domineering, that she managed this. No. She made herself necessary to him—necessary to his ease, his comfort, his pleasures. She worked for him; she planned for him; she decided for him. She saved him a world of trouble. She taught him to consider the strength of her will necessary to supply the weakness of his own—necessary to save him the labor of exertion and thought. Prompt in decision, ready in resource, quick in invention, ruthless in action,—she saw her way at once to the point at which she aimed, and would cut with a sharp stroke through knotty matters which the king shrunk from the labor of untying. She was thus often enabled to secure for her husband the object of his desires, which he himself shrunk from pursuing or despaired of obtaining; and in accepting it from her hands, he cared not too nicely to inquire whether it were not stained with blood, or whether it heaped not upon his head coals of fire, which would one day consume him.

FORTY-FIFTH WEEK.—THURSDAY.

BAAL.—I KINGS XVI. 32.

It is in some respects to be regretted, that the information we possess regarding the system of idolatry which pervaded the region in which the chosen people were set down is very scanty. The intimations of the Bible are few and unconnected; and the more recent information supplied by the Greeks and Romans is generally superficial, and not always trustworthy; and it is always colored, and sometimes distorted, by the ideas derived from their own idolatries.

From all that can be understood, the idolatry of southwestern Asia seems to resolve itself into the most gross and material form of Sabeism, or the worship of the heavenly bodies. This agrees with Scripture, which continually connects this idolatry, or rather identifies it, with the worship of the "hosts of heaven." The sun, the moon, some planets, and certain constellations, in their mutual relations, or in their relation to the earth, appear to have been the principal objects of adoration; and it is among these, mostly as personified under human figures and symbols, that we are to seek for the Baals, the Molechs, the Ashtaroths, and other idols named in the Scriptures.

The earth, with its phenomena and accidents, had also a part in the myths of this religious system. The different aspects and circumstances of different localities, invested with varying hues legends in their bases identical; while the impassioned nature of man, wrought upon by various influences, caused important differences, and even marked oppositions, to be presented, not only in the fables and symbols belonging to what were really the same idols, but even in the rites and ceremonies by which they were worshipped; and the excited imaginations of men, with the same essential objects before them, bore them away to the most opposite excesses. Thus the worship which was in one place (as at Babylon) altogether

voluptuous, in another exhibited the most ascetic discipline, and was full of deadly rigors and bloody rites.

But we must not go into all the breadth of this question, but confine our attention to the Phœnician Baal, which here mainly requires our notice. It seems that Baal or Bel is here the generic signification of *master*, *lord*, or *husband*; and, as such, is applied merely as a title of honor to different gods,—sometimes to the sun, sometimes to Jupiter, sometimes to another planet. Thus we have in Scripture Baalim (plural of Baal) for false gods collectively; and in some cases the title Baal is applied even to Jehovah himself.* When used by itself in Scripture as the name of an idol, it designates the chief god of the Tyrians and Zidonians. Sometimes it occurs in combination with other names, as Baal-zebub, the *lord of flies*, which was worshipped at Ekron, among the Philistines:† but it is doubted whether this was the proper name, or one imposed in contempt by the Hebrews. If the former, it may be considered as a title of honor corresponding to the “fly-expelling Jove” of the Peloponnesus;‡ but if the latter, it is probably a Jewish nickname formed by an easy distortion of the sound of Baal-samen, the *lord of heaven*. The proneness of the Israelites to deal with obnoxious names in this manner is much in favor of this latter conclusion. Under the name of Baal-Gad (lord of the troop), which occurs in Joshua xi. 17 as the name of a town, which was probably the chief seat of the worship, the Syrians appear to have honored the moon, as presiding over sublunary bodies under the blind movements of chance,—and consequently, as Fortune. Baal-zephon, from whom also another town was called,§ was a name distinguishing the deity who had the north for his empire. The Moabites and the Ammonites adored Baal-peor, or Bel-phegor, by which name the generative or reproductive power of nature—still ultimately the sun—was worshipped with obscene rites and under indecent symbols. Sometimes we find the name of Baal united to

* Hos. ii. 16.

† Pausanius, v.; *Eliac.* i. 14.

‡ 2 Kings i. 2.

§ Exod. xiv. 2.

that of a city in which he was worshipped, or simply as designating the chief idol of that city, as Baal-Beryth, the *lord of Beryth*,*—a city which is said to have been founded by the Phœnicians. There is also the name Baal-Thares, probably *lord of Tarsus*, found upon several medals of the Phœnicians.

But our immediate concern is with the Baal of the Phœnicians. This was undoubtedly the sun; and the name by which he was generally distinguished among the Phœnicians was Melkart, Melkrut, or Melchrat. This has been thought to mean “king of the city,” *i. e.*, of Tyre, or Zidon, though some make it denote “the strong king.” To us, however, it seems to be a compound term, the meaning and sound of which may be drawn from the Hebrew words MELEK ERETZ, “king of the earth,” which is an epithet sufficiently appropriate to the sun, as a type of the life-giving power in nature. With this Phœnician Melkart or Baal, the Greeks—according to their well-known custom of identifying the gods of other nations with such of their own as they appeared most to resemble—identified their own Hercules, and called him the Hercules of Tyre. This was one of their worst identifications, as there appears but little analogy between the deified hero of that name and the supreme deity of the Phœnicians, unless, as we have more than once suspected, Hercules himself is but a type of the energies which the sun exercises, or was deemed to exercise, upon the earth.

From such accounts as we possess, it appears that, from the earliest foundation of Tyre, Baal must have been the tutelary god of that city; and his worship had probably a still more ancient existence at Sidon. The worship gradually spread with the power of Tyre, until it not only prevailed throughout the Phœnician states, but was extended to its distant colonies. At Gades (Cadiz) the everlasting light was kept burning in his temple; and the Carthaginians, who in-

* Classical Berytus, now Beirut. From Judges viii. 33, it appears that the worship of this idol had extended into the Sacred Land in the time of the Judges.

herited this worship from their Phœnician forefathers, continued for a long time to send to the parent city a tithe for the support of his temple.

Under the name of Melkart, or of the Tyrian Hercules, this idol was very famous throughout the west. The Egyptians claimed that he originally belonged to them—was one of the primeval gods of their country. This is likely enough, as Egypt seems to have been a great cradle of gods for all the near nations. The fact is interesting from its having awakened the special attention of Herodotus to this god, and induced him to make a journey to Tyre (about 456 B. C.) for the express purpose of seeking further information at the famous temple there dedicated to his service. What he there learned confirmed his previous information as to the remote antiquity of Melkart's worship. The priests affirmed the foundation of the temple to have been coeval with that of the city, which they said was founded 2366 years before their time. In surveying the temple itself, his attention was attracted by various rich offerings which had been presented to it by votaries—particularly by one pillar all of gold, and another of emerald (?), which by night shone with amazing splendor. Some of the particulars furnished by this and other writers are of peculiar interest, as presenting such resemblances to the worship of the true God at Jerusalem as may have induced the Israelites the less reluctantly to fall into the idolatry of their neighbors, when it was thus enforced upon them. No human sacrifices were offered to him, as there were to Molech; nor does the Scripture anywhere lay this charge to the worship of Baal. No swine were offered to him, although this was rather a common sacrifice to other idols. The fire was always kept burning upon his altar. His priests always officiated with naked feet; and kissing was among the acts of worship—a fact which the reader may find expressly mentioned in 1 Kings xix. 18,—“All the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him.”

The figure, or rather figures, under which the Phœnicians

themselves represented their Baal or Melkart, are now sufficiently ascertained from their coins which have been found in the lands they once occupied. They are rude, barbarous, and fantastic—reminding one of the idols of the New Zealanders. They are not, however, to be taken as specimens of Phœnician art. They could probably have represented them better, had they been better to represent. But they are true likenesses of their gods; for it often happens that the images of idols preserved the very forms which belonged to them in ancient and barbarous times—although the worshippers had become comparatively civilized and skilled in arts,—so that they could, had it been lawful, have fabricated much finer images, and much better representations of them. Use, and the veneration for antiquity, may have prevented the Phœnicians from perceiving, or rather from *feeling*, how outrageously absurd such figures were; but what had Israel—how had Israel fallen!—to feel when such monstrosities as these were set up to Israel to worship, and for Israel to kiss!



These figures of Baal are from Phœnician and Carthaginian coins, and are all taken from Creuzer's "Symbolik," where the authorities are given, and where other figures of the same sort may be found.

FORTY-FIFTH WEEK—FRIDAY.

ELIJAH.—I KINGS XVII. 1-3.

GOD never yet wanted a man for any work He had to be done. He to whom all hearts are open, and all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid, never experiences the embarrassments common among the rulers of the earth in choosing the fittest agent for every task and every work. The world would be rarely governed, if the great ones of the earth possessed the faculties of discovering, and the desire of employing, the best and fittest man in the land for every service. But this is what God does. The spirits of all the men of a whole people lie open as a book before Him; and the man wanted for his day and generation is at once singled out by Him, and called to his work. Such a man never fails to be found; for if the demand be extraordinary—such as the ordinary gifts and attainments of a nation are not likely to supply—the man is appointed for his work from childhood, or even before his birth. He is born for it, trained to it, and, lo, at the appointed time—the time foreseen in the eternal counsels of heaven—he is summoned to his task, and he goes to it—he must go. Willingly or not, he must go. A force greater than the modern enginery of the two worlds impels him—a weight greater than the crush of mountains lies upon him: he must go. What says the prophet, when, craving peace, and weary of his task of confronting a stiff-necked generation, he purposed to abandon it?—"Then I said: I will not make mention of Him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay." Jer. xx. 9. Mark the tremendous force of these phrases,—“A burning fire shut up in my bones”—“weary with forbearing”—“*could not stay*”—as indicating the strong compulsions under which the prophets

acted, whether they were prophets of utterances or prophets of deeds.

So now, peculiar and hopeless as the exigency in Israel seemed, the Lord found a man fit for it—a man fitted beyond all others, by the force of his character, his grasp of faith, and his fearless spirit, to “stem the torrent of a *faithless* age.” This man was Elijah the Tishbite, so called from Tishbe, a place in Gilead beyond the Jordan. He was one of the most extraordinary characters in the Bible. Great evils require great remedies ; extraordinary diseases, extraordinary physicians ; gigantic corruptions, gigantic reformers. And such was Elijah, who, in his gifts and qualities, assumes a figure scarcely human, from its gigantic proportions, and towers aloft like one of the sons of Anak among common men. He was such stuff as the heathen made their gods of ; and had he appeared in a heathen country, he would have come down to us as scarcely less than a god, side by side, perchance with Hercules, instead of only something more than a prophet. There are two sorts of prophets : prophets of deeds, prophets of words. Of the latter the greatest is doubtless Isaiah ; of the former there has not been among men born of women any greater than Elijah. Moses might be named ; but he stood alone. He was “mighty *both* in words and deeds.”

He is introduced with remarkable and significant abruptness, as appearing before Ahab and declaring:—“As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew or rain upon the earth these years, but according to my word.” He did not say *why* this judgment came. It was sufficient to declare whence it came, for too well could Ahab’s conscience supply the cause. The form of the message was also most extraordinary and unexampled. The lack of rain and dew implied the destruction or prevention of all vegetable growth, and therefore famine in the land ; and this stay of the life-bestowing waters of heaven, was not to be withdrawn but when the prophet should give the word. The visitation came at his word, and only at his word would it be removed. Note also, that the denunciation has a very

peculiar character—referring it again more to the prophet himself than is in such cases customary. Instead of the usual formula—“Thus saith the Lord”—he swears by the Lord God of Israel, that no rain shall come but at his own word! In a matter like this, so godly a man as Elijah could not so much have departed from all precedent—could not have given so autocratic a character to his denunciation, had he not been specially ordered to do so. With what object? The object must be estimated from the result. It tended to fix the attention of the court and nation upon the person and character of the prophet; and such an example of zeal for the Lord, and daring boldness for his cause, could not but be most beneficial in its action upon an age so corrupt, unprincipled, and nerveless—an age so void as this seemed of champions for the truth—so destitute of that martyr-spirit which is the salt of life to a nation.

It was not likely that Elijah would stay long within reach of the royal clutches after he had delivered such a message. Here was a man who said that there should be no rain till *he* called for it. What so obvious, then, as to clap him into a dungeon, and feed him with the bread and water of affliction, till it were seen whether the timely rains came or not. If they did, he could be punished as a false prophet; if they did not, he might, being in their hands, be compelled to give the word which should bring rain to the thirsty earth. In any case, his movements and proceedings became matters of vast importance—of such importance, as no other form of the message could possibly have imparted to them. This personal importance, in connection with the result, was not of his own seeking. It gave him naught to glory in, nothing for pride to rest upon. It was a duty imposed upon him—a duty which exposed him to persecution and arrest—which made him a fugitive and a vagabond until the appointed day came round, the great day of vindication.

Meanwhile, it was necessary that he should remain in concealment, and therefore he was directed to withdraw from the haunts of men, and fix his abode away upon the solitary

banks of the brook Cherith. Where was this brook? We do not know. It is not even known whether it was on the east or west of the Jordan. One would think it most probably on the east, as it would seem obvious to interpose the river between himself and the research of Ahab, especially as the prophet was a native of Gilead. However, there were towards the Jordan many secluded places even in the west; and Dr. Robinson suggests, that what is now called the Wady Kelt, formed by the union of many streams in the mountains west of Jericho, issuing from a deep gorge in which it passes by that village, and crosses the plain to the Jordan, may be the Cherith. This learned traveller rests this conjecture upon the analogy of name. The reader may be at some loss to see the analogy of Cherith and Kelt. But *r* and *l* are commutable letters, frequently exchanged for each other; and if the *l* in Kelt be changed for *r*, it becomes Kert, or with the softer sounds of the initial and final letters, Cherth. This seems to us hardly sufficient to make out the identity, as the situation of this brook seems less suitable for the purpose in view than many others that could be indicated.

FORTY-FIFTH WEEK—SATURDAY.

THE RAVENS.—I KINGS XVII. 4-6.

WELL, Elijah, in his retreat by the brook Cherith, would have water enough so long as the lesser streams were not dried up. But how was he to be fed—seeing that the necessities of his seclusion would prevent him from seeking his subsistence? The Lord, who sent him thither, had also promised him food:—"Behold, I have commanded *the ravens* to feed thee there." And accordingly it is stated that, during his stay by the brook Cherith, "the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening." This is a very startling statement, particularly when the nature

and habits of the bird are considered; and it well deserves our attentive consideration.

The first objection is, that the raven was a legally unclean bird. But its uncleanness only consisted in its being itself unfit to be eaten; and it imparted no uncleanness to that which it carried, any more than Abigail's asses, although unclean animals in the same sense, imparted any defilement to the bread and roast mutton which, with other comestibles, they carried as that bountiful lady's present to David.

At the outset it should be observed, that the statement in the text does not require us to suppose that the ravens with purpose and forethought brought victuals designedly for Elijah, and laid them before him, or presented them to him. This was not required for the object in view, and therefore was probably not done; for God does not work needless miracles. Yet it is hard to judge when or in what degree miracles are needless; and in this case the degree of miracle which might not have been necessary, so far as the mere subsistence of Elijah was concerned, may have been necessary to evince the miraculous nature of his subsistence, and to show that he was supported, not by a concatenation of fortunate accidents, but out of the special care and bounty of Him who will sooner root up the mountains, and rain bread from heaven, than suffer those who trust in Him to lack any good thing. Apart from this consideration, and supposing that the subsistence of Elijah was the only object sought, and that by the simplest and safest means, it may suffice to suppose that the place to which he had been directed to retreat, was the chosen resort of ravens, who had their nests among the trees that grew on the banks of the stream. That the ravens were *commanded* to feed him, implies no more than that constraint was laid upon them to become the unconscious instruments of the Divine will—as in Amos ix. 3, "Though they be hid in the bottom of the sea, yet thence will I command the serpent, and he shall bite them." These brought home, morning and evening, to their nests as much animal and vegetable food as sufficed not only for their own wants, but for those

of Elijah, who secured what he required, and dressed it with the dry wood which abounds in such situations. The only objection to this is, that, except during the period of incubation, when the male brings food to the female, and subsequently, when both bring home food to the young until they are able to provide for themselves, ravens do not bring home food at all, but devour it on the spot where they find it. Well, we are content with this. Seeing that, with birds, the period of helplessness in the nest is proportioned to the duration of life—the longest-lived having the longest infancy,—and seeing that the raven is one of the birds that lives the longest, it is not likely that the periods of incubation and of rearing the young occupy together less than six months, which, and not a year, as some imagine, we take to be the period that the prophet spent by the brook Cherith.

But the natural food of the raven was that which, least of all, an Israelite obedient to the law could touch. He could not eat that which died of itself; yet this is generally the case with the carrion, which forms the proper diet of the raven. There is great weight in this objection. Still, the food of the raven is not exclusively carrion. Among birds it is one of the most universal appetite. There is scarcely anything that comes amiss to it; and although its ordinary food be carrion, it does not scruple, especially in times of comparative scarcity, to attack ducks, chickens, and small quadrupeds, which its strong and powerful beak enables it to despatch with a few strokes. It even assaults young lambs and sickly sheep; but it does not, of course, carry them away. It does not even kill them, but pecks out their eyes, and leaves them to a miserable lingering death—a fact alluded to in Prov. xxx. 17. In addition to these, eggs, grains, grubs, reptiles, and shelled mollusks, are among the articles of its bill of fare.

This, at the first view, seems to relieve much of the difficulty, and appears to offer an ample range among which Elijah might obtain food proper for him as an Israelite. But we are to remember that, although the raven may slay ani-

imals of some size, it *cannot* carry them entire to its nest—though it may do so with small animals and birds, such as chickens, rats, mice, and the like ; but such larger animals than these as it may be enabled to slay, it is obliged to rend, and carry portions to its nest, as neither its bill nor its claws are suited to the *carriage* of any heavy or bulky substance. Now this presents greater difficulties than any which have hitherto been suggested. An Israelite was not only unable to eat that which died of itself, but that from which the blood was not perfectly discharged by a mode of killing suited to that purpose. Hence he could not eat that which was “torn of beasts,” unless, *before* the animal so torn was dead, he could slay it in the proper manner. It is therefore difficult to see how the ravens could have brought any meat fit for Elijah to eat—if what they did provide was in accordance with their own instincts and habits. The meat would be a portion of some animal—a piece of flesh. But Elijah would have several questions to decide before he could eat it. Was it the flesh of an unclean animal—that is, of an animal unfit for food to an Israelite ? Was it from an animal that had died of itself ? Was it from one that the raven or some other ravenous creature had destroyed ? It was almost certain to come under one of these three disqualifications, and therefore could not be eaten by the prophet. It was hardly possible for him to suppose that the meat brought by a raven was the flesh of a lawful animal killed in a proper manner. Then again, if small animals were brought entire, it could scarcely ever happen that they were of kinds fit for his food ; and even if they were, they would in almost every case be dead, and therefore unlawful, as “torn of beasts,” without the opportunity of killing them by the knife being furnished.

It is therefore impossible to suppose that the prophet was supplied from the ordinary sources and operations of the ravens. If we admit that ravens were the agents through whom subsistence was given to him, we must hold this agency to have been miraculous in all its circumstances ; and

that suitable and adequate food was daily presented by miracle twice to the notice of the ravens, which they were impelled to bear away to Elijah's hiding-place, and to drop it there. If so, where did they get it so regularly? Some say they stole it from Ahab's kitchen; others, that it was from the provision made by the good Obadiah for the persecuted prophets whom he hid by fifties in caves. Or again, Elijah, as a prophet, may have been enabled to discern what of all the matters brought to their common retreat by the ravens was suited to be his food. Or, further, under the circumstances, it was made lawful for him to eat whatever food he could obtain, or that the ravens brought within his reach,—being instructed, like Peter in a later age, that what the Lord had cleansed had ceased to be “common or unclean.”

We have made this statement on the hypothesis most generally received, that ravens are really intended. On this point there are warrantable differences of opinion, seeing that the word translated “ravens” may have other meanings. We must try to make this a little plainer. We beg even such of our readers as do not know Hebrew, to *look* closely at the words noted below,* and take notice of any differences they find between them. They will see that there is no difference but in the little points above and below the words. These points express the vowel sounds, the letters themselves being only the consonants. Originally, all Hebrew was written, as it still is very frequently, without these vowel marks, as is the case also in Arabic, and other oriental languages. Men, when the Hebrew was a living tongue, supplied the vowels orally, in reading that which was written without them. Usage made this easy to those to whom Hebrew was a native tongue. The differences between words of like consonants was of course brought out by the interposed vowels, just as to the common consonants גרן the sense of *grain*, *groan*, or *grin* is fixed by the vowels added. After the Hebrew text had for many ages remained without the

* עֲרַב עֲרַב עֲרַב עֲרַב .

vowel marks, or indeed without such marks being known, they were at length, in the seventh century after Christ, invented, and inserted throughout by the Jewish doctors to fix the pronunciation, and with it the sense,—thus insuring uniformity of interpretation, as it was feared that diversities might otherwise arise, and the true transmitted signification might be in many cases lost, through the dispersion of the people and the neglect of the language. They *fixed* the vowels, which determined, as it were, whether in particular places the consonants GRN should mean *grain*, *groan*, or *grin*,—bestowing thus a permanent written form to much which had hitherto rested in the memories of men, and had been distinguished only by vocal usage. This was a great and noble work, and was for the most part executed with great integrity and sound judgment. But Christian scholars do not conceive that they are in every case bound to the decisions of the Masoretes (as they are called); while some (fewer now than formerly) reject their authority altogether, and feel at liberty in every case to take the sense which agrees best with the context. This agreement both parties allow that the present vowel points do not always afford; and the text before us is one of those on which that question is raised. Look at the Hebrew words again. The consonants of all are the same as of the word which means “raven,” and may be made plural by the usual masculine termination *im*. But the vowels make these differences between them:—The first word (left to right) is *ārob*, a gad-fly; the others are *ārāb*, Arabian (Gentile—*Arabi*, an Arabian,—plural *Ar’bim*, Arabians); *ērēb*, the woof; *ērēb*, evening; *orēb*, raven. Now the Masoretes fixed the sense of “raven” to the word in this case, by affixing the points which it bears, in preference to any other senses. But this, perhaps, is the last of all the senses which would occur to any one reading the Bible without the points, and without a previous knowledge of this interpretation; while, recollecting that these vowel points were added in an age when the Hebrew mind had gone astray after prodigies, and after it had given

birth to the monstrous creations of the Talmud, we might expect that in such a case as this the most marvellous interpretation would be adopted in preference to any of the others.

Going again over the list of alternatives, that of "Arabs," instead of "ravens," is probably the one that persons free from any previous bias would spontaneously select as the most probable. For ourselves, although we should not hesitate at the ravens, if quite sure that those birds are really intended, yet, when the alternative is thus open, we rather incline to the Arabs,—influenced, perhaps, by such a knowledge of the habits and character of that people as enables us to perceive their entire fitness to be the agents of this providential dispensation in favor of Elijah. To us nothing seems more likely than that encampments of Arabs, who still intrude their tents, at certain times of the year, upon the borders or into the unappropriated pastures of settled countries,—would at this season of drought have been forced within reach of the brook Cherith; and, knowing the increasing scarcity of water, would have remained there as long as its stream afforded any to them—that is, as long as Elijah himself remained, which was until the stream was dried up. They were also, from their condition and habits of life, the very persons to whom the secret of his retreat might be most safely entrusted,—far more so than it would have been to any townsmen, subjects of Ahab, whom some conceive to have been the parties in question.* They were the least likely to know his person, or that he was sought after by the king; or, if they did know this, they were less than any other persons open to any inducements to betray him which the king could offer, or any fears he could impose. Besides, when he had *once* eaten of their bread and meat, the great law of Arabian honor made him secure of continued support, and safe from betrayal. Nothing they could afterwards

* Some conceive there was a place in the neighborhood called Oreb, and that the Orebim (according to the present vowels), who ministered to the wants of Elijah, were the inhabitants thereof.

learn concerning him—no temptation that might afterwards be presented—could have any force against the solemn obligation thus incurred, and the breach of which would cover the tribe with scorn and shame for many generations. Under these views, it seems to us that “I have commanded the Arabs to feed thee there,” is, under all the circumstances, a more probable and natural interpretation than “I have commanded the *ravens* to feed thee there.”

Forty-Sixth Week—Sunday.

ZAREPHATH.—I KINGS XVII. 7-14.

FAITH is the great word to be written in the forefront of Elijah's history. He was “a man of like passions as we are,”—tempted as we are, open as we are to joy and pain—yet of him, of all men that had lived since “the father of the faithful,” it was of him most eminently true that “he staggered not at the promises” or commands “of God through unbelief.”

The chapter before us is full of faith—nothing but faith.

The waters of the brook Cherith began to fail. Now, in such a case it is to be feared, that you who read and we who write these words, should not have been perfectly at ease. The Arabs will go away when this water is done; then what shall we do for food? And even more than that, what for water? We should tremble to see the stream decreasing from day to day. What a sinking of the heart, when we wake one morning and note that the water-mark is lower than it was yesterday; and so, day by day, to see the stream of our life getting lower and lower, till at length there is but a narrow thread of water through the midst of the channel; and at last we are obliged to seek the water in the hollows, or to scoop hollows with our hands to collect the

dribbling waters! It is such slow processes that try faith most of all. Many possess the faith for any sudden, great, and heroic deed—for one who can maintain his faith unshaken in the midst of such slow trials as this.

This trial the faith of Elijah stood. Yet it may be, that now and then, in his solitary musings upon the ways of God, the thought may have occurred to him, that this one stream might have been spared for his sake. But there was faith even in such a doubt. Such an exemption of this stream would, however, have brought crowds of people thither for water, and thus his retreat would have been discovered. In a time when water was everywhere sought for, the fact that it was to be found in the brook Cherith, could not long have remained hidden from the people. Besides, God does not always exempt those whom He loves from their share in such visitations as these. "It is," says Bishop Hall, "no unusual thing with God, to suffer his own dear children to be enwrapped in the common calamities of offenders. He makes difference in the use and issue of their stripes, not in the infliction. The corn is cut down with the weeds, but to a better purpose."

We cannot doubt that Elijah awaited the gradual failure of his means with untroubled thoughts, believing that the Lord whom he served would in due time appear to make provision for his wants; and He did so—but not until the brook was actually "dried up." We may say that the Lord might have relieved his anxiety sooner. But he had probably no anxiety in the matter; and it very often happens that the Lord does not appear for help until the last moment of our exigency—when to delay any longer were to let us perish. Not that He takes pleasure in our trials; but He cares above all things for our soul's welfare, and therefore subjects us to such wholesome discipline as may help to build us up in the faith, and bring our souls nearer to him. It is when help comes but at the last pinch, that we value it the more, and are proportionably more thankful to our helper.

The relief came in the very extraordinary shape of an or-

der to proceed across the country to Zarephath, in the country of Zidon, where a widow woman had been commanded to feed him. Strange it must have seemed, that he should be directed to go into that very country which had been, by its gods and by its Jezebel, the occasion of all Israel's troubles, and which, as appears by the sequel, had a common share in the calamity. Doubt might have asked, Why send him to such a country—subject to the same visitation; and why, out of all there, to a poor widow, who could have little means of providing for his subsistence? And if a widow, why not rather to one of the thousands of widows in Israel? But the high-hearted prophet knew that his course was not to reason and speculate, but to hear and obey. So he forthwith girded his hairy mantle closer to his body, and taking his staff in hand, set forth at a strong pace upon his journey.

When he approached Zarephath, he encountered a woman gathering sticks. He accosted her. He had drunk no water since he left the brook; and, devoured with keen thirst as he was, his first thought was naturally of water. "Fetch me," he said, "a little water, I pray thee, that I may drink." This was a great thing to ask in such a time of drought; but although the poor woman perceived from his appearance and accent, that he was a Hebrew, and even gathered from his hairy mantle and leathern girdle, that he was a prophet of the God of Israel—she was hastening to satisfy his want, when he called after her with the additional request,—“Bring me a morsel of bread in thine hand.” On this she spoke; for this thing was more than she could do—“As Jehovah thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but a handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse; and behold I am gathering two sticks, that I may go and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it and die.” Here note that, as among the Germans at this day, “two” is equivalent to “a few.”

By this Elijah knew that he beheld the woman to whom he was sent. But how came *she* to know the Lord? That she was a worshipper of Him, as some have thought, is not likely, and betrays some ignorance of the extent to which

the heathen were disposed to recognize the gods of other nations as gods—and powerful gods—but not as their gods. Besides, she says “*thy* God”—an addition which she would not be likely to have made, had the Lord been her God also. The prophetic garb of Elijah pointed him out as not one of the votaries of Baal, but a worshipper of Jehovah, and, as such, it was a civility to mention his God; besides that, she really had such notions of the Lord’s power as inclined her to speak well of his name; and, moreover, it had probably reached this quarter, that the existing drought was owing to the wrath of the God of Israel against his people, which could not but raise a fear of offending him, and a desire to mention his name with honor.

We see that the kindness of this poor woman shrunk from *this* test. Human kindness can scarcely come to the pitch of giving the *last* meal of yourself and child to another. The prophet hastened to re-assure her:—“Fear not; go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof 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.” Now here was a demand upon the faith of this woman—from a foreign man and a foreign God, as large as any exacted from the great prophet himself. See how it stands. First, she was to make up her provisions for Elijah, trusting that, as he had said, more would then come miraculously to supply her own wants. What a trial! What would the “bird in the hand worth two in the bush” principle, say to this? Who could find the heart to blame her had she declined to run what was under the circumstances so hard a risk? Who would blame her if she had discredited this stranger? How could she know but that, after he had eaten up her precious bread, he might laugh in her face? Besides, was not his very anxiety to be served first of all very suspicious? Looked it not as if he were determined, at all hazards, to secure a meal for himself; and could we call it unreasonable had she asked for

the proof first—which could be given as well before as after—that it should be as he had said? But nothing of this occurred. She went and did as Elijah had told her, and found the result as he had promised. That barrel from which she had taken the prophet's dole, never wanted meal, and the flask was never void of oil, during all the three years more that passed before the rains again watered the gasping earth. This was faith of the true sort—heroic faith—the faith that asks no questions. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, I have not found such great faith, no, not in Israel.”

FORTY-SIXTH WEEK—MONDAY.

THE DEAD CHILD.—I KINGS XVII. 15-24.

How Elijah employed himself all the time he was at Zarephath we know not. If he had been in Israel, we might guess that he taught and governed the schools of the prophets. But he had nothing of this kind to occupy him at Zarephath; and it is clear that he kept himself as private as possible, as he must have been aware that Ahab sought him diligently; and if he had known where he was, his influence at the court of Tyre was amply sufficient to cause him to be given up. To the looker-on he might seem to be leading an idle life. But he whom the world calls idle is often “busiest most” when he seems least occupied. To a holy man, meditation and prayer are an occupation, and make time pass swiftly. Then, such a man as Elijah must have felt a generous pleasure in leading the comparatively untutored, but open, mind of this poor widow to the true conceptions of the God of Israel, and the great designs of his grace and providence. Her son, also, could hardly escape his earnest solicitude; and we cannot doubt that he labored much to educate his mind in all true knowledge.

He became interested in this lonely pair, whose lives he had been the means of preserving. He loved them. It was a grief of heart, a dreadful shock to him, to learn one day that the boy was dead, had died suddenly; and to discern, through the form which the grief of the mother took, that by some process of reasoning—or rather, perhaps, of unreasoning feeling, which it is difficult to follow with certainty—she ascribed this calamity to his presence. Consider that this boy was her only child, and that she was a widow—to estimate the extent of her loss and the agony of her spirit. To lose one of many in death, is a most awful and trying thing; how hard, then, to lose the one who stands alone, and besides whom there is no other to us! When we behold that a child so dear

—— “Like a flower crusht, with a blast is dead,
And ere full time hangs down his smiling head;”

how many sweet interests in life, how many hopes for the time to come, go down to the dust with him! The purest and most heart-felt enjoyment which life offers to a mother in the society of her little child, is cut off forever. The hope, the mother's hope, of great and good things to come from this her son, is lost for her. “The live coal that was left,” and which she had reckoned that time would raise to a cheerful flame to warm her home, and to preserve and illustrate the name and memory of his dead father, is gone out—is quenched in darkness. The arms which so often clung caressingly around her, and whose future strength promised to be as a staff to her old age, are stiff in death. The eyes which glistened so lovingly when she came near, now know her not. The little tongue, whose guileless prattle had made the long days of her bereavement short, is now silent as that of “the mute dove.” Alas! alas! that it should ever be a mother's lot to close in death the eyes of one whose pious duty, if spared, should be in future years to press down her own eyelids. This is one of the great mysteries of life, to be solved only thoroughly, only fully to our satisfaction, in that

day when, passing ourselves the gates of light, we behold all our lost ones gather around our feet.

We marvel not that the poor widow of Zarephath, thus suddenly smitten, spoke in the bitterness of her spirit to Elijah:—"What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? art thou come to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son?" This is manifestly founded on the notion, prevalent in those days, that sickness and untimely deaths were special judgments from heaven; and it would appear, that the consciousness of sin having been awakened in the breast of this woman, by the views of the Divine character which Elijah had set before her, and by the observation of the man of God's holy life and conversation, she seems to have thought that the God of Israel had probably, at the instance of his prophet, taken this means of impressing her with a sense of her unworthiness.

The imputation, however interpreted, upon one who had really been the means of preserving her son's life, as well as her own, so long, was unjust to him, and perhaps had, under other circumstances, kindled up his naturally warm temper. As it was, her deep affliction left room for no feeling but commiseration, which seems to have been strong enough to make him feel disposed, for the moment, to question the Lord's justice and mercy in bringing this deep affliction upon one who had so befriended his servant. These are among the occasions on which the best and holiest of men often lose the soundness of their judgment; and Elijah, although a wonderful man, was still a man of like passions as we are. He said nothing before the woman. He had not the heart to reprove her, in her grief, for the harsh suspicion that he had been instrumental in bringing this misery upon her. The bereaved, and not yet wholly chastened heart, seeks some object on which to wreak its sense of wrong. God himself is the real object of this feeling; but, dreading to smite the throne of heaven, the distressed soul seeks, and is glad to find, some intermediate object of its indignation. Elijah understood this, and made no attempt to cast back the words which this poor

childless widow flung forth in the trouble of her spirit. He forbore to tell her, that such words as these showed her need of the affliction that had come upon her. He simply asked her to give him the child; and on receiving the corpse from her bosom, where it lay, he bore it away to his own little garret, and laid it down upon his bed. There he gave free vent to his strong emotions. Remember that the most marked characteristic of Elijah was the strength of his will, the indomitable character of his faith. Our Lord says,—“The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the VIOLENT TAKE IT BY FORCE.”

Now Elijah was one of those who take the kingdom of heaven by force—who storm its crystal walls in unconquerable faith, and batter them with prayers that will not be denied. To use fitly the compulsive prayers of Elijah, it is needful to have Elijah’s faith—just as only one who wrestles till break of day as Jacob did, could dare to say—“I WILL NOT let thee go, except thou bless me.” Behold this great man in his chamber, alone with the corpse of that fair child. See how vehemently he strides up and down, gradually working himself up to the height of the great demand which gleams before his thought. Hear him. He ventures to expostulate; humbly indeed, but with some soreness of feeling, natural enough—only too natural—to one who began to think that afflictions attended him wherever he went. Trouble he could bear, so that it came upon himself alone; but it was hard to feel that his presence brought nothing but misery to those who befriended him most. “O Lord my God,” he cried, “hast thou brought evil upon the woman with whom I sojourn, by slaying her son?” This thought was hard to bear. Again, he lashes himself up to his great purpose, which had only not crossed the mind of man since the beginning of the world, because no man before had the same degree of faith—the faith to deem it possible that the dead might be restored to life at man’s urgent prayer. It is done. His purpose is taken. The child shall live. Nothing is too hard for the Lord. It is as easy for him to give back life as

to take it : and he will do this if asked with adequate faith. Elijah knew that men too often expect to move the mountains by such faith as suffices not to shake the mole-hills ; and that because, from the insufficiency of the means, the hoped for results do not follow, the power of faith is disparaged. But he felt the true mountain-moving faith heaving strong within him, and he gave it unrestrained vent. He threw himself upon the corpse, as if, in the vehement energy of his will, to force his own life into it ; and the while he cried, with mighty and resistless urgency, to God, to send back to this cold frame the breath he had taken.

Faith conquered. It was *adequate*, and therefore irresistible. The fleeing soul was arrested in mid-career, and sent back to its earthly house. The child revived ; and we may conceive the deep emotion with which the forlorn widow received—far past all her hopes or thoughts—her living son from the hands of the prophet. The effect was salutary. It removed all lingering doubt in her heathen-trained mind of the mission of the prophet, and of the truth of the great things he had so often told her. “ Now *by this* I KNOW that thou art a man of God, and that the word in thy mouth is truth.”

FORTY-SIXTH WEEK.—TUESDAY.

THE RE-APPEARANCE.—I KINGS XVIII. 1-20.

ELIJAH had long concealed himself from the search of Ahab—not because he feared, but because the hour was not yet come. When the hour had come, and he was ordered not only to care no more for concealment, but to go and present himself before the king, he conferred not with flesh and blood, but girding up his loins, set forth upon the journey. Sad were the sights that met his eye. The land lay desolate

before him. All was dry, and parched, and barren, and the face of the earth seemed to have been burnt up by the wrath of God. No trace of the products or the labors of the field were to be seen; cultivation had ceased; and the eye sought in vain the groups of those who were wont to till the ground, and gather in the harvest and the vintage. All seemed solitary. Men had no business to bring them abroad, and they remained at home musing in their cottages, or crouching about the market-places, which trade had by this time almost forsaken. Even the birds had abandoned the land which afforded no nourishment—except only the screaming fowl that fed on dead creatures, and they found no lack. Even the cattle had disappeared. The shepherd tending his sheep and goats was to be seen no longer; and the herds of neat cattle, which once enlivened the scene, had altogether disappeared, for there was no more pasture.

The calamity had come to such a pass, that the king himself had determined to explore the land in one direction, in search of green herbage for the royal cattle, while Obadiah, the governor of the palace, was, at the head of another party, to search in an opposite direction. This was to be sought at the brooks; for it was possible that in some a little moisture might still remain, and there some herbage was likely to be found,—likely, but not certainly, for such places form, in times of drought, the resort of wild herbivorous creatures, who seldom leave the place while any green thing remains. If, therefore, in the course of their researches, the king and his trusted servant did come to some slight traces of water—which is scarcely probable—the expectations raised by it must often in this way have been disappointed.

This journey of the king in person in search of herbage, is a somewhat remarkable example of the simple manners of those ancient times. It is, however, the same among the emirs of Arabia, the chiefs of central Asia, and the kings of southern Africa, at the present time. None of these high personages (and some of them have great power) think it in any way below their dignity to lead an expedition in search

of grass or water. The matter is indeed of so much importance, that it is regarded as a sort of official duty in them to conduct the search; and success in it contributes very materially to their popularity among their people, who are apt to ascribe the happy result in a great measure, if not wholly, to the "fortune" of their chief.

Obadiah, who led the other party, although an officer of high rank and trust in the court of Ahab, was known to be a sincere worshipper of Jehovah—one of the few whom neither fear nor favor had induced to bow the knee to Baal. Nay further, it was now publicly known that, during the first heat of the persecution against the Lord's servants, he had secured the safety of no less than a hundred of his prophets,* by concealing them in caves, and there providing for their support at his own cost, until the storm had blown over. It is creditable to Ahab that he had for his most trusted servant such a man as this; and he must have been so much attached to him, that even Jezebel had not ventured to remove him from near his person. It was the policy of that evil-minded but sagacious woman not to rouse her husband to any exertion of strength by running counter to his known wishes and predilections; and she no doubt found her advantage in another way, from the concessions which this plan of action occasionally extorted from him.

Such a man as Obadiah could not but be acquainted with the person of Elijah. Yet so incredible did it seem, that he who had so long remained in such concealment as the emissaries of the king had been utterly unable to penetrate, should now appear thus openly abroad in the high road to Samaria, hastening, as it were, into the very jaws of the lion, that he could scarcely trust his own eyes when he beheld the hair-clad prophet advancing towards him. "Art thou my lord Elijah?" was the expression of his astonishment. The answer was laconic: "I am. Go and tell thy lord that Elijah is here." This raised the perplexity and apprehension of the

* Probably "sons of the prophets," or those under training in the schools of the prophets.

good governor to the utmost. The prophet was so much in the habit of rendering unquestioning obedience to the mandates he received, that he seems to have got into the habit of expecting the same from others whom he knew to be true and faithful men. The reply of Obadiah apprized him that he had made a mistake. This person explained how diligently Ahab had sought him through all lands to which he had access, and how intense was his anxiety and eagerness to gain possession of his person. He could not believe that the king's intentions could be otherwise than intensely hostile towards one, whom he regarded as the cause of all the misery that he and his people had suffered; and such being the case, he felt persuaded that the Lord would protect his servant by withdrawing him from the face of his greatest enemy, whose rage would then be turned against Obadiah himself, as one who had deceived him. He prayed, therefore, to be excused from a task so dangerous.

The reply of Elijah convinced him that he fully intended to meet the king; and being satisfied of this, he reasoned no more about motives and consequences, but set forth in search of his master. It seems that he was not long in finding him; and soon the king and the prophet confronted each other face to face. "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" was the salutation of the king. He was hardly prepared for the daring and faithful retort. "*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.*" This stern rebuke led the poor king to feel that he had his master before him, and that the hairy mantle of the prophet was a symbol of greater power than the royal robe, and his staff than of the sceptre. He quailed before him; and the same facility of temper which inclined him to evil when under the influence of Jezebel, swayed him to good in the presence of Elijah. We have heard of men whose whisper could quell the rage of the wildest horse, and bend him down to sudden tameness. Power of the like kind some men possess over other men. Elijah possessed it eminently; it was the gift of

God ; and such a man as Ahab was a proper subject for its influence.

Besides, Ahab seems to have had some capacities for right feeling when away from under the deadly influence of his wife ; and whatever may have been his first purpose when he heard that Elijah had awaited him, he had time to cool in the way to the place where he was. This, indeed, had probably been the object of the prophet in sending to him, instead of going with Obadiah, and so appearing abruptly before him.

Now, overawed by the words and demeanor of the great prophet, the king became anxious lest any untowardness on his part should obstruct that prospect of rain, the want of which was now so deeply felt in the sufferings of himself and people, and which he believed could only be brought at the intercession of Elijah. He there consented at his demand, to call together, not only the four hundred and fifty “ prophets ” or priests of Baal, dispersed through the land, but the four hundred priests of the groves (rather of Ashtarothe), who ate at Jezebel’s table—with a view to that trial of spiritual strength which the prophet proposed. The obvious fairness of the demand, the little there could be to apprehend from one man against a thousand, with some curiosity as to the result, together with the hope of rain, which the prophet probably held forth as the issue of the contest,—concurred to secure Ahab’s compliance. It is indeed likely that more passed between the king and the prophet than has been recorded ; and that the latter, as we have supposed, explained in general terms his object in making this demand. So it was, that Ahab consented, and sent forth the required summons. It is a significant fact, that although it was obeyed by the priests of Baal, the four hundred priests under the immediate influence of Jezebel were absent. In this, we cannot fail to see her hand.

FORTY-SIXTH WEEK—WEDNESDAY.

CARMEL.—I KINGS XVIII. 19-22.

FORTY miles below Tyre, and little more than half that distance west of Nazareth, and forming the south-western boundary towards the sea of the plain of Esdraelon, extends for several miles the mountain ridge of Carmel, throwing out a bold promontory right into the sea. The beauty of Carmel is celebrated in Scripture; and even in this day of desolation it sustains its ancient praise. The enlivening atmosphere—the sides covered with perpetual verdure—the brow dark with woods—and the wide prospects around—combine to form a scene which he who has once beheld forgets no more. And this is saying much; for there are few travellers who do not forget as much of what they have seen, as most people do of the books they have read. The mountain is from a thousand to twelve hundred feet in height, and the views which it commands are very extensive. In front, the view extends to the distant horizon, over the dark blue waters of the Mediterranean; behind stretches the great plain of Esdraelon, and the mountains of the Jordan and of Judea; below, on the right hand, lies the city of Acre, lessened to a mere speck,—while, in the far distance beyond, the eye rests upon the high summits of Lebanon.

Where “Israel was gathered together unto Carmel,” the scene of the great transaction—“the Lord’s controversy,” which they came to witness—was doubtless the inner side of the mountain, where it gradually descends into the noble plain beneath. This declivity overlooks a vast extent of country on every side; and from the hills of Galilee and Samaria the consummating miracle might have been beheld by the more distant gazers; while, from the plain in front, the prophets of Baal, their useless altars, and their frantic movements—as well as the calm majesty of the avenging prophet, would have been as distinctly visible as if the whole had

been brought to their feet. It was a noble and fitting spot for one of the greatest transactions in the history of man; and which the imagination can so inadequately grasp in all the fulness of its grandeur, that we know not of any painter that has even attempted to portray it.

The great assembly gathered there together consisted of the priests of Baal, and some others, perhaps not very numerous, who were exclusively worshippers of that idol, and disavowed all knowledge of, or cared for, Jehovah. The court party surrounding the person of the king, who could not but know the claims Jehovah had to their exclusive reverence, and who, perhaps, had not gone so far as absolutely to deny him, but who practically ignored his existence and his claims, by giving all their attention and all their service to the fashionable idolatry. To them, this was but another form of the universal world worship. The worship of Baal was favored at court,—to follow it was the road to advancement and honor; therefore Baal was great, therefore Baalism was true. And to them it was true; for Mammon was the real object of their worship, and Baal to them was Mammon. Then there was the great crowd of people, who, while they worshipped Baal, had never formally renounced Jehovah, nor had ceased to regard themselves as his people, and heirs of the promises made to the fathers. Sometimes they worshipped Baal, sometimes Jehovah, as convenience or impulse dictated, rendering, perhaps, generally their more public service to Baal, while Jehovah had the higher place in their private service and in their thoughts, and hoping in their hearts that they might not be far wrong in serving *both*. This was *their* form of serving two masters, which so many of us do at this day in some form or other, although the idol we associate in our worship with Jehovah may bear some other name than Baal.

It was to this great multitude of time-servers that the prophet addressed himself. When he stood forth, and lifted up his hand as one about to speak, there was a dead silence among that great assembly; and in that thin air his strong

and awful voice was heard afar. Those who expected a long harangue, full of sharp rebukes and vehement calls to repentance, were disappointed. Elijah was habitually a man of the fewest words; but these few words were always full of power, and produced more effect than the labored discourses of the most "eloquent orators." He spoke from God, he spoke from the heart—from his own heart—to the hearts of others.

In the present case, his words were not aimed at the apostasy, but at the hesitancy, of the people—not at their idolatry, but at their doubleness and indecision. Under the old dispensation, as under the new, nothing is more abhorrent to God than a profane neutrality in matters of vital moment—than the lukewarmness which admits not of decided opinions. He likes decision. He likes something real. Be hot; be cold; be something. To be

"Everything by turns, and nothing long,"

is intolerable—is hateful to Him. So now the prophet:—"How long halt ye between two opinions? If Jehovah be God, then follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him." In this was a boldness characteristic of this wonderful man. Instead of a tirade against Baal and his worshippers, here is a simple alternative of choice. His simple cry is—"Decide! decide!" But decision is the most difficult of all things to lukewarm and temporizing men. The demand to take a part at once and for all, is the most cruel task that could be imposed upon them. This great audience shrunk from it. Dismay and astonishment held them mute. "They answered him not a word." Some say that they feared to pronounce for the Lord in the presence of the king and the priests of Baal. Some say that they feared to pronounce for Baal, in the presence of that prophet whom they believed to possess the means of bringing down to the parched earth the refreshing showers, which could alone fertilize its barren womb. But we venture to say—it is our humble opinion, that they were silent as careless men, shrinking from the trouble and re-

sponsibility of decision. It required something more than they had yet witnessed to rouse them out of the inertness into which they had fallen.

Let us observe that, although the essential meaning of the prophet is correctly enough conveyed in the phrase—"How long halt ye between two opinions?" this is rather an explanation than a literal rendering of the original, which to us has a significance which ought not to be lost. Literally, the words may be translated—"How long leap ye upon two branches?"—a most beautiful and poetical allusion to the restlessness of a bird, which remains not long in one posture, but is continually hopping from branch to branch. Somewhat less expressive, but still very significant, is the version which others extract from the original words:—"How long limp ye upon two hams?"—alluding to the alternate movements of the body—now on one side, and then on the other—of a lame man in his walk.

FORTY-SIXTH WEEK—THURSDAY.

THE CONTEST.—I KINGS XVIII. 22-40.

THE silence of the people at his appeal was no surprise to Elijah. He knew them and their state too well. He had calculated on it, and was prepared for it. He was prepared, by one grand demonstration, to force upon them the conviction of the impotency of their idol, and to compel them to acknowledge the supremacy of Jehovah. This was probably deemed by him to be necessary, before he could be justified in interceding for them, that they might have rain, with the God whom they had as yet refused to acknowledge. What right had they to expect favors from Him whose authority they had disavowed, and whose greatness they had insulted? No; they must be brought to a more suitable state of mind before he could pray the Lord to open wide that hand, in which the seasonable rains had been so long shut up.

Elijah proposed a trial which should demonstrate to their senses the proportion between the claims of Jehovah and of Baal. He desired that two bullocks should be provided,—one for him, and one for the priests of Baal. These they were to lay out upon two altars for sacrifice, in the usual manner; but that, instead of applying fire to their offerings, each party should supplicate their God, and the God that answered by sending fire to consume the victim should be acknowledged as the Almighty Lord. To show that the human disadvantage was all on his side, the prophet touchingly alluded to the disproportion of their numbers:—"I, even I only, remain a prophet of Jehovah; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men."

The proposal was altogether so fair and unobjectionable, that the people assented to it with such entire satisfaction, that the Baalite priests, whatever may have been their misgivings, could not with any credit refuse to abide by this ordeal. Indeed, they could have done so with the less grace, seeing that, as we have shown, their Baal was no other than the sun, whence it should have been very much in his line thus to supply them with the fire they wanted for his service. Remembering what we have read respecting the skill of the ancient heathen priests, in the arts of producing sudden combustion by their skill in pyrotechnics, one almost shudders at the danger of the trial proposed; for, if the priests had been able, by some secret art or contrivance, to kindle the fire upon the altar, the result would have been deemed conclusive by the people in favor of Baal. But they either did not possess such arts, or from the suddenness of their being called on for this trial, *off their own ground*, and watched by thousands of vigilant eyes, were unable to exercise them.

They, however, set to work with the reality or show of great courage and vigor. They built their altar, they laid on their wood, they slew the victim, and set it ready for the burning. They then commenced their sacred invocatory dances around the altar,—first slow and solemn—then

quicker—then with frantic energy—their numerous skirts flaunting in the air, and creating an artificial breeze. Then, as their blood waxed hot, and their enthusiasm was kindled, arose from among them shrill cries, fit to pierce the heavens, of “Baal, hear us! Baal, hear us!” and presently, in the madness of their wildering excitement, they smote themselves with their knives, and the blood gushed out and streaked their persons with gore, presenting a most frightful spectacle to the eyes of unexcited observers. But still their oracle was dumb,—no responsive fires came down from heaven in answer to their cries; and as the time advanced in their abortive efforts to rend the brazen heavens, the voice of the Lord’s prophet was heard lashing them with sarcasms, which smote them with far keener cuts than the knives which, in their madness, they thrust into their flesh:—“Cry aloud; for he is a god: either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is on a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked.” This is one of the few examples of ridicule to be found in the Scripture, and justifies the use of that somewhat dangerous weapon on proper occasions. The present occasion was marvellously proper, and the prophet’s words must have had an awakening effect upon the minds of the people, coupled as it was with the wild doings of the priests, which might have been stimulating had they been less protracted, or had any result appeared. But the whole affair grew vapid by its long duration, and by its entirely abortive character. We have no doubt that the people were heartily weary of it, and had ceased to pay attention to their proceedings, long before the priests found it in their hearts to give over their attempts, and were constrained to confess that their god could or would not move to vindicate his own honor.

The expectancy of the people had, however, a remaining object. It was yet to be seen whether or not the Lord would do that which Baal had failed to accomplish. But Elijah was in no hurry. He allowed them to occupy the greater part of the day in their vain endeavors, that their utter futility might be manifest to all the people. It was

not until the regular time of evening sacrifice approached, that the prophet arose for action. Then the relaxed attention of the people was once more wound up, and directed with eager interest to his proceedings. The murmur of voices all around became suddenly silent, and those who had sat down, or were lounging on the dry plain, stood up.

One would think that Elijah might as well have gone over to the altar of the Baalites, where everything was ready, and call down, in the Lord's name, the fire which the priests had been unable to obtain from their idol. But he would have nothing to do with the unclean thing. He knew the place of an old altar which had there been formerly used for the worship of Jehovah. It was in ruins, and had, as a high-place altar, been irregular; still, as consecrated to the Lord, it was better than one set up for Baal, and better than one altogether new. He repaired it, so that, when completed, it was composed of *twelve* large stones. *Ten* tribes only had direct concern in this controversy; but the faithful prophet would not omit the opportunity of impressing upon the assembled people the essential unity of the nation, and the unity of their true worship. All being ready, the prophet directed the altar, the victim, and the wood, to be flooded with water, in such abundance that, as it flowed down, it quite filled a trench he had caused to be dug around to receive it. He multiplied difficulties, in order that the miraculous nature of the result might be rendered the more striking, in contrast with the vain efforts of Baal's votaries, of which the cold altar and the unconsumed victim stood there for a monument.

At the right moment of national sacrifice, the prophet approached the altar; and the simplicity of his proceedings—of his words and actions—appears in fine contrast with the demonstrative antics in which Baal's priests had consumed the day. He called upon "Jehovah, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel," to "let it be known this day that Thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. Hear me, O Lord, hear

me ; that this people may know that Thou art the Lord God, and that Thou hast turned their heart back again." The words had no sooner passed his lips than the fire of the Lord came manifestly down, with such devouring energy that it consumed not only the victim—not only the wood, but the very stones of the altar, and licked up all the water that was in the trench. It had been something—it had been enough—to have kindled the wood merely. The Baalite priests would have been glad of so much from *their* god ; but here was something far more and greater—something to suggest to the people that it was only of the Lord's mercies that they, in their clustered thousands, were not also consumed. The effect was irresistible. Every knee smote the ground, every face sought the dust, and one universal cry rose to heaven—"The Lord, He is the God : the Lord, He is the God !"

In that moment of profound excitement, Elijah felt that the power of the sword was in his hands ; and he shrunk not from exercising it. He called to the people to prevent the escape of the priests of Baal. They were accordingly seized by the people, and conducted to the river Kishon ; and, at the suggestion of the prophet, they were put to death—the spot being chosen, probably, that the stream might bear away to the sea the pollution of their blood. It does not appear that Ahab took any part in this matter. The appeal of Elijah was to the people. He called upon them to inflict, then and there, upon these ringleaders of the people in idolatry—the punishment which the law denounced, and such as would have been inflicted upon himself had the victory been on their side ; and the king seems to have been too awe-stricken to interfere. From the character of Elijah, we have no doubt that he executed this act of blood heartily and with entire satisfaction. It is not for us to vindicate him. The only question is, Was this in accordance with the law, and with the spirit of the times ? It was certainly both. And we ourselves, not so much as fifty years ago, performed under our own laws, with perfect peace of mind, such deadly executions upon far less heinous offenders, as we now look

back upon with horror. And if, in looking back upon the last generation, we allow for this great change of law and sentiment within so short a time, we must needs make the same allowance in looking back to the more remote time, and less refined age, in which Elijah lived.

FORTY-SIXTH WEEK—FRIDAY.

INCIDENTS.—I KINGS XVIII. 22-40.

THE great theme of yesterday allowed us no pause for the illustration of its subordinate incidents; but some of them are too remarkable to be passed over, and therefore we give this day to them.

The sign given to manifest the Lord's presence and power, by the descent of fire upon the altar to consume the victim, must be allowed to have been in the highest degree appropriate—probably the most appropriate that could be suggested—for it was an old and venerable form in which in old time he manifested his presence and made known his favor. Perhaps it was so in respect of the sacrifice of Abel; certainly it was so in the covenant sacrifice with Abraham,* and at the consecration of the tabernacle by Moses,† and at the dedication of the temple by Solomon.‡ The historical knowledge which the people possessed of the previous use of this symbol, rendered its adoption in the present instance peculiarly striking and appropriate.

But the idea itself, of such a trial of strength between the gods, is less obvious to us, and somewhat shocking. It was, however, familiar to the ancient mind. Judaism was the only religion that denied the existence of all other gods than the one it worshipped. Polytheism admitted the existence of the diverse gods worshipped among different nations. The only questions, therefore, that could arise among them, were re-

* Gen. xv. 17.

† Lev. ix. 24.

‡ 2 Chron. vii. 1.

specting the comparative power and strength of the different gods, as—Whether the god we serve is greater or not than the god you serve? This was sometimes tried by actual experiment, the result of which was usually held to be conclusive. Some reports of such contests have come down to us, and are usually of a nature that seems to us exceedingly whimsical. Such is that of the fire-worshipping Chaldeans, who believed their god to be superior to all others, and bore him in solemn assemblage to various nations. The story runs, that this fire-god baffled the power of the gods of gold, silver, brass, stone, wood, and of every other material, by melting their images out of all form, by calcining them, or by reducing them to ashes. The arrival of this conquering god in Egypt filled the priests of that country with dismay, till a cunning old priest of Canopus thought of a device for securing the victory to the god he served. The jars in which the Egyptians were wont to purify the waters of the Nile, being perforated with imperceptible holes, he took one of them, and stopping the holes with wax, and after filling the jar with water, he fitted to the top the dog's head of Canopus. The unsuspecting Chaldeans, rendered confident by past victories, subjected this fresh idol to their fiery proof. But presently the heat melted the wax, and then a strange commotion in the fire was witnessed, as if it had got something it did not like. There was a hissing, a spitting, a fizzing, a fuming, and at length the fire went out, and the jar-god stood triumphant over the steaming embers. This story is in Rufinus. How far it may be true we cannot say. The form of the Canopic jars gives it the semblance of truth; and it at least shows, that the idea of such contests for power among the gods was familiar to the ancient mind.

The cutting of their flesh by the excited priests of Baal, is not the only or first intimation of the existence of this practice among the nations of Canaan. The law expressly forbade the adoption of this practice. "Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead." Lev. xix. 28. This shows that it was chiefly used as an act of mourning, an act of deep

and affectionate grief; and to this effect are all the allusions to it in Scripture. But occasionally, as in the present instance, it was an act of strongly excited feeling—whether of love, of grief, or of devotion, and as such acceptable to gods and men. This is easily intelligible to one who has had occasion to witness the strong demonstrative emotions of the East, where there seems to be a general impression that nothing is true that cannot be evinced to the senses. Cutting the flesh is therefore a common mode of demonstrating strong feeling in the pagan East; and although the spirit of Islamism is less favorable to such displays than that of Paganism, it has not been able wholly to eradicate them, as may be readily apparent to one who has witnessed the furious gashes which the Persians inflict upon themselves in their frantic annual lamentations for Hossein; or the bloody smittings by which the young Turkish gallants seek to demonstrate the depth of their affection. There are also, as in the remoter East, devotees who seek to gain credit before men, and merit before God, by self-inflicted tortures. Such are often mentioned by the older travellers in Palestine, one of whom gives an illustrative figure, of which a copy has already been given in this work.* There are many notices of this custom in ancient writings, most of which show, that in the religious point of view the gods were pacified and rendered propitious by human blood, on which was also founded the idea of human sacrifice. Herodotus relates, that when the Persian fleet (of Xerxes) was near ruin from a storm on the coast of Magnesia, the magi, by making cuttings in their flesh, and by performing incantations to the wind, succeeded in allaying the storm—"or it may be," adds the sagacious old Greek, "that the storm subsided of its own accord." We are also told, that the priests of the Syrian goddess (who was nearly allied to Baal) were wont to cut and gash themselves with knives until the blood gushed out, when they carried her about in procession. The priests of Bellona, also, in their service to that

* See Seventeenth Week, Saturday.

sanguinary goddess, were accustomed to mingle their own blood with that of their sacrifices.

The question may occur, and has often been asked, Whether Elijah did not make himself a transgressor of the law by offering sacrifice to the Lord, which was the function of the priests? This question may have been suggested in other instances, posterior to the law by which this priestly function was limited, as in some of the judges, and in Samuel, who though a Levite was not a priest.

But it is to be recollected that the priest, as a priest, was simply and solely a minister of the temple service; the prophets—through whom God gave his law, announced his purposes, inculcated truth, gave his specific commands, uttered his promises or his threatenings, and disclosed the future—were quite a distinct class of men. It is a remarkable fact, that the whole of the Hebrew Scripture, at least all that is didactic and prophetic, was, with the exception of the books of Ezra, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, written by men who were not of the priestly order—Moses, Samuel, David, Solomon, Isaiah, and Daniel, were not priests. Priests were indeed sometimes called to the prophetic office, as in the case of Jeremiah and Ezekiel; but it was evidently as to a new and additional office. The prophetic office was undoubtedly the higher one of the two. It was special, and only men of extraordinary gifts and piety were called to it. Those endowed with it were sent directly from God, and were admitted into a near and most peculiar intimacy. God spoke to them, and showed to them the symbols of his most ineffable glory. They were the great inspired teachers of the world; and while the priest could not as of right be a prophet, the prophet could, by virtue of his direct commission and his higher function, act as a priest. Hence it is, that we find Elijah here, and Samuel there, offering sacrifices. Before the Mosaical economy, the priest and prophet were the same. Upon the introduction of this economy, the priesthood became a distinct class; but the prophet lost none of his original official capacities.

FORTY-SIXTH WEEK—SATURDAY.

THE LITTLE CLOUD.—I KINGS XVIII. 41-46.

ONE would think that Elijah was the king, and Ahab his subject. It is not Ahab who says to Elijah, but Elijah to Ahab—"Go, and he goeth; and, Come, and he cometh." So now the prophet tells the king to withdraw and refresh himself after the fatigues of the day; and Ahab, glad to be relieved, retires to eat and to drink. But Elijah's "meat was to do the will of Him that sent him, and to FINISH his work." He then went to the top of the mountain, and cast himself down upon the earth, with his face between his knees—thus remaining in earnest prayer. He then desired his servant to go to the top of the promontory, and look towards the sea. The man went, and returned to report that he observed nothing. Seven times the prophet bent down in prayer and six times the servant returned without the report of coming rain. But the seventh time he announced, with quickened words, that he saw on the horizon a little cloud, not larger than a man's hand, arising out of the sea. On hearing this, the prophet sent the man to tell Ahab to betake himself to his chariot, and hasten home, *lest the rain should prevent him*. The king caught the precious meaning of this message. Never was the prospect of a journey being hindered by rain so gladly received by mortal man. He hastened to his chariot. It was full time. The heavens were already black with clouds; the wind arose; and presently the rain fell down in mighty streams. The king, meanwhile, was scouring the great plain of Esdraelon for Jezreel. But who is that strong man, with tightly girded loins, who flees swifter than the horses, and runs before the chariot of his king? It is Elijah. The great prophet chose, in this remarkable and characteristic way, to evince that, after all the great deeds he had done—after all the stern things he had spoken—he forgot not that

Ahab was his sovereign; for the part he took was that of a servant, whose duty it is to run before the chariot of his master. It is seen by the Egyptian monuments that the princes and nobles of that country had attendants who ran before their chariots. Such vehicles are not now used in Egypt, or in western Asia; but in Persia it is at this day regarded as a piece of necessary state for the king and great nobles to have several men to run before and behind them as they ride out on horseback. This they do even when the rider puts his horse to a gallop; and, as a general rule, it is understood that a well-trained footman ought to remain untired fully as long, if not longer, than the horse ridden by the master. The men are of course trained to this arduous service; and it is astonishing to observe the apparent ease with which they keep their relative distance from the master's horse, in all its paces, even the most rapid. These men are called *shatirs*; and the reported feats of some of them would be incredible, were they not well authenticated. One is known to have accomplished about 120 miles in fourteen hours' unremitted running; and instead of finding praise for this, was rather censured for not having accomplished the task in twelve hours.

These men are, like Elijah, tightly girded; so tightly that to stoop were death, and to fall were to rise no more. There is near Ispahan a monument called the Shatir's Tower (*Meel e Shatir*), the story connected with which is, that a king of Persia promised his daughter in marriage to any one who would run before his horse all the way from Shiraz to Ispahan. One of the shatirs had so nearly accomplished the task as to gain the height on which the tower stands, and where the city comes full into view, when the monarch, alarmed lest he should be forced to fulfil his engagement, dropped his whip. The shatir aware that, owing to the ligatures around his body, it would cost him his life to stoop, contrive to pick it up with his feet. This trick having failed, the royal rider dropped his ring: the shatir then saw that his fate was decided, and exclaiming, "O king, you have

broken your word, but I am true to the last!" he stooped, picked up the ring, and expired.

There is something remarkable to us in the sign by which the prophet knew that the rain was coming. A little cloud in the horizon would to us be of small significance; but it is not so in the East. The clearness of the sky renders the slightest appearance of the kind distinctly visible, and it is known to be a sign of an immediate storm with violent rain. Of several instances that occur to us, one of the most graphic is that given by Mr. Emerson in his "Letters from the *Ægean*." He is at sea in a Greek vessel in the Levant. One morning, which had opened clear and beautiful, it was announced that a squall might be expected. No sign recognizable by European landsmen appeared; but on attention being properly directed, "a little black cloud" was seen on the verge of the horizon towards the south, which was every instant spreading rapidly over the face of the sky, and drawing nearer to the vessel. Order was immediately given to strike sail, and to prepare the vessel for scudding before the hurricane. "But scarcely an instant had elapsed ere the squall was upon us, and all grew black around; the wind came rushing and crisping over the water, and in a moment the ship was running almost gunwale down, while the rain was dashing in torrents on the decks. As quick as thought the foresail was torn from the yards, and as the gust rushed through the rigging, the sheets and ropes were snapping and cackling with a fearful noise. The crew, however, accustomed to such sudden visitants, were not slow in reefing the necessary sails, trimming the rigging, and bringing back the vessel to her proper course; and in about a quarter of an hour, or even less, the hurricane had all passed away; the sun burst out again through the clouds that swept in its impetuous train; the wind sunk to its former gentleness, and all was once more at peace, with the exception of the agitated sea, that continued for the remainder of the day rough and billowy."

To this Mr. Emerson adds the interesting fact, that it is

mainly the dread of such sudden bourasques as the present, that compels almost every vessel in the Levant to shorten sail at the close of day, since in cloudy weather it would be next to impossible, during the night, to discern the cloud which announces the approach of the tempest, in time to prepare for its reception; and to a ship with all her canvass spread, the effect might be terrific.



Forty-Seventh Week—Sunday.

THE STILL SMALL VOICE.—I KINGS XIX.

It is said that the hand of the Lord was upon Elijah to bring him to Jezreel. He knew that Jezebel was there. Her character was well known to him; but he feared not to go where duty called him, and to carry on and complete the great work he had so signally commenced—of bringing back the people to the faith of their fathers—of keeping them firm in the choice they had made—of strengthening the good impressions they had received—and of maintaining the influence he had begun to establish over the mind of the unstable king. These were great objects, and it was not to be expected that such a man as Elijah, whose conquering faith had never yet known doubt or fear, would shrink from any danger in order to realize them. His duty called him to Jezreel, and to Jezreel he went.

All that has gone before, and all that we know of his character, would naturally prepare us to hear of his great doings there—in that very place of Satan's seat—in purging out the unclean thing. It was a great task; and of all the men that ever lived, Elijah seemed the one best fitted for it, by his extraordinary spiritual gifts, and by the convincing assurances which he had just received, that the Lord was with him, would hear his prayer, would hold his life pre-

cious, and would afford him all the aid his work required. But the expected history of great doings and great reforms is a blank. Nothing was done. The great Elijah—that strong-hearted man—failed at the critical moment, fled from his post to save his life when threatened by the wrath of Jezebel, as soon as she heard that her prophets had been slain. He who had experienced the sufficiency of the Lord's protection from prince, prophets, and people, now shrinks at last, at the crisis of his highest duty, from the face of a woman, whom his Master could, if He had seen fit, have cut off in a moment. He fled; and, lacking their great guide, and the prime leader in this auspicious movement, the people became discouraged, and the impression made upon the king's mind rapidly cooled down, both relapsing into nearly their former state. Truly in this did Elijah show himself "a man of like passions as we are." O Lord, what is man? O Lord, who shall stand, when even thy Elijahs fail in their high trust?

Those who vindicate Elijah for fleeing when his life appeared in danger, forget that he was not a private person, but a commissioned prophet, set prominently forth before the eyes of men, as the appointed corrector of his times and people. He had an appointed post to occupy, and a determined duty to fulfil, in which his Master would certainly sustain him; and from which not even the fear of certain death should have permitted him to flee. Suppose, indeed, that he had been absolutely *certain* that the Lord would not interfere and that to stay was death—how could he know but that the Lord's cause might be better promoted, and His great name more glorified, by his death than by his life? From such a man as Elijah we are entitled to make exactions of duty from which commoner men might be excused. In him, of all men, we are entitled to look for the martyr-spirit; for if not in him, in whom of that age was it to be looked for?

Still, in this deplorable lapse of faith, there is, we suspect, some mystery that does not at first sight appear; for so sig-

nal a failure of duty in a man so eminent, is seldom without its antecedents—is seldom other than the due effect of something that has gone before. Seeing how often the declinations or lapses of great and good men follow closely upon the moments of their highest exaltation—there is reason to suspect that Elijah had suffered his mind to be too much elevated, “exalted above measure,” by the great deeds he had accomplished, and by the notion in his mind, that he alone of all Israel had maintained his faith untainted. It was therefore necessary that he should be humbled, by being allowed to feel his own weakness, and to know that of himself he was nothing. For this correction it was only necessary that the Lord’s hand should for a moment be withdrawn from him, that for a little while he should be LEFT TO HIMSELF. The example is most instructive, as showing how timid and forlorn a creature even an Elijah may become, when even for a short time stripped, in correcting mercy, of all but his own strength.

The prophet, haunted by fears hitherto unknown to his stout heart, hastened to get into the neighboring kingdom of Judah. Even there he was uneasy until he had reached Beersheba, the most distant inhabited place of that kingdom, towards the southern desert. Good Jehoshaphat then reigned in Judah, and one would think that the prophet might have deemed himself safe under his protection, even if he had openly declared himself. But with his shaken trust in God, he had lost much of his trust in man; and he seems to have recollected that Jehoshaphat was politically in close alliance with Ahab, and that his eldest son had espoused the like-minded daughter of that Jezebel, whose name had become a terror to him. He began to feel uneasy even in Beersheba. He therefore dismissed his servant, and set forth alone into the wilderness, whose wide but desolate bosom offered, as it seemed to him, the best security against detection and pursuit. Perhaps he had some reason to expect to find in this quarter, at the present time of the year, the friendly Arabs through whom the Lord had provided for his wants by the

brook Cherith, and who would have been glad to receive him into their tents. All day he travelled, and found no refuge; and in the evening, worn out with fatigue and consumed with hunger, he cast himself down under the shelter of one of the broom-trees,* which alone flourish in that wilderness. Here this lately strong-souled man lay hopeless, helpless, and despairing; and he who fled so anxiously from death, prayed for himself that he might die. "It is enough; O Lord God, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers." Strange contradiction! Here the man who was destined not to taste of death—flees from death on the one hand, and seeks it on the other! And who told him it was "enough?" God did not; He knew what was enough for him to do and to suffer. It was not enough. God had more to teach him, and had more work for him to do. If the Lord had taken him at his word, and had also said it was "enough," Elijah's history would have wanted its crowning glory.

Hitherto the Lord had not manifested himself to him since he had left his high post. But He had not lost sight of his servant, and the time was come when it seemed to Him fit to evince so much care towards him as might prevent him from being consumed with over-much sorrow. From restless sleep, troubled with dreams and doubts, he was roused by the touch of an angel, and he beheld close by a cruse of water and a cake of bread just baken on the coals. After having partaken of this simple but grateful fare, he sunk into sounder sleep; and, as the morning rose, he was again awakened, and found the same provision made for him. In this food, prepared by angel hands, he found more than mortal nourishment; for the strength it imparted enabled him to travel without weariness, and to remain for no less than forty days without the need or wish for other food.

He was now in a better mind, yet not wholly corrected. Something more was needed to be taught him. His journey

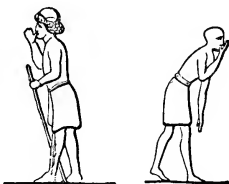
* *Genista retani*, or Spanish broom, is allowed to be the tree (in Hebrew *rothem*) the name of which is translated juniper in the text.

now assumed a definite object. He proposed to go among the mountains of Sinai, probably as being uninhabited, and as affording among their recesses many caverns in which he might rest without danger of detection. And although he was still astray from the path of strict duty, we make no question that he expected and hoped to build his heart up in holy thoughts among the scenes which the footsteps of the Lord had hallowed.

So he went to Horeb, and took up his quarters in a cave. Here at last the word of the Lord came to him once more. It came in the form of questioning rebuke. "What doest thou here, Elijah?" As much as to say—"What hast THOU, of all men, to do here? Thou, whose post in my service is among the haunts of men—to fight my battles against a perverse generation, and to strengthen the hearts of those who still encourage themselves in the Lord their God. What hast thou to do in this selfish, moaning solitude? With whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? What hast *thou* to do *here*?"

Elijah's answer is less candid, or rather more self-deceiving, than we could wish. He upholds his own zeal for the Lord; he believes he is the only true worshipper left; and therefore he seeks to preserve a life which had thus become so important, that forsaken truth might not be left without a living witness. He was then directed to go forth and stand on the mount before the Lord. He obeyed; and as he stood, a great strong wind went by, that brake the rocks and rent the mountains. But the Lord was not in that wind; it was but his harbinger. Then an earthquake made the everlasting hills tremble beneath his feet; but the Lord was not there. Then a fire wrapt in flame the crests of the mountains; but the Lord was not in the fire. All these terrors were but his harbingers—the harbingers of a "still small voice." When the prophet heard that Voice, he knew it; and since he might not hide within the cavern, he wrapped his face in the folds of his mantle, and stood to receive the word of the Lord. The question was repeated. "What doest thou here,

Elijah?" And to this the same reply was given. The answer was, to bid him return to the world, and do the Lord's work in it; with the assurance that, alone in the faith, as he thought himself, the Lord, who knew and numbered his hidden ones, had found in Israel "seven thousand knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him."*



"Back, then, complainer; loath thy life no more,
Nor deem thyself upon a desert shore,
Because the rocks the nearer prospect close.
Yet in fallen Israel are there hearts and eyes
That day by day in prayer like thine arise;
Thou knowest them not, but their Creator knows.
Go, to the world return, nor fear to cast
Thy bread upon the waters; sure at last,
In joy to find it after many days."—KEBLE.

And we also! Has it not often been so with us, that after we have been tossed by the rough winds, shaken by the earthquake, and scorched in many fires, the "still small voice" has come to us in the solitude of our chamber, in the night watches upon our beds, accusing us of neglected duty and broken faith—yet speaking comfort, and whispering encouragement and hope.

FORTY-SEVENTH WEEK—MONDAY.

BENHADAD.—I KINGS XX. 1-21.

THE twentieth chapter of the First Book of Kings contains the history of two invasions of the kingdom of Ahab by Ben-

* Literally *to him*, suggesting that this act of homage consisted in kissing the hand to him—an ancient act of worship represented in sculptures.

hadad king of Syria, and of his defeat on both occasions by the Israelites, under the special intervention of the Lord, who, grievously as He had been offended, still has pity for the seed of Abraham, will try them longer yet, and will not yet give them over to utter misery and ruin. He, therefore, unasked, interferes by his prophets, and encourages the king and people by exhortations and promises. We hear nothing of Baal in these transactions. Their holiday god was of no use to them in time of trouble; and Ahab himself had of late seen too many proofs of the Lord's power, not to know, that whatever He promised He was able to perform, and to follow, in a spirit of becoming submission, the instructions he received. Still there is throughout the narrative a sort of cheerlessness, arising from the want of that spontaneous reference to the Lord, and thankfulness to Him, which plays like a sunbeam over the history of public transactions of equal, or even lesser moment, in the time of devout kings.

The chapter is deeply interesting for the picturesque indications it presents of ancient usages and sentiments, especially in regard to warlike matters, forming a remarkable instance of that consummate word-painting, of which we find in the sacred books the most perfect existing specimens.

The arrogance engendered in an ill-regulated mind by the consciousness of irresistible power, is strikingly shown in the whole conduct of Benhadad, whose immense force was such as seemed to render the mere idea of opposition ridiculous. What might have been the case had Ahab been allowed time to call out and embody the resources of his kingdom, may be a matter of question; but it had been the policy of Benhadad to prevent this, by marching direct upon Samaria, to strike at the head at once, without allowing his force to be detained by securing the towns and fortresses on his way. Nothing can be more insulting than the message he sent to the king of Israel, when he came before Samaria:—"Thy silver and thy gold is mine: thy wives, also, and thy children, even the goodliest, are mine." Many would have said—"Come and take them." Many would have answered,

that they would first die among the ruins of Samaria. And, seeing the natural strength of the position, a spirited man might have calculated on holding out until the country had been roused against the invaders, or until relief had been obtained from some quarter—perhaps from the king of Judah, perhaps from the Phœnicians. But the answer was beyond measure tame and submissive, even to abjectness; furnishing another illustration of the yielding temper of this king to any kind of force put upon him from without. It is quite possible that another kind of force would have roused the same man to heroic daring and true kingly action. The answer was—"My lord, O king, according to thy saying, I am thine, and all that I have." Yet, notwithstanding the servile tone of this answer, it is probable, from what follows, that he understood the Syrian king to mean no more than that Ahab should hold all things of him under tribute. Encouraged to still more inordinate arrogance by this submissiveness, Benhadad sent afresh to declare, not only that his message was to be literally understood,—that all was to be actually given up to him—but that his officers should make a general search of the palace and the dwellings of the city, to take what they pleased, and to ascertain that nothing worth the having had been retained. The insolence of this is almost beyond precedent. Such treatment is the worst that could be expected for a city taken by storm; and even an unscrupulous eastern conqueror would hardly demand it of a power which had yielded without fighting. It was worse than the treatment to which Nadir-Shah subjected Delhi, after the emperor Mohammed-Shah had been defeated in a hard-fought battle, and had rendered his personal submission. *Then*, that not very scrupulous conqueror, while treating the emperor with distinction, and protecting the inhabitants from injury and insult—and while, in fact, all was in his hands—claimed, as a prize that he had won, the wealth of the emperor, and a great proportion of that of his richest nobles and subjects. The whole of the jewels which had been collected by a long line of sovereigns, and all the con-

tents of the imperial treasury, were made over by Moham-med-Shah to the conqueror. The principal nobles, imitating the example of the monarch, gave up all the money and valuables which they possessed.* This exaction, after a great battle lost, severe as it seems, bears no comparison to Ben-hadad's demand upon those who had not struck a blow against him. He not only required as much as this, but demanded the persons of wives and children, and exacted a right of search, equivalent to pillage, throughout the city of Samaria. Twenty-four hours were given to Ahab to consider this proposal. There is reason to think, that he would have consented even to this, so abject had he become in spirit: but the elders of his council, whom he was obliged to consult, together with the general voice of the people, stimulated him to resist this insolence. Yielding to this fresh force laid upon his facile temper, he replies with some spirit, though with less than became the occasion:—"Tell my lord the king, all that thou didst send for at the first, I will do; but this thing I may not do." This looks very much like an intimation that he would even in this have yielded, had not the public voice forbidden—

"Making, I dare not; wait upon, I would,"—

as was often the case with this king. We do not like this renewed offer to consent to the first demand. Now, beholding the spirit and temper of the people, he might well have been stimulated to some more courageous course. But he was at this disadvantage, that he could not, as had been the custom of kings and judges in Israel, appeal to the Lord for protection and assistance. This had been their strength in weakness, and their victory in conflict. But in Ahab we do

* There was a massacre afterwards; but this was only when the inhabitants had risen upon the Persian troops. The prisoners were also required to pay their arrears of tribute to the conqueror, which produced much suffering to the inhabitants; but this was chiefly through the villany of the *native* agents, who, to enrich themselves, extorted from the people four or five times as much as they paid into the treasury of Nadir.

not expect this true Hebrew faith ; and we fail to find in him even the mere human qualities of kingly greatness.

Tame as this reply seems to us, it affronted the pride of the great Benhadad, who sent back the thrasonical answer, that he would reduce Samaria to dust, which would then not suffice to give handfuls to all the men of his numerous host. The answer of Ahab to this hectoring boast, was neat, noble, and significant—"Tell him, let not him that girdeth on his harness, boast himself as he that putteth it off." This sensible and spirited answer, divested also of the former preamble—"tell him," not, "tell my lord the king,"—goes some way to restore Ahab to our good opinion. It is clear that his spirit was now fairly up, and it would appear that his feelings were taking a right course.

The scene now changes to the luxurious camp of Benhadad, where the king, though it was scarcely yet high noon, was, with his allied tributary princes (thirty-two in number), drinking in the pavilions—a remarkable touch of description at such a time, serving to convey a distinct idea of the habits of the leaders of this great army. It was when thus engaged that the king received Ahab's reproofing answer. In human writing, it would be regarded as a noble touch of literary art—that nothing is said of the Syrian king's feelings, his wrath, his indignation. He says nothing, his astonishment and rage are too big for words, and is intimated only in its effects, in the laconic military order given in a single word—"Set," or "Place,"—which we are obliged to paraphrase into several, in order to give it its probable meaning. "Set yourselves in array," or, in other words, invest the city. This absence of oral abuse or expressed anger, save as implied in the command to proceed to the instant punishment of the offender, is exceedingly fine. The celebrated instance—

"Off with his head !—So much for Buckingham,"

is exceeded by this in the proportion which exists between one word and eight. Benhadad meant much the same ; but one word sufficed to express his feeling and his purpose.

The order was obeyed : and it was at this juncture that a prophet stood forth to promise victory in the name of the Lord, against this great multitude, and to direct the course that should be taken. The king was all submission and acquiescence, for he saw no other help, and dreamed not of looking in this emergency to Baal. Thus instructed, two hundred and fifty young men, attendants on the princes of the provinces, or, as an old version (Rogers's) has it, of the "shrifcs (sheriffs) of the shires," went boldly out to the enemy, while seven thousand more, probably volunteers, followed at some distance behind, or it is likely remained at the gate ready to march out to support the others.

The Syrian king was still at his cups, when the watchmen reported that men were coming out of the city ; on which, with quiet indifference, which seems characteristic of his arrogant temper, or might be the effect of his wine, he simply directed that they should be taken alive, whether they came for peace or for war. He probably wished to learn from them the state of the city and the intentions of Ahab ; but the direction, given without any questions as to their numbers, indicates the most sovereign, if not sottish, indifference to any force that Samaria could set forth. To take them alive was, however, much easier said than done. The young men had no mind to be taken. On the contrary, they smote right and left, and presently laid prostrate those who had stood against them. This, with the sight of the seven thousand behind coming out of the gates to take part in the fray, struck the Syrian host with a sudden panic, and they fled with all their might, the arrogant king himself being not the hindmost, for he hastened away on a fleet horse.

This was the Lord's doing ; but we do not hear of any thanksgiving or sacrifices offered to HIM in gratitude for help to which they had such little claim.

FORTY-SEVENTH WEEK—TUESDAY.

THE GOD OF THE HILLS.—I KINGS XX. 22, 23.

WHEN the Syrians were beyond harm's reach, they began to speculate upon the causes of their extraordinary and most humbling discomfiture. As they saw no adequate human cause, they rightly referred the matter to the power of the God of Israel. And, in fact, from the corrupt state of religion among the Israelites, it might be difficult to discover what God they worshipped. With this the Syrians probably did not concern themselves much. But their reasoning upon this conclusion is curious to us, although perfectly natural to them, who entertained the belief in the mere local power of particular deities: "Their gods are gods [or "their god is a god"] of the hills, therefore they were stronger than we; but let us fight against them in the plain, and surely we shall be stronger than they."

Believing that the God of Israel was merely a national god like their own, and that, like theirs, his power was limited by local or other circumstances, it was easy for them to infer that He was a God of the hills and not of the valleys. Their impression in this matter may have arisen from the traditional knowledge, that this God had given his law to his people from Mount Sinai; that on a mountain had died their great lawgiver, and their first high pontiff. They must also have heard of the recent miraculous manifestation of his power upon Mount Carmel; and they saw that Canaan was a mountainous country, with all its chief cities seated upon hills. All these recollections may have had their basis in the practical experience that the parts of the country into which they had ventured were unsuited to chariots, in which their military force seems to have chiefly consisted; and in the conclusion that if they kept more exclusively to the plains and valleys, a very different result might be expected.

In the parcelling out of the earth among national and ter-

ritorial gods, and among gods who presided over the various forms, and powers, and qualities of nature, we find many gods of the mountains, and some, but not so many, of the valleys. At the present day the Hindoos have their gods of the hills, and also of the lower places. Thus Siva, Vishnu, and Murruga-Murte, are those of the high places; while Vyravar, Urruttera, and many demons, are the deities of the lower regions. So in classical antiquity we meet with Collina, the goddess of hills, and Vallina, of valleys. We also hear of the god Montinus, and of a god Peninus, who had his name from a part of the Alps, so called, where he was worshipped, and where also the goddess Penina was honored. Even Jupiter had names from mountains, as Olympius, Capitolinus, etc.; and the "great universal Pan" is called "mountainous Pan" by Sophocles. Some have expressed surprise that the Syrians should have conceived their own god to be a god of the valleys—supposing this an admission of inferiority. We see not this; and as the greater part of their territory was level country, and the capital was seated in one of the finest plains in the world, they could scarcely, when they came to this mode of reasoning, and compared the difference between the two countries, arrive at any other conclusion. This was, however, a conclusion ruinous to them; for this attempt "to limit the Holy One of Israel," by making Him a mere God of mountains, made it necessary that He should vindicate his universal power and the honor of his own great name. This is, indeed, assigned by the prophet, who promised another and crowning victory, as the reason for the Lord's further and decisive interposition in behalf of a people who had so little deserved His care.

The king had been forewarned of this second invasion, and was not this time taken unprepared, though his utmost preparations bore no comparison to the Syrian power. This time, however, he concluded he would not be again shut up in Samaria, but that the contest should be in the open country. The Syrians, firm to their purpose, chose a route which led them to the plains and valleys—though this was neces-

sarily circuitous—and would not be drawn among the hills, although the presence of the Israelites attending their march upon the hills tempted them to action. Six days this caution was maintained on both sides; but on the seventh day they came to blows, as it would seem, by the Israelites venturing down from the hills to give battle, undeterred by the chariots which were so formidable in the plains. On this occasion we are told that the army of Israel appeared in comparison “like two little flocks of kids,”—a significant simile, flocks of goats being smaller than those of sheep; and they were not only flocks of goats, but small goats or kids; and not only flocks of kids, but little flocks; and not only little flocks, but “two” little flocks—not that they were necessarily of that number, but “two” being, as we have already explained, an epithet of fewness.

Again, through the might of the Lord, were the Israelites victorious. They fell upon the Syrians with great vigor, and slew large numbers of them. The rest fled, and sought shelter in Aphek, which they appear to have taken on their march. But even here many of them were crushed beneath a wall which fell upon them. The wall was cast down probably by an earthquake. Hither Benhadad himself came, and withdrew to an inner chamber to hide his sorrow and his shame. There was no chance of escape; nor, since the wall had fallen, any defence for the city against the pursuers. The case was manifestly desperate; and there was no hope but in throwing himself upon the clemency of Ahab. Remembering how roughly the old theocratists had been wont to handle their captives, there might well have been room for a doubt even in this; but the servants of Benhadad assured him that they had heard the kings of Israel were merciful kings—which we take to mean that the present and some past kings of Israel had manifested so much sympathy for, and friendly feeling towards, foreign idolaters, that the chances were greatly lessened of his being harshly treated.

Benhadad accordingly sent ambassadors to meet Ahab, and to beg the Syrian king's life from him—nothing more

than life ; but with injunctions to note the manner in which the application was received, and to frame their demeanor accordingly. Ambassadors charged with such a suit are wont to present themselves in a pitiable plight, in order to express their affliction, and to move compassion. In the present case the messengers not only clad themselves in sack-cloth, but appeared with ropes about their necks. This, though probably an old custom of suppliants—intended to express that their fate lay in the hands of him before whom they appear—is here for the first time mentioned in Scripture ; but we see prisoners of war strung together by ropes around their necks in the sculptures of ancient Egypt and Persia. In the present and such like cases, it seems to express their entire helplessness and dependence upon the king's mercy. He might hang them up if he liked ; and here were the ropes ready for him to do it with. Or it may be that, as we see captives were thus dealt with, they appeared tied together by the necks to show that they were prisoners of war.

The language of the ambassadors corresponded with their appearance. "Thy servant Benhadad saith, I pray thee, let me live,"—language in edifying contrast with the former arrogance of this same Benhadad. But it has always been observed that the men most arrogant in prosperity, are in adversity the most abject and cast down. So it was now. The easy-tempered Ahab was moved to commiseration at this marked change of language and fortune in his greatest enemy ; and yielding, as usual, to the impression of the moment, he said quickly, "Is he yet alive ? He is my brother." The men, keenly watching the impression made on his mind, caught eagerly at the words, and replied, "Thy brother Benhadad liveth." On this, he desired him to be called, and on his appearance took him up into his chariot. Eventually he was restored to liberty on his own terms—that of allowing the Israelites to have a quarter in which they might observe their own laws, customs, and worship in Damascus, and in giving up the northern towns that had been formerly taken from Israel.

At the first view, one is rather favorably impressed with this clemency of Ahab towards the great enemy of his country. But as we afterwards perceive that it was visited with the Divine displeasure, we are obliged to examine it more closely. We may then find that what might have been magnanimity becomes in reality a gross weakness; and that this extravagant and uncalled-for generosity, which might entitle a man to praise if shown towards a private enemy, may become a crime in a king towards a public adversary. It corresponds to the case of Agag whom Saul spared, but whom Samuel slew. The Lord had appointed this man to "utter destruction;" and Ahab knew it. He was appointed to taste the utmost dregs of that calamity with which the Governor of the world so often punishes the pride of kings. He was to be taught to know, in avenging justice, the greatness of that God he had blasphemed; and the power of the state he ruled was to be so broken as to render it incapable of giving further trouble to Israel. All these public duties Ahab had neglected, to gratify a private sentiment; and, doubtless, from a sympathy with idolatry, which it ill became a king of Israel to show. It was in this that he offended; and his offence was great. To view it rightly, we must look to the misery thereafter caused Israel by the very power which he threw away this opportunity of rendering harmless; and with peculiar intensity must we regard the fact that, a few years after, Ahab met his death in battle with the very king he thus befriended, and under the orders of that king to his soldiers to aim their weapons exclusively against the life of the man who had spared his own.

Suppose that five-and-thirty years ago, when the great troubler of Europe was brought a prisoner to our shores, the Regent had (supposing it in his power) behaved like Ahab in setting him free. No doubt, some sentimentalist would have applauded his "magnanimity" towards the greatest enemy his country had ever known. But Europe would have mourned his "weakness;" and his people would have execrated it, if, as is likely, instead of the longest peace known

in their history, the thirty-five subsequent years had been marked with trouble, distress, confusion, warfare, rapine, and blood; and the Regent would doubtless have experienced from this "Themistocles" gratitude of the same quality as that which Ahab received from the Syrian king.

FORTY-SEVENTH WEEK—WEDNESDAY.

NABOTH'S VINEYARD.—I KINGS XXI. XXII.

ALTHOUGH Samaria was the metropolis of his kingdom, Ahab had a palace at Jezreel, where he seems to have resided during part of the year. This palace was situated on the heights at the western extremity of Mount Gilboa, on the eastern borders of the plain of Esdraelon, and about twenty-five miles north of Samaria. It was the Windsor of Israel. It is a fine site for a town, and commands a wide and noble view, overlooking on the west the whole of the great plain to the long ridge of Carmel, and extending in the opposite direction down the broad low valley to Bethshean, and towards the mountains of Ajlun beyond the Jordan.

One day it struck Ahab, that the garden at this place would be greatly improved by an enlargement which would take in an adjoining vineyard. He therefore caused application to be made to the owner, whose name was Naboth, stating his wish to turn this vineyard into "a garden of herbs;" and, as became a king, offered him another vineyard in exchange for it, or any price that he might choose to ask for it. But Naboth, strong in his indefeasible right of property, declined—somewhat bluntly, it seems—to part with it at all, on any terms, on the ground that he could not, and would not, alienate a property which he had derived from his fathers, and which it behooved him to transmit to his descendants. In fact, Naboth seems to have regarded the proposal with a kind of religious horror, and did not mind letting the king see

that he did so. There was ground for this in the peculiar tenure by which land was held in Israel.

At the original occupation of Canaan, every family had a portion of land assigned it by lot, the size of which was proportioned to the numbers in the family. These portions remained in the family, and could not legally be alienated but for a term of years, ending at the next jubilee year, when all the lands that had been thus leased reverted to the original owners, or to their heirs. We know that the observance of the sabbatic years had fallen into disuse, and so, doubtless, had the jubilee years. Yet the solemnity of the distribution, and its unalterable character, coupled with its beneficent object, in securing to every family an indefeasible right to the land originally bestowed from the Lord himself—who insisted on being regarded as the sovereign proprietor of the soil—must have fixed in the public mind a feeling of something like a religious duty, in retaining possession of inherited property. Yet the disuse of the jubilee as a solemnity, must have contributed to loosen the force of this obligation in the minds of weak or careless persons; and it is likely that many sold their lands in perpetuity. It is true, this would be illegal; but Britain is not the only country where possession constitutes nine points of the law; and few heirs probably would, at the jubilee year, stand forth to assert their claim to lands held by kings and other high personages. In this way, and by means of the estates of persons attainted of treason, which lapsed to the king, the crown was eventually enabled to acquire a considerable landed property, which would have been impossible had due attention been paid to the law of Moses, by which the land was so strictly tied up in private hands, in order that none should have too much, nor any too little. These practices, by which “field was added to field,” are severely reprehended by the prophets, whose reprehension of them proves their existence.

It is creditable to Ahab, unless it be the mere result of his passive character, that he, of himself, thought not of se-

curing, by any tyrannous or violent act, the land which Naboth had so steadily refused to sell. But his own garden, in which he had hitherto taken much pleasure, lost all value and beauty in his eyes, since the nice plan he had framed for its improvement was balked by the churlishness of his neighbor. We should not wonder if he decapitated with his staff half the flowers in his garden, while this fit of ill-humor was upon him. It gathered strength with indulgence, till at last he betook himself to his bed, and lay with his face to the wall, refusing to take any food. This pitiable display of childish fretfulness, is something more than we should have expected, even from Ahab. No wonder such a man as this was a mere tool in the hands of his wife. It is not unlikely that, relying upon her power of action, and her fertility of resource, he indulged his ill-humor on purpose to draw her attention to the matter, that she might learn, in answer to her inquiries, that which he was unwilling to carry to her spontaneously as a matter of complaint.

She came to him as soon as she heard of his strange behavior, and soon learned the cause of his affliction, when she exclaims, with indignant surprise—"Dost thou now govern the kingdom of Israel?" But she did not belie confidence in her resources; for she immediately added—"Arise and eat bread, and let thine heart be merry, for *I will give thee the vineyard.*" She—how? Ahab did not care to inquire; he only knew she had said it, and would do it; and that was enough for him. He gave her authority to act as she pleased in the matter, by entrusting to her his signet, which gave her the power of issuing in his name whatever orders she liked. It will be remembered, that in giving validity to documents, names were not in those days, nor are they now in the East, signed by the hand in writing, but impressed by a seal on which the name is engraved. Hence the importance which is attached to the signet throughout the sacred books.

Thus armed, Jezebel sent orders into the city, that two lawless men should be provided, who at a public assembly

should stand up and accuse Naboth of cursing God and the king; and that they should forthwith proceed to execute judgment upon him. Dreading Jezebel's resentment, and their consciences seared by corrupting idolatries, the elders of Jezree! obeyed this atrocious mandate; and soon Jezebel was enabled to come and tell her husband that she had accomplished her task; and that he might go down and take possession of the coveted vineyard, for the owner was stoned and dead. The estate of Naboth had lapsed to the crown by his execution on the charge of treason, consisting in cursing the king; for which reason that charge had doubtless been added to the other, which was of itself capital. Instead of shrinking with horror from the deed, Ahab, now that it was done, accepted it with all its consequences, by hasting to take possession of his blood-stained acquisition—probably not without a secret, or even declared, admiration of his wife's decision of character and hardihood—qualities which inspire such souls as his with deep reverence.

But One whom Ahab had forgotten had noted all this, and when he went to the vineyard, he found there—Elijah! and from his mouth received his doom—the overthrow and ruin of his house—and that “where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine.”

Ahab was not, like his wife, hardened. These words struck him down, and humbled him completely. He rent his clothes, he assumed the habit of a mourner, he “fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly.” His misery was real, and the Lord had some compassion on him; for the destruction of his house was deferred, that his eye might be spared that doleful sight. But his personal doom was accomplished three years after, when he was slain in battle against Benhadad. His body was brought to Samaria, and when his chariot and armor were washed in the pool of Samaria, the dogs licked up the blood as they had done that of Naboth at Jezreel.* His death was kingly, and became

* The words of Elijah, “*Where* dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood,” were literally accomplished in his son, to

him better than his life. When mortally wounded, he directed his chariot to be quietly driven aside to have his wounds dressed ; and then returned to the battle, supported in his chariot, until the evening, when he died.

FORTY-SEVENTH WEEK.—THURSDAY.

THE MANTLE.—II KINGS I. ; I KINGS XIX. 15–21.

AHAZIAH, who succeeded his father Ahab in the throne of Israel, did not reign more than two years. He was fully under the influence of his mother, and sanctioned the idolatries she had introduced. His death was the result of a disaster that befell him, described as a fall through a lattice that was in his upper chamber—which would suggest that he fell through the open window into the court below. Some think he fell through a sky-light on the top of his palace ; but there are no sky-lights to eastern houses. The word rendered “lattice” may be a “rail,”—which may suggest that, in leaning against the rail—forming the inner fence of the house-top (the outer towards the street being usually a wall, and the inner, towards the interior court, a light rail of wood), it gave way, and he fell into the court below. Such accidents frequently occur in the East, and the liability to their occurrence is constantly presented to the mind of one who walks on the house-tops, until use begets insensibility to the danger.

The hurts which the king received in his fall were serious enough to occasion doubts of his recovery ; and he therefore, like one thoroughly imbued with idolatrous sentiments, sent messengers to the oracle of Baalzebub, the fly-god of

whom his doom was in some sense transferred on his humiliation : and it was virtually thus accomplished in Ahab. The words may mean no more than that dogs should lick his blood, even as they had licked the blood of Naboth.

Ekron,* to inquire if he should recover. The, came back much sooner with an answer than he expected ; for they had been encountered by a prophet, who sent them back with the doom that he should never more rise from his bed, seeing he had forgotten there was a God in Israel, and had sent to learn his fate from the paltry idol of Ekron. It is clear that his proper course would have been to send to a prophet of the Lord to inquire of him—if the proud stomach of a king of Israel could not brook the still more becoming course of sending to the temple of Jerusalem, to inquire of the Lord through the appointed agencies and regular ministers. To send to Baalzebub implied, or left it to the heathen to infer, that there was no God in Israel who could or would satisfy him, and was therefore a deep affront to Jehovah.



The men did not know who it was that had met them ; but on their describing his dress and appearance—"a hairy man, girt with a girdle of leather about his loins"—the king at once said, "It is Elijah the Tishbite." It is understood that the hairiness ascribed to the prophet is to be referred, not to his person, but his mantle—made of hair, which, with the girdle of leather, formed the cheap, durable, and humble attire of the prophets. Instead of having its proper effect upon Ahaziah's mind, this discovery only exasperated him ; and he forthwith sent an officer with fifty men to bring Elijah before him. What was his purpose we know not ; but from his sending a troop of soldiers, and from the result that followed, it could not have been good. Very likely it was meant to destroy him, unless he recalled the sentence he had

* This idol has been noticed already under Week Forty-Five, Thursday (p.206). Although Ekron was in the territory of the Philistines—not in that of the Phœnicians—their idolatries seem to have been in most respects identical ; and it is remarkable that we find on a silver coin of Aradus (the Arvad of Scripture), which belonged to the Phœnicians, an insect figure, which may be presumed to have some reference to this idol.

pronounced ; for by this time there had come to be a strong conviction throughout the land that whatever the prophet said *must* come to pass. The awful destruction by fire from heaven—that is, we suppose, by lightning, at the word of Elijah, of the two first parties sent to apprehend him—must have tended powerfully to impress upon the nation the fact that the Lord still asserted his right to reign over them, and would be known to them in his protesting judgments, since they would not know him in his mercies. His cheerful going with the third party, the leader of which approached him with humble entreaties, must have suggested that the door to those mercies was still open to those who becomingly approached it. This was practical preaching of the kind that this people could most easily understand. The fearless prophet repeated in person to the king the words of rebuke and death that he had sent by the messengers ; and the doomed king was too awe-struck, after what had passed, to make any attempt upon his liberty or life.

According to his prediction, Ahaziah died soon after, and, as he had no son, was succeeded by his brother Jehoram.

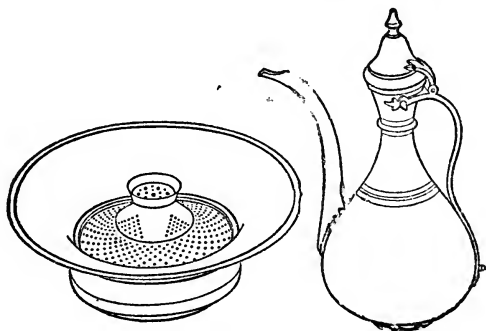
Elijah had now, and for some time before, a personal follower or attendant—one of those so well known in the East, and in ancient history, who are the disciples and followers of a holy or learned man, and who, although they may themselves be persons of some consideration in the world, feel glad and honored in being allowed to discharge for their master the light servile duties which his habits of life require, but which they would feel it a degradation to render to any other man. This person was Elisha, the son of Shaphat, of Abel Meholah beyond the Jordan—a name scarcely less illustrious than that of Elijah. The latter had in Horeb received the command to anoint Jehu as king of Israel, Hazael as king of Syria ; and this Elisha to be prophet in his own room. The latter office only he performed in person, leaving the rest to his successor. This Elisha was the son of a substantial land-owner, as appears by the fact that, although the prophet found him personally engaged in the field, he was

ploughing with no less than twelve yoke of oxen. This is no doubt intentionally mentioned, for to this day in Syria a man's wealth is estimated by the number of ploughs which he works, or, which is the same thing, by the yokes or pairs of cattle he employs in drawing them. As Elijah passed, he, without any previous intimation, slipped his mantle from his shoulders and threw it over those of Elisha. This was a summons equivalent to that which our Saviour addressed to his disciples—"Leave all, and follow me!"—and it was more than this, for it implied the fact that he was to succeed the man who called him. It was his investiture with his present heirship to, and the assurance of the future possession of, that very mantle; and to this day in the East, a reputed saint, when departing from life, indicates his successor by bequeathing to him his mantle, the symbol of his spiritual power; and although that mantle may be dirty, patched, tattered, or threadbare, it is deemed to be of higher price than the brocade robes of kings; and the older it is the more precious it becomes. Elisha well understood the sign, and appreciated the distinction conferred upon him at its true value, by leaving his home to follow the prophet, after he had given an extemporaneous feast to the field-laborers, and to others who had come from the town, by slaying a yoke of the oxen, and burning the agricultural instruments to dress the meat.

He then took his departure with Elijah, who must have been much comforted by the company of such a friend and follower; and he was doubtless most thankful to the Lord for thus providing for him one much better suited to be his helper than the "servant" he had left behind at Beersheba.

Until Elisha became distinguished on his own account, he was known as the "Elisha who poured water on the hands of Elijah." This was a servile office, and might be understood of any servant. The Easterns, in washing, never, if they can help it, dip their hands in water unless it be running water, as they abhor the idea of using in this form repeatedly water already soiled. To pour the water upon the hands from a vessel, however, requires the assistance of an-

other, and this is usually the office of a servant, and the most frequent one he has to render to the person of his master—which fact renders it appropriate as the description of a personal attendant. Friends, neighbors, and fellow-travellers often, however, pour water on each other's hands in the absence of a servant—as it is exceedingly inconvenient to fill one hand repeatedly with water from a vessel held in the other, and which is laid frequently down to be taken up again. No one washes thus who can find any one willing to pour water on his hands. In-doors, an ewer and basin of turned copper are commonly used. The water poured from the ewer upon the hands, falls into the basin held below



them, and which usually has a perforated false bottom through which the used water passes out of sight. The same kind of ewer and basin as are now in use, we find represented on the most ancient monuments of Egypt.

FORTY-SEVENTH WEEK—FRIDAY.

HEAVEN-WARD.—II KINGS II.

It is clear that a great day is come. The young men in the schools of the prophets at Gilgal, at Jericho. and at

Bethel, are in unusual agitation. Elijah visits them all in succession. His manner is that day even more than commonly solemn, and his countenance and converse more heaven-ward ; and all his demeanor seems to say—"Ye shall see my face no more." They fear to question their great master ; but they venture to whisper to Elisha the inquiry, If he knows that his master and theirs was that day to be taken away ? They seemed to want his confirmation of a fact of which they had received heavenly intimation, but feared to misapprehend. His answer was,—“Yea, I know it. Hold ye your peace.” Being aware of this, Elisha resolves not to quit his master that day, notwithstanding Elijah plainly declares a wish to proceed alone. Whether this were to try the depth of Elisha’s affection and zeal, or in actual ignorance that others would be allowed to witness the approaching event, cannot be said ; but it may be he knew not that the matter had been revealed, not only to Elisha, but to the “sons of the prophets.” But his faithful and devoted follower will not thus be dismissed. For once, he ventures to decline obedience to one whose wish had hitherto been a law to him. He refused to discontinue his attendance, with the gentle and respectful persistence of one who will not be dissuaded from seeing his friend yet further on his way.

They came to the Jordan, for even an Elijah must cross the Jordan before he passes from the world, though it be not by the gates of death. But, lo, a wonder!—the prophet takes his mantle, and smites therewith the stream, which then divides to let the friends pass. This, with what ensued, was witnessed by fifty of the sons of the prophets, who, though they durst not obtrude their presence, watched the doings of the friends from the distant hills. Here, again, was faith : but Elijah knew that seas, rivers, and mountains, are no obstruction to him who, with steadfast feet, walks his path of duty. It was because he was in that path, and because *he knew* that what he asked was in accordance with God’s will that his faith was met by miracles, which, apart from these conditions, it had been presumption in him to demand. It is

in this we discern the difference between the dignified and effectual energy which wrought through the faith of Elijah, and the insane pretensions of such men as William Hackett (afterwards hanged), who, in the reign of Elizabeth, had the hardihood to declare, that if all England prayed for rain, and he himself prayed against it, there would be dry weather. "Thou, Lord," he said, "hast the power, and I have the faith—therefore it shall be done!"

It was when they had passed the Jordan that the departing prophet asked his faithful disciple what last favor he desired of him. This was a trying question, which few would be able promptly to answer with entire satisfaction to their after-thoughts. But Elisha knew that of spiritual blessings too much could not be asked. He therefore said, "Let a double portion of thy spirit rest upon me." His master confessed that this was a hard thing; but that it would be granted, if he took care to be present at the moment of separation. But what was that double portion of Elijah's spirit which his disciple desired? One would think that it expressed the possession of such qualities as should make him twice as great a prophet as his master. But it was not so; for although Elisha became a great prophet, and wrought miracles as great as those of Elijah, and in greater number, no one feels that he was greater as a prophet or as a man, than his master—or so great. His meaning is explained by the fact, that the heir was entitled to a double portion of his father's goods; hence, in asking for the double portion of his master's spirit, Elisha meant to claim the heirship or succession to Elijah in his place as prophet in Israel. He had reason to suppose that it was meant for him; but he wished to be assured of this by some token which should be satisfactory to himself and others.

As they went on, conversing of high things, suddenly a whirlwind reft Elijah from his companion, and he was borne aloft, like an exhalation, in "a chariot with horses of fire," or glowing like fire, to heaven, followed by the cry of the forsaken disciple, as he rent his clothes—"My father, my

father! the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof!"—meaning, as is generally understood, that he regarded Israel as bereft of its strength, its chariot and its horsemen, by the departure of this great prophet. He failed not, however, to take up the precious mantle which fell from Elijah as he rose; and he felt, in the beating of his own heart, the assurance that his prayer had been granted. And he knew it still more when he reached and smote the waters with the mantle. At first, it seems, there was no response; but when he repeated the stroke, with the words—"Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" the waters separated, and he passed over. The sons of the prophets noted this, on their distant watch, and knew by this sign their new master, on whom rested the spirit of Elijah.

This is a strange transaction, and we cannot hope as yet to understand it fully. It seems to us, however, that it is but an isolated anticipation of that which shall happen collectively to the righteous that are alive on the earth at our Lord's second coming. "The dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."* And "in that sudden strange transition" the body will undergo a change, divesting it of its earthy essence, and bringing it into conformity with the glorified bodies of the saints raised from the dead. For the same apostle, alluding in another place to the same great transaction, says:—"The dead will be raised incorruptible, and we [who are then alive] *shall be changed*. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal immortality." And he had said before—"Behold, I show you a mystery: We shall not all sleep [die], but we shall all be changed."† Then what hinders that this rapture of the living, and change in the act of rapture—change, because flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, which is to take place on so large a scale on *that* great day, should be

* 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17

† 1 Cor. xv. 51-53.

exemplified in one or two instances before—in this instance of Elijah, and in the earlier instance of Enoch?

Under this view, there is no more any objection to the departed Elijah having his place in heaven, seeing that his body, doubtless, underwent all that change possible, as we find, to the living, which was needful to fit it for abiding in that place where nothing corruptible can exist. Not discerning this, the old schoolmen were of opinion, that Elijah was taken to some place—doubtless a pleasant place—prepared, as they supposed, of old, for those pious spirits which awaited the Messiah to open paradise for them. Others have staggered at that text (John iii. 13), understanding it to allege that none ascended to heaven before Christ. Hence they imagine that Elijah was taken to “Abraham’s bosom,” which they conceive to be an intermediate state in the air—granting, however, that his garments were burned in the fire, and his body changed and made immortal. But is not *that* really a staggering text? We think not. It is not usually supposed to refer to the ascension at all; but allowing it to have that reference, it could only mean that none of the *dead* should ascend to heaven before Christ, being, as He was, the first-fruits of *them that slept*, that is, that died. But Elijah did not die.

Elijah is supposed by the Jews to be frequently employed in missions to mankind, and as in some sense ubiquitous, being present in many places at one time. He is visible only to those deeply versed in the Cabbala, and is described as a venerable old man with a long beard. He is supposed to be always present at circumcisions, and there is a chair kept vacant for him. Those who are the special objects of his notice are highly favored. “Happy,” says one, “is he who hath beheld him in dreams, happy he who hath saluted him with peace, and to whom the salutation of peace hath been returned.” One of the Jewish commentators, Abarbanel, has explained how Elijah became qualified for these missions. “He was carried away in a powerful wind, with a chariot and horses of fire, that his moisture might be exhaled and

dried away. Thus he became light and swift, to appear in all places. He has no need of meat or drink, or of anything necessary to human life, because his body was transformed into a spiritual state, and he received a spiritual nature."

FORTY-SEVENTH WEEK—SATURDAY.

THE MOCKERS.—II KINGS II. 18-25.

ABOUT a mile and half north-west of Jericho, at the base of some low hillocks, thought by some to be mounds of rubbish, is the fountain-head of a stream, to which the place owes now, and must have formerly owed, its supply of water, and the irrigation of its fields. The water rises into an old ruinous basin, and flows off in a stream large enough to turn a mill. The principal stream runs towards the village, the rest of the water finding its way at random, in various channels down the plain, which here is decked with the broad forest of the *nubk* and other thorny shrubs. The water is beautifully clear, and although slightly tepid at the fountain-head, is sweet and pleasant. Josephus, by whom it is mentioned, ascribes to it a peculiar efficacy in promoting vegetation, and declares, that "it affords a sweeter nourishment than other waters." The fountain is now called by the Arabs Ain es-Sultan; but the Christians and Jews recognize it as Elisha's Fountain, and give it the prophet's name.

Formerly, and perhaps in consequence of the curse pronounced on the place by Joshua, the waters were wholly unfit for domestic purposes or for irrigation, by reason of their unwholesomeness or bitterness. But the evil was miraculously healed by Elisha, and the waters brought into their present wholesome state. Jericho was the first place he reached after he had crossed the Jordan; and it was probably the extraordinary miracle by which he passed it that

suggested to the people that he had power over the waters, and might remove the disadvantage which rendered what would otherwise be a most pleasant place scarcely habitable—there being perhaps no water available in dry weather but such as might be preserved in cisterns, or brought from the inconveniently distant Jordan. So a deputation of the inhabitants waited upon the prophet, respectfully drawing his attention to the case. He heard them, and desired them to bring him a *new* dish. In the original the word indicates a kind of dish used in cooking or serving up victuals—which may be noted as of itself a suggestive indication that the waters were to be made potable. And it was *new*—the more to illustrate the intended miracle, by making it evident that there was nothing in the vessel, or adhering to it from previous use, which possessed any curative power. He also told them to put salt into the vessel. So far from in any way contributing to the intended result, the salt might be supposed rather to increase the evil—water charged with salt being unfit for use, and unfriendly to vegetable life. No people knew this better than the inhabitants, living, as they did, within ken of the Salt Sea; and being well, therefore, acquainted with the effects of salt in water. It was probably for this reason that the salt was chosen—that the effect might be produced not only by agencies not in any way contributing to the result, but naturally contrary to it. This was, therefore, what the Jews call a miracle within a miracle. Thus furnished, Elisha forthwith proceeded to the spring—attended, doubtless, by a large concourse of people; and there he cast in the salt, saying, in the fulness of faith, and in language well suited to direct attention from himself as the agent to the Lord as the author of the miracle—“Thus saith the Lord, I have healed these waters: there shall not be from thence any more death or barren land.” And so it came to pass, to the great joy of the people, who could not but see the entirely miraculous nature of the transaction, not only in the agency employed, but in the fact that no human act could have had any *permanent* effect upon the water. The

effect of whatever human resource or knowledge could have done, must have passed off before the day closed, as the water then in the basin and the channel became mixed with that which rose freshly from the spring. It is surely impossible for human art by any one act to produce an abiding effect upon running water.

Soon after this the prophet went to Bethel. This, it will be recollected, was a seat of the worship of one of Jeroboam's golden calves—the inhabitants of which were therefore doubtless very corrupt in their religious notions and services. The reception which the prophet met with confirms the impression. He was assailed by a rabble of young blackguards with cries of “Go up, thou bald-head! go up, thou bald-head!” And how did the prophet meet this rude assault, from what the reader takes from the narrative to have been a gang of unmannerly boys? He turned and *cursed* them—nothing less—cursed them in the name of the Lord; and forthwith came two she-bears—perhaps robbed of their whelps—and tore forty-and-two of them. We dare say there are few young readers, or indeed old ones, of this passage in the Bible, who do not think the prophet was terribly severe; and that, although the “children” deserved a good whipping or something of that sort for their impudence, it was going rather too far to punish them with death. But, in the first place, he did not do so. He “cursed them”—and that not from personal resentment, but under a divine impulse, without which, we will venture to say, no prophet ever dared to pronounce a curse. He cursed, and that was all. He did not punish. He left it to the Lord to determine and inflict the measure of punishment; and that the Lord judged the crime worthy of death, requires us to look more closely into its nature.

In the first place, we are to take the children not as mere thoughtless boys, scarcely knowing what they were about, but as young men acting from a strong animus against the prophet for his works' sake, and with a full meaning to insult and discourage him at the commencement of his career. The

Hebrew word here employed to describe them (*naarim*, singular *naar*), no doubt does denote even an infant, and a mere child; but also does as frequently denote grown-up lads, youths, and young men, and is often used, irrespective of age, in application to servants and soldiers. In fact its use is more extensive than ours of the term “boy,” though that is very wide, and more nearly corresponds to the Irish use of the same word “boy,” or “gorsoon,” or the French of “garçon.” We need only to point out a few passages to show this. The term is applied to Ishmael when he was about fourteen years old;* to Isaac when he was grown up to a young man;† Hamor of Shechem, when of marriageable age, and probably not less than twenty years old;‡ to Joseph when he was seventeen;§ to Gideon’s son Jether, when old enough to be ordered to slay two kings;|| to Solomon after he had become king;¶ to the four hundred Amalekites who escaped on camels;** to Elisha’s servant Gehazi;†† to the son of the prophets who anointed Jehu;‡‡ to the two hundred and thirty-two attendants of the princes of the provinces who went out against Benhadad;§§ to the soldiers of the Assyrian king;||| and in other places too numerous to cite. In all these cases, though differently translated according to the apparent meaning of the sacred writer—by child, lad, young man, servant—the word is but one in the original, and is the same which is here employed to express “children.”

But it will be said those designated here are not only children, but “little children.” Even so; but in one of the instances just cited, Solomon calls himself “a *little* child” when certainly a young man; and we wish to point attention to the fact, which we have never seen noticed, that although those who came out against the prophet are called “little children,” the “little” is dropped where the forty-two who are slain are mentioned. Even the word for “children” is

* Gen. xxi. 16.

† Gen. xxii. 12.

‡ Gen. xxxiv. 20.

§ Gen. xxxvii. 2.

|| Judges viii. 20.

¶ 1 Kings iii. 7.

** 1 Sam. xxx. 17.

†† 2 Kings iv. 12.

‡‡ 2 Kings ix. 4.

§§ 1 Kings xx. 15.

||| 2 Kings xix. 6

then changed to another (*jeladim*, singular *jelad*); and although that word is of nearly synonymous use and application with the other,* the change, with the dropping of the word "little," is probably intended to mark the distinction. Wherever there is a mob of idle young men, there is sure to be a number of mischievous urchins, who shout and bawl, as they do, without knowing much of the matter. Although, therefore, there were no doubt little children among this rabble of young Bethelites, there is every reason to suppose that the forty-two *of them* who were destroyed were the oldest ones, the ringleaders of the set, and who very well knew what they were about. It is worthy of note here, that the Jews have long considered a father responsible for the sins of his sons while they are under thirteen years of age, after which they become accountable for themselves. There is a ceremony, wherein the father publicly in the congregation transfers to his son, when he attains that age, the responsibility he has hitherto borne for him. This notion is old. We trace it in John ix. 23, where the parents decline to answer for their son, on the ground that he has reached the age of personal responsibility, and can answer for himself. If this idea was as old as the time of Elisha—and it probably was, though the age may then have been later—it supplies a fresh argument to show that the *youngest* of those destroyed was not under the age to which personal responsibility was fixed by the Jews themselves—the Bethelites among the rest.

Observe further, that these youths were not accidentally encountered: they did not happen to be at their sports outside the town when the prophet passed; but they "came out" of *malice prepense* "to meet" and insult him. Such a purpose against the prophet must have been the result of their un-

* Lamech applies it to the person he had slain, whom he also calls "a man," Gen. iv. 23. It is also applied to Joseph when seventeen (equally with the other term), Gen. xxxvii. 30; xlii. 22; to the "young men" who were brought up with Rehoboam, who was forty years old 1 Kings xii. 8, 10; to Daniel and the pious youths his companions, Dan. i. 4, 10, &c.

godly training in that evil place, and must have had its root in the sneers and sarcasms which they had all their lives heard levelled at the name and acts of Elijah. Him, surrounded as he was with terrors, they would not have dared thus to insult and abuse; but from his comparatively meek and gentle successor, whom they had never hitherto seen in any position of authority, they thought there was nothing to apprehend, and that they could with impunity pour out the blackness of their hearts upon him. They had heard that Elijah had been taken up to heaven, and they believed it; but instead of being suitably impressed by it, they regarded it as a fine new subject of derision—telling the disciple to “go up” after his master, and then they should be well rid of both. To this they added the ignominious term of “bald-head,” which was one of great indignity with the Israelites—baldness being usually seen among them as the effect of the loathsome disease of leprosy. It was a term of contempt, equivalent to calling him a mean and unworthy fellow—a social outcast. In this sense it is still used as a term of abuse in the further East (India, etc.), and is often applied as such to men who have ample heads of hair. In western Asia, where men shave their heads, the term is not now known as one of reproach.

The offence, involving as it did a blasphemous insult upon one of the Lord’s most signal acts, made a near approach to what in the New Testament is called the sin against the Holy Ghost. It became the Lord to vindicate his own honor among a people governed by sensible dispensations of judgments and of mercy; and it became him to vindicate the character and authority of his anointed prophet at the outset of his high career.

Forty-Eighth Week—Sunday.

WATERS.—II KINGS II. 19.

WHEN the elders of Jericho described to Elisha their distressed condition, they did so in the words—"Behold, the situation of this city is pleasant, but the water is naught, and the ground is barren." The material facts, thus combined and contrasted, are very suggestive to the mind of spiritual conditions. Let us therefore examine these words more closely. The situation is pleasant; it appears to present everything that might render life happy and prosperous; but it appears that this great advantage is neutralized by the barrenness of the ground, where nothing will grow, where no fruit is brought forth to perfection; and, seeking the cause of this, we find it is because the waters are naught. It is not that there is drought, the usual cause of sterility in the East; it is not that water is even scanty, it is abundant; but that they are bad waters—such waters as, instead of sustaining, destroy the powers of vegetation.

Why, this becomes a very parable to us, touching, with painful force, upon the spiritual condition of many of us. The situation in which we stand is pleasant. What more could the Lord have done for us than he has done? While so many fair regions of the earth lie in spiritual darkness, the full and blessed light of God's truth shines upon our habitations. We have the written word of truth—we have the uttered word of truth—one of the first sounds that entered our infant ears was that name which is above every name, and in which all our hope is found; and not a day passes in which, under some form or other, we may not see or hear the words of salvation. What situation could be more pleasant, more favorable to our spiritual prospects? Surely our city stands upon the delectable mountain, whence

on any clear day we may have fair prospects of the goodly land that lies beyond the swellings of Jordan.

Yet, pleasant as all things seem, it is not well with us. "The ground is barren." The great Husbandman has ploughed it up, with which of his ploughs He would; for He has many ploughs for different soils. He has cast in the seed—carefully cast it in; and it is good seed, bursting with ripeness, and He has a right to expect large returns from it—if not sixty-fold, if not thirty-fold, at least ten. But nothing comes from it. The seed will not germinate—nothing will grow. Yet the ground is clean and sweet; for it has been under heavenly tillage, and the Sun of Righteousness has beamed warmly on it. What ails it, then? Something is wrong, or something wanting. It is the waters that are either bad or deficient. Who shall heal them? Only God; it is no use to look to any one else. If they are bad, if they have been poisoned, and our souls rendered barren by bitter doctrine, read or heard—there is no cure till the handful of wholesome salt is cast in. If they are deficient through the starved poverty of our faith and love—there is no help but in the waters He will send, either in streams or showers, and which He will send if earnestly implored; for He is not a husbandman who forgets the soil He has tilled, or the seed He has planted.

"See how this dry and thirsty land,
Mine heart, doth gaping, gasping stand,
And, close below, opens towards heaven and Thee;
Thou fountain of felicity;
Great Lord of living waters, water me."

If then, He send not his rains, his streams in abundance, He will send *enough* to refresh, to heal, and fertilize.

"If not full showers of rain, yet Lord,
A little pearly dew afford.
A little, if it come from Thee,
Will be of great avail to me."

Nothing but this water of Divine grace and doctrine is want-

ing to make our "situation pleasant" altogether—to render this once barren ground a very land of Beulah.

"O let thy love
Distil in fructifying dews of grace,
And then mine heart will be a pleasant place."

Such ideas and images derived from water are entirely scriptural. The remarkable and almost marvellous effects upon the parched lands, produced by the coming of water, whether of rains or streams, in the warm and dry regions of the earth, quickening into sudden verdure, beauty and life, that which lay dead, dreary, and unfruitful, suggests analogies to the influence of Divine doctrine upon the soul, and of heavenly grace upon the heart—the singular beauty and appropriateness of which are scarcely appreciable in our moist climate, where the prime anxiety of our cultivators is not to obtain water, but to get rid of its superabundance. But to such as know the East, such passages as these speak to the very heart:—

"My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew; as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass."*

"He shall come down like rain on the mown grass; as showers that water the earth."†

"I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring."‡

"I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water."§

And then, not to quote more—for there is much—of the same purport are almost the last words of Scripture—"The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."||

* Dent. xxxi. 2.

† Ps. lxxii. 6.

‡ Isaiah xlv. 3

§ Isaiah xli. 18.

|| Rev. xxii. 17.

FORTY-EIGHTH WEEK—MONDAY.

THE THREE KINGS.—II KINGS III. 4-16.

THE Moabites, rendered tributary—conquered by David, and remaining tributary to the kingdom of the ten tribes, took advantage of Ahab's troubles from the Syrians in the latter years of his reign, to assert their independence. This they did by withholding their customary annual tribute. The relation of this circumstance brings out the curious fact, that Mesha, king of Moab, was a sheep-master, and rendered unto the king of Israel a hundred thousand lambs, and a hundred thousand rams, with the wool. A strange proportion of rams; and it seems so unlikely that so large a number should be kept, that it has been supposed that wethers are intended. It claims notice, also, that the word translated "sheep-master," is in the original (*noked*) literally "*a marker*;" a name which came to denote a shepherd, because it was a pastoral duty to mark the sheep by some color, to distinguish them from others, and so to prevent the confusion that might arise from the accidental mingling of two flocks—a circumstance particularly apt to occur in lands destitute of enclosures; and also, more particularly to distinguish the animals of better breed or quality from others. But we find, that the corresponding term denotes among the Arabs a species of sheep and goats, short-legged and deformed, but distinguished for the length of the wool; and it is also applied to the shepherd of a flock of sheep.

This custom of calling a man from the species of animal in which his trade lies, or from the commodity in which he deals, is common in the Hebrew and other eastern languages. Nor is it unknown in our own common language; for, according to a writer of the present day,* this usage is common among our own street-folk, who call a man who deals in baked potatoes "a baked 'tatur;" one who sells pickled whelks, "a pickled

* Mr. Henry Mayhew in *London Labor and London Poor*.

whelk;" and so on. As a tribute is always of the best of the land, and as "with the wool" is particularly mentioned, it is very probable that the sheep in question may have been of the very same breed with the Arabian, to which the same name is given—distinguished for the quality of the wool. Some of our older versions render the designation by "rich in sheep," and "a lord of sheep;" and there can be no doubt of the attention the king of Moab paid to this branch of industry and source of wealth, from the form which the tribute took. It is only highly civilized countries, possessing such active commerce as enables them rapidly to turn their products into money, that could pay tribute other than in kind; and in ancient history instances of tributes being otherwise rendered than in the principal products of the tributary country are comparatively rare. The Hebrews themselves usually rendered their tributes in precious metal; and this argues the relative wealth of their country—partly from the hoards of ancient kings, and partly from the facility they possessed of turning their produce into money in the Phœnician markets. But the Moabites, beyond almost any of the neighboring nations, were cut off from the ordinary lines of traffic, and could have but little occupation or commerce except in cattle, for the pasturage and nourishment of which their country was well adapted. Much curious information might easily be presented with respect to ancient and even modern tributes in cattle. But it suffices us to state that all our information is confirmatory of Pliny's statement that in ancient times the only tribute was from the pastures. A curious instance is that of the Cappadocians, of whom Strabo relates that they used to deliver as tribute to the Persians, every year, fifteen hundred horses, two thousand mules, and fifty myriads of sheep, or fifty thousand. The Moabite tribute seems very heavy, and doubtless it was so felt by them while it lasted; but in the same degree was it valuable to the crown of Israel; and the internal taxation, to which resort must have been made to make up for this lapse of external revenue, doubtless made the expedition eventually undertaken

for the purpose of reducing the Moabites, highly popular in Israel. Yet this was not undertaken by Ahab; and his unwarlike son Ahaziah seems to have shrunk from the enterprise. It was left to his brother Jehoram, and it became one of the first objects of his reign. He easily prevailed upon Jehoshaphat of Judah to join him in the undertaking. His primary inducement seems to have been to assist in putting down a resistance to Jewish domination, which afforded an example dangerous to the dominion of Judah over the neighboring country of Edom. Indeed, although the viceroy of Edom was compelled to bring his forces into the field in aid of Judah against Moab, there is much reason to suspect that the Edomites were nearly ripe for revolt, and were watching the turn of events to declare their own independence, if not to make common cause with Moab. Indeed, it may be traced, we apprehend, in the narrative, that the king of Moab had expectations from them; and it is likely these expectations would not have been disappointed had any reverse attended the arms of the allies. The direct course into the land of Moab would have been to cross the Jordan somewhere above the estuary of the river; but instead of this, the Israelites marched down through Judah's territory, and, being joined by the forces of Jehoshaphat, proceeded round by the southern extremity of the Dead Sea, where, being joined by the auxiliaries of Edom, they entered Moab on the south. The course thus taken admits of various explanations. That the Syrians were posted in Gilead, where they still held the stronghold of Ramoth, may have rendered it unadvisable to assail Moab on the north; but we are ourselves more inclined to ascribe it to the necessity which the king of Judea felt, of holding the Edomites under close observation.

By the time the allies entered the land of Moab, they were nearly consumed for lack of water; and in this emergency good Jehoshaphat inquired if there were any "prophet of the Lord" within reach. In his own country, and among his own people, the designation of "a prophet" would have sufficed; but mixed as he was with the Israelites, he felt the

need of specifying that he desired the counsel of "a prophet of the Lord." On hearing that Elisha had followed the camp, he readily recognized the name and claims of the inheritor of Elijah's mantle, although his prophetic career had but just commenced ; and, at his suggestion, the three kings—sent for him? No, went down to him. Not at all abashed by the presence of three crowned kings, the prophet, albeit a mild-mooded man, greeted Ahab's son with a rebuke as stern as Elijah himself could have administered. A soft answer turned away some of his wrath ; and his heart softening towards Jehoshaphat, he consented to seek counsel of God. But Elisha, who always appears as more susceptible to external influences than his great master, needed first to calm down the perturbations of his spirit, to bring his soul into a fit frame for receiving the intimations he sought from Heaven, and to bear his spirit upon the wings of melodious sound into the harmonious company around that throne which no dissonance can approach. Nor was it for him alone. The kings, as they listened, could not but come also under this, the most spiritual of earthly influences, and be thereby prepared to receive in a right spirit the word they sought. As the minstrel with rapt ardor swept the strings, the divine influence came down upon the prophet's mind, and the last note had scarcely died away when he spoke. His words were strange—"Make this valley full of ditches." This was to receive the water, which, as he said, should, without sign of wind or rain, speedily fill the valley. Unlikely as the thing seemed, the kings recognized the power of the Lord by following the directions of his prophet ; and presently thousands of men were at work scooping out wide and deep trenches in the valley—trenches larger, it is probable, than their need, though less capacious than their present thirst.

FORTY-EIGHTH WEEK—TUESDAY.

THE BLOOD-LIKE WATER.—II KINGS III. 22, 23.

LARGE as were the trenches which the eager allies digged to receive the promised water, they were filled to overflowing. To show more distinctly that it was from the Lord, the time was that of the morning sacrifice, which was offered towards the rising of the sun, and before all other sacrifices. At that moment the waters came from the way of Edom, and filled the ditches which had been digged in the bed of a winter torrent.

The distant Moabites, having no suspicion of the presence of water, and beholding a reddish tinge along the valley, jumped to the conclusion, that the allies had fallen out, and fought together during the night, and that this was the blood of the battle. They probably thought that it was the king of Edom who had risen upon the Israelites, being aware that he was present only by constraint. Under this delusion, they hastened to plunder the camp which they supposed forsaken, but found it full of living and refreshed men, whose swords soon made the visionary blood a truth.

But respecting this water. The time of its coming, and all the circumstances, were framed to evince the miraculous nature of the supply, by the special and extraordinary act of Divine power. We are expressly told there was no rain. Neither was a new spring opened ; for in that case the stream would have continued to run, and the trenches would have been unnecessary. The opening of a fountain, also, although a temporary advantage to the Israelites, would have been an enduring benefit to their enemies ; and as the allies were not to remain there, and only sought present relief, to render the supply as temporary as the occasion, the more illustrated the miracle, and the more distinctly showed that the waters were meant for them, and for them only. To send a sudden rush of waters, just to fill the trenches at the precise moment, and

then to cease, was as distinctly a supply on purpose for them, as if the Lord had sent a host of angels under the guise of water-carriers, to empty full skins of water into the trenches they had made. Nevertheless, the water must have been produced by some *means*, and one would like to know what took place at the spot from which the stream came. Perhaps something of the same nature that has been occasionally, but rarely, witnessed in different lands, and of which an instance occurred at no remote date in our own country. The journals of the time record, that on the 20th of September, 1810, the inhabitants of the town of Luton, in Bedfordshire, were surprised by a singular phenomenon. The common pond, situated in a rather elevated part of the town, which, as there had been no rain in the neighborhood for some weeks, was gradually becoming shallower of water, suddenly filled, and ejected from its bottom all the filth and sediment. It continued flowing over, and discharging a large quantity of water for some hours; but afterwards remained quiet as usual. It is added, that the town's people were struck with considerable alarm at the circumstance, and apprehended that there would soon be intelligence of some distant earthquake, as it was remembered that a similar emission of water at this spot had taken place at the precise instant of the great earthquake in Lisbon in 1775.

There are also some curious questions respecting the color of the water. It is stated that it appeared to the Moabites as red as blood. As this appearance was presented when the morning sun shone upon it, the probability seems to be, that the color was reflected from the redness of the horizon at the sun rising. But it may be asked, How could the Moabites be deceived by so common a phenomenon, especially when the glaring sun and the crimson clouds around it must have instantly indicated the cause of this appearance? The answer is, that this would have been the case, had they known there was any water in the valley; but they felt quite sure there was none; and as in the absence of water there could be no reflection from the skies, the reason they assigned

was really the most probable that could be suggested under the circumstances. That this was the cause of the redness, is the general sentiment of interpreters. We are of the same judgment, for this reason, among others, that any real redness in the water would have laid its wholesomeness open to doubt, and would have been felt as rendering the boon less valuable than the gift of pure limpid water would have been. Nevertheless, some have thought there may have been something in or on the water to impart to it a red appearance. The possibility of this is not to be denied; and were there not examples in nature of such redness in water, God might have imparted it supernaturally; for He is not limited to natural agencies, though He commonly works through them when available. And it may be urged, that an adequate motive for such color being given to the water is found in the fact, that the taking it for blood by the Moabites was the means, and was intended to be the means, of giving an immediate victory to the allies, according to the promise of Elisha.

Various instances of the redness of water have been recorded. The most famous instance is that of the river Leontes in Lebanon, which becomes red at a certain time of the year, from its stream then washing or passing over beds of coloring earths. This is, indeed, the common cause of the periodical redness of certain rivers. In this case it was regarded by the Syrians and Phœnicians as an annual commemoration of the death of Adonis—the Thammuz of Scripture—and while it lasted, the mourning rites of Thammuz were celebrated, as alluded to in Ezek. viii. 14. Milton finely refers to this mythological fable:—

“Thammuz came next,
Whose annual wound in Lebanon allured
The Syrian damsels to lament his fate
In amorous ditties all a summer's day;
While smooth Adonis from his native rock
Ran purple to the sea, supposed with blood
Of Thammuz yearly wounded.”

It is related by Pliny, that the water of the lakes near Babylon was of a red color during eleven days in summer. The water at the mouth of the river Plata has often been observed of a blood-red color; and the French missionary Con-sag observed, in 1746, that the open sea near California was of a bluish-red color. The same has been observed in the *Red Sea*, and from this some have been of late inclined to suppose its name was derived. In this case it was shown to be a jelly-like substance floating upon the surface of the water, and composed of a multitude of very small mollusca, each having a small red spot in the centre, forming in the mass a bright body of red color.

When observed in the sea, it is probably in most cases of this nature; but when in lakes or rivers, it seems as likely to be a vegetable product or deposit, as in the case of the lake supposed to have been turned into blood towards the close of the last century, near Strautsberg; but, when scientifically examined in January, 1799, the coloring matter was found to be some vegetable substance. Professor Klaproth found, that the coloring substance in another lake (near Lubotin in South Prussia), exhibited a chemical affinity to the coloring matter obtained from the indigo plant; and although the water appeared of a dark-red crimson color, this was merely an optical delusion, occasioned by the refraction of the rays of light, the real color being a pure blue.

FORTY-EIGHTH WEEK—WEDNESDAY.

PRINCIPLES OF HUMAN SACRIFICE.—II KINGS III. 26, 27.

THE victory won by the allies was followed up with vigor and with severity, until at last the king of Moab was obliged to shut himself in his strong city of Kir-hareseth, which was soon invested by the allies. In the desperate state of his affairs, and feeling that it would be impossible for him to

hold out long, the king of Moab made the bold attempt of forcing his way through the beleaguering force, at the head of a small body of seven hundred resolute men. That he chose to make the attempt upon the quarter which the king of Edom occupied, may have been either from the comparative weakness of this part, or from his having reason to suspect the Edomites were not hearty in the cause for which they fought, and would, after some decent show of resistance, allow him to pass. He was, however, disappointed; for he was repelled by the Edomites, and driven back into the city.

This seemed to king Mesha the last of his human resources, and nothing was left for him but a solemn appeal to his gods, for deliverance. The emergency was great. Not only the welfare, but the very existence of his house and nation, was at stake. He therefore conceived that the blood of bulls and goats would not suffice for the greatness of the occasion, which was such as to demand the most precious and costly offering known to Paganism—the life of a man—and that of no common man, but of him whose life was most precious to the king himself, and to the state—even the life of his own son, his eldest son, who was to have succeeded him in the throne.

This is the only positive example of human sacrifice recorded in Scripture, though there are frequent allusions to such sacrifices, as an abominable custom of idolatry, solemnly interdicted to the Israelites. There can be no question here, as to the possibly limited meaning of such phrases as “burning with fire,” and “causing to pass through the fire.” The young prince is clearly offered for “a burnt-offering” upon the wall of the city, and in the sight of the allied besiegers, who are so horror-struck, that they raise the siege and depart.

Human sacrifice was in fact very prevalent in ancient times. Various accounts of its origin have been given, but all necessarily conjectural. It seems to us, that the practice grew out of the notion, that whatever was most costly and

precious must needs be most acceptable as an offering to the gods; and it being established that the life of animals was an acceptable offering, perverse ingenuity reasoned, that the life of the human creature—the noblest of creatures, and his life-blood—the most precious on earth, must be still more acceptable to heaven, still more valuable in the sight of the gods. This being the case, it further followed, that the more illustrious, the more pure or exalted, the person whose life was offered, the more proper still was the offering, and the more cogent its force in gratifying, soothing, or rendering propitious the stern powers that ruled the destinies of man. Hence the lives of the most pure, the most beautiful, the most high-born—children, virgins, and noble youths, were considered the most splendid and effectual sacrifices; although, in default of such, captives and slaves were offered, the life of the meanest human creature being of far more value than that of the noblest beast of the field. As to the precise object, it appears to us that in all, or nearly all, the cases fully known, these offerings were propitiatory at least, if not expiatory. Thus: a certain danger threatens the nation or family, or a certain calamity has been inflicted. Hence it is inferred the gods are angry, and the evil cannot be averted, or will not cease, or prosperity will not return, until they are pacified. For this end nothing must be spared; the public good requires that at all costs the angry gods must be placated, rendered propitious. The priest is supposed to possess the means of knowing what will turn their wrath away; and if he names the son or daughter of the king himself as the needful victim, it becomes his duty not only to submit to the demand, but to acquiesce in it with all the marks of cheerful obedience, lest the manifestation of natural grief should neutralize the merit of the costly and powerful offering.

That these offerings were regarded as expiatory of sins which had brought down, or which threatened the judgments of heaven, is clearly indicated by Micah (vi. 7)—“Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit

of my body for the sin of my soul?" And indeed this prophet, in the context, makes it distinctly a further development of the principle of expiatory animal sacrifice. His mention of the "first-born," perhaps glances at the very case now before us; but, indeed, when the most precious life was sought, that of the first-born, as in this case, and still more of an only child, as in the case of Iphigenia, would be regarded as the most precious.

Even the wrath of man, his wicked inventions, may redound to the glory of God, and illustrate the mysteries of his grace and providence; and it has been often to us a matter of solemn thought, that in this matter, the heathen themselves, in doing this awful and forbidden thing,—which God never exacted from any people, but which was abhorrent to him—did yet bear witness to the great doctrine of the Atonement, and declare the need for it. Their consciences bore witness, that the blood of bulls and goats could not put away sin—they craved some higher, some more effectual expiation, and sought it in the life of man. They could go no higher. If they could, they would have done so; for still they must have felt unsatisfied—a more precious life than any they could offer was really needed for effectual expiation: and that life the Lord himself provided when He gave his well-beloved Son to be offered up as an atonement for the sins of the world. Awfully affecting is the contemplation of the blind ways, in which the ancient heathen unknowingly expressed their consciousness of the need for some greater and higher atonement than any they had to offer.

Having alluded to the case of Iphigenia, we feel constrained to return to it, as expressed in the tragedy of *Æschylus*, as it seems to embody the ancient ideas bearing on the subject. This sacrifice of the king's only daughter was declared by the priest to be the sole means of atoning for the offence, which the angry goddess avenged by storms and adverse winds, which prevented the Argive fleet from sailing. The sacrifice was thus expiatory. The manner in which this demand was received, powerfully suggests how

the hearts of men were rent by the exactions which their "dark idolatries" imposed upon them, whatever aspect of fortitude and submission they might feel it becoming to put on when the deed was consummated.

"The sons of Atreus, starting from their thrones,
Dashed to the ground their sceptres, nor withheld
The bursting tears that dew'd their warrior cheeks;
And thus exclaiming spoke the elder king:
 'O heavy, fatal doom! to disobey!
 O heavy, fatal doom! my child to slay—
 My child! the idol treasure of my house!
 Must I, her father, all bedabbled o'er
 In streaming rivers of her virgin gore,
 Stand by the altar with polluted hands?
 O woe! woe! woe!
 Where shall I turn me?"

But at length—

"—— He bent his neck beneath the yoke
Of dire necessity, and champ'd the curb."

And then, when all was ready, the mailed chiefs who stood around

"Heard in silence stern
Cries that called a father's name,
And set at naught prayers, cries, and tears,
And her sweet virgin life and blooming years."

Then followed a solemn prayer, during which the victim sinks to the ground in a swoon; and at length, on the word being given by her father, the priests lift her up,

"And bear her to the altar dread,
Like a young fawn or mountain kid;
Then round her beauteous mouth to tie
Dumb sullen bands to stop her cry,
Lest aught of an unholy sound
Be heard to breathe those altars round,
Which on the monarch's house might cast a deadly spell."

FORTY-EIGHTH WEEK—THURSDAY.

PRACTICE OF HUMAN SACRIFICE.—II KINGS III. 27.

HAVING yesterday developed the principle of human sacrifice, we may to-day contemplate some ancient and modern instances in illustration of the practice.

Although, as we have seen, the practice was not unknown to the Greeks, and there are even examples of it among the Romans in the early period of their history, it was never so common among the classical ancients as among the Canaanites and other nations of Syria. On this point the testimony of ancient heathen and early Christian writers concurs with that of Scripture. It was indeed awfully common among the Carthaginians in North Africa, but they derived it from the same quarter, being a colony of the Phœnicians. Their customs in this matter are better known than those of the Phœnician and Syrian nations, and it is hence usual to carry back their usages, to supply the details which the Scripture does not furnish. But one who has expressly written on the subject,* says they are not strictly applicable to the usages of the Molech of Scripture by human sacrifice, but are later developments of the primitive rites. Jewish rabbis and Christian fathers concur, however, in this reference; and although the mode of operation may have been different in some particulars, the essential facts and principles of action are identical. It is with MOLECH that human sacrifices are usually connected in Scripture. "Causing children to pass through the fire to Molech," is frequently alluded to in Scripture; and some Jewish rabbis, tender of the reputation of their ancient kings to whom this practice is ascribed, started the ingenious notion that the ceremony was not one of sacrifice or death, but a sort of lustration or purification by fire, which, although idolatrous, and, indeed, an act of devotement to the idol, was not cruel, and inflicted no bodily harm. But this view of the

* Munter in his *Religion der Karthager*: also Movers, *Die Phönizier*

matter is untenable in the face of the evidence we possess, and is not now usually entertained. When the Israelites fell into this practice, this passing "through the fire" took place in the valley of Hinnom, south of Jerusalem; and Jeremiah, speaking of what there took place, expressly says that the subjects of this operation were "burned in the fire."*

"Molech, horrid king, besmeared with blood
Of human sacrifice and parents' tears,"

was the same, doubtless, with the Kronos whom the Greeks identified with Saturn, and concerning whom we have the mythological fable of his devouring his own children. There is a difficulty in distinguishing him from Baal. Both names are appellative—Baal being *lord*, and Molech *king*. Recent investigation seems to point to the conclusion that Baal represented the life-giving and cherishing, and Molech the life-destroying powers of the same god—the sun. In that point of view, the offering of human victims, to be consumed by fire, must have seemed highly appropriate.

Without further explanation or application, we proceed to sum up a few of a large body of facts and instances which we have been able to collect on this painful subject.

The Phœnicians and Carthaginians are reported to have had a yearly celebration, upon which human sacrifices were offered in large numbers to their idol; and it is worthy of note that the Jews appear to have traced some analogy between the ceremonies of this day and those of their own great and solemn day of atonement—with the difference of human for animal victims. Victims were also offered on particular emergencies, as in the instance by which these remarks have been suggested. Princes and great men under severe calamities used to offer their beloved children to the god. Private persons soon came to imitate the example of their princes; and thus in time the practice became general. Indeed, to such a height did this infatuation rise, that those who had

* Jer. vii. 31. See also Ps. cvi. 38; Ezek. xvi. 20; xxiii. 37, to show that these were real sacrifices by fire.

no children of their own bought those of the poor, that they might not be deprived of the benefits they expected from such offerings. The original practice seems to have been to slay the victims, and then to place the body on the altar, to be consumed in the fire. Indeed, that they should be burned alive, as some suppose, would have been adverse to the analogy of sacrifice. Afterwards, a kind of burning fiery furnace was used; and eventually, among the Carthaginians, the victims were—at least sometimes—cast into a large brazen statue of the god, made red-hot. To drown the cries of the young victims, musicians were made to play on noisy instruments—particularly drums;* and the mothers made it a sort of merit to divest themselves of natural affection—or rather to restrain its manifestation. A tear rendered the sacrifice of no effect, and the one who shed it was deemed an enemy to the public peace. Tertullian, who was himself a native of Carthage, says that this inhuman custom was maintained there long after the Carthaginians had been subdued by the Romans. He affirms that children were sacrificed to this Molech, Kronos, or Saturn, down to the consulship of Tiberius, who, to put a stop to it, hanged the sacrificing priests themselves on the tree that shaded their temple, as on so many crosses raised to expiate their crimes, of which the soldiers who assisted at the execution had been the witnesses.

There is a curious and painfully illustrative anecdote on this subject in Diodorus Siculus, who relates that, when Agathocles was going to besiege Carthage, the people, seeing the extremities to which they were reduced, ascribed their misfortunes to the anger of their god, in that they had latterly spared to offer to him in sacrifice children nobly born, and had fraudulently put him off with the children of slaves and foreigners. To make an atonement for this crime, two hundred children of the best families in Carthage were at once offered in sacrifice, and no less than three hundred of the

* Hence the place in the valley of Hinnom was called Tophet, from *Toph*, a drum.

citizens voluntarily sacrificed themselves—that is, they went into the fire without any compulsion.

Nor was the practice of human sacrifice confined to the East. It was found among the British Druids, as well as with the Gauls and Germans. Prisoners taken in battle were thus disposed of as offerings to the god who had given the victory. The victim was chained with his back to an oak, and while music was played, and the people danced to the music, the officiating Druid smote the victim on the bowels, and professed to draw auguries of the future from the manner in which the blood flowed. On other occasions prisoners were consumed by hundreds in a wicker machine or cage, to which the sacrificial priest set fire. With such offerings the infernal powers were supposed to be well pleased; and it is likely that they were.

Among many of the nations of Africa the custom has subsisted to our own time—with this difference, that, instead of sacrifice by fire, the blood of the victims (unless, as in Dahomey, kept to be made into black puddings) is alone poured out as an offering to the gods, the bodies being eaten by the people—partly as a religious act. The travellers of the sixteenth century relate that the sovereign of Guagua never entered upon a military expedition without a solemn sacrifice, in which he immolated a youth with his own hatchet; and afterwards four slaves, two by his hand, and two by the aid of others.

Snelgrave, in his "New Account of Some Parts of Guinea," published in 1734, speaks of two cases of human sacrifice that came under his own notice in Old Calabar. On the occasion of the illness of king Jabru, the priests prescribed, as an effectual means of cure, the sacrifice of a child six months old. Snelgrave saw the dead body of the child suspended from the branches of a tree with a living cock which had been tied to him for the completion of this horrid ceremony. This was in 1704. Nine years after, in his last voyage to this coast, this captain, visiting one of the chiefs, saw a negro child fastened by the arms to a post driven into the

ground; and observing the poor creature to be covered with flies and vermin, he inquired concerning him, and was told that he was a victim intended to be sacrificed the night following to the god Egbo for the prosperity of the realm. The rough seaman could not endure this, and, his men being with him, rescued the victim by little less than force of arms.

The same captain witnessed in Dahomey the very same practices of human immolation, but on a more extensive scale, which Commander Forbes* in the present day has horrified us by describing. This fact, not known to the late traveller, shows the inveteracy of such customs, especially such as comprise bloody rites. Commander Forbes declined to witness the actual immolation of the victims, and he and a companion were allowed to buy off three of the fourteen for a hundred dollars each; but both he and Snelgrave bear witness to the amazing coolness of the victims. "These sturdy men met the gaze of their persecutors with a firmness perfectly astonishing. Not a sigh was breathed. In all my life I never saw such coolness. It did not seem real; but soon proved frightfully so. One hellish monster placed his finger to the eyes of a victim who held down his head, but finding no moisture, drew upon himself the ridicule of his fiendish coadjutors."

In Snelgrave's time the immolation of no less than four hundred victims took place upon four small stages, about five feet above the ground. One stroke of a sabre separated the head from the body, amid the shouts of the assembly. The heads were placed on the scaffolds, and each body, after having lain on the ground until drained of blood, was carried forth by slaves to a place beyond the camp. He was told by the interpreter that the heads were for the king, the bodies for the people (to eat), and the blood for the fetishes or gods.

If we go to America, we still find the same customs among the ancient inhabitants. The human sacrifices of the Mexicans were performed with peculiar atrocity, and on a dread-

* *Dahomey and the Dahomans.* By F. E. Forbes, Com. R.N. 1850.

fully extensive scale. They never sacrificed less than forty or fifty at one time, and often a much larger number. The poor wretches were placed upon a terrace, and the immolation of each victim was performed by six of the priests' servants. Two held the victim's arms, two his legs, one his head, while the sixth ripped open his stomach, whence he tore the heart, and after holding it up to the sun, turned round and flung it in the face of the idol. The body was then cast into the area of the building,* which was a cemetery or charnel-house for such sacrifices, whose remains, thousands in number, might there be seen. On solemn occasions it was the duty of the high priest to operate upon the victim; and the dexterity with which he discharged his butcherly office was a matter of high admiration to the people.

Many more instances of these abominations might be given; and we purposely abstain from noticing immolations in which the idea of an offering to the gods is not so obviously involved—such as those who are slain in order to be deposited in the tombs of kings and great men; as well as of prisoners of war, slain by savages as an act of vengeful triumph, consummated by the bodies of the victims being devoured.

For all this there needs but one remark: "The dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty."

FORTY-EIGHTH WEEK—FRIDAY.

ELISHA'S STAFF.—II KINGS IV. 29.

A FRIEND, since deceased, once told us that he never was able to find in any commentary, or to obtain from any minister whom he had consulted, an explanation that he could re-

* There is a fearfully suggestive picture of this place and of the sacrifices in the *Histoire Générale des Voyages*, tom. xii. 4to edition.

gard as satisfactory, of Elisha's view in sending his staff to be laid upon the face of the dead son of the friendly Shunamite. As the prophet went himself, why send his staff before? and as no effect resulted from the operation, what was his view—apparently a mistaken one—in sending it at all? Attention being thus drawn to what seemed a matter not likely to have been overlooked by any commentator, we turned over a good many volumes of all sizes, and ascertained with some surprise that our friend's information was correct. There is a dead silence on this point; and even Krummacher, who has written a whole volume on a part of the history of Elisha, has passed this over, though he as well as others do suggest reasons for the failure of the experiment.

Elisha evidently sent his staff by his servant with the expectation that it would be effectual to raise the dead. This was great faith in him; faith as strong as any that his great master exemplified—almost; for Elijah was the first to conceive the great thought that even the raising of the dead was not a thing too great for faith to ask. Elisha had that for a precedent; but he was the first to think that even his presence was not needful to this effect—that his faith might act thus mightily even at a distance, by the mere instrumentality of his staff, to indicate the power and influence from which it came. But why his *staff* in particular? One might think that the mantle of Elijah would more readily have occurred to his mind in connection with such a purpose and such ideas. We should ourselves at once have understood that. It would have been a most intelligible sign.

Now, it may be possible to explain both why he did not send the mantle, and why he did send the staff. As to the former point, little explanation is needed; for, bearing in mind what has been already stated in regard to the value and importance of the prophetic mantle, every one can feel that he would not himself like to trust it out of his own possession; and, in point of fact, the eastern inheritors of saintly mantles never do let them go out of their immediate charge

on any account whatever, and scarcely, indeed, will allow them to be separated from their persons. They even sleep in them.

To see why he did send his staff, we must consider that the prophetic staff was probably of some particular shape or material, which indicated the authority and function of the person who bore it—being to him, in his degree, what a sceptre was to a king. In fact ancient sceptres, as symbols of power, were only rods or staves. So, in Ezekiel xix. 11, we read of “strong rods for the sceptres of those that bear rule.” Now, the authority of the owner of such an official or symbolical staff was, and even to this day is, considered to be as effectually delegated, for any occasion, to the person to whom it is entrusted, as it would be by a signet ring. Thus, when Captains Irby and Mangles left an Arab camp to proceed to Shobek, the sheikh Abu Rashid sent on with them an Arab bearing his own mace, to ensure for them the same reception as if he had himself been in their company.

In connection with this matter, we cannot fail to recollect the rod of Moses, which was the instrument of all his numerous miracles in Egypt, and in the wilderness, and which he was on all occasions enjoined to use. We remember also that the chiefs of the tribes had staves or rods as the symbol of their authority; and that the budding of Aaron's rod, when laid up along with theirs, became the sign of the peculiar powers with which he was invested. This rod was preserved for a standing memorial in the tabernacle. Even the magicians of Egypt had rods like that of Moses, which they used in the same manner, as signs of the thaumaturgic power with which they claimed to be endowed.

In India the *orou-mulle-pirambu* (*i. e.*, cane with one knot) is believed to possess miraculous powers, whether in the hands of a magician or of a private person. It is about the size of the middle finger, and must have only one knot in its whole length. Mr. Roberts, in his “Oriental Illustrations,” produces the following native declarations on the subject:—

“A man bitten by a serpent will be assuredly cured, if the cane or rod be placed upon him : nay, should he be dead, it will restore him to life. ‘Yes, sir, the man who has such a stick need neither fear serpents nor evil spirits.’” Mr. Roberts adds, “A native gentleman, known to me, has the staff of his umbrella made of one of these rods, and great satisfaction and comfort he has in this, his constant companion. ‘The sun cannot smite him by day, neither the moon by night ; the serpents and wild beasts move off swiftly ; and the evil spirits dare not come near to him.’”

Various reasons have been offered to explain why the application of the staff to the dead child did not produce the effect intended by the prophet. Some suppose that the fault was in his servant Gehazi, who either did not follow the particular directions given him by his master, or lacked the proper faith, or was under the influence of wrong motives and feelings. All this is, however, purely conjectural, and has no foundation whatever in the sacred narrative. Others imagine that Elisha himself was not free from presumption in supposing that his staff alone would be a sufficient instrument for so great a miracle, even without his presence ; and that for this reason his call upon the Lord was not in this form answered. Finally, some lay the failure upon the mother’s manifest want of faith in any result to be produced by the staff. To us the fact appears to be clearly this : Elisha did not at first mean to go himself to Shunem, and for that reason sent his staff to supply the lack of his own presence. If he had then intended to go himself, there would have been no need of sending his staff beforehand ; and his haste to do so might have suggested to the ungodly a detraction of the miracle, in the supposition that he apprehended the child would be too dead, before he came himself, to be revived at all.

But after he had sent away the servant, his observation of the uneasiness of the mother—whom he now expected to go home satisfied, and her avowed determination not to leave him—which was a polite way of pressing him to go in per-

son, induced him to alter his purpose, and, with the kindness natural to him, to forego his own engagements at Carmel in order to satisfy her wishes by accompanying her to her forlorn home. It was probably in consequence of this change of plan that no response was made to the first claim of faith by means of the staff. *That* appeal was in fact superseded the moment he resolved to go in person—the Lord thus reserving for the personal intercession of his prophet the honor of this marvellous deed.

FORTY-EIGHTH WEEK—SATURDAY.

DEBTORS AND CREDITORS.—II KINGS IV. 1-7.

AFTER these great public concerns, the course of the sacred history brings us into the midst of scenes of private trouble. The poor widow of one of the sons of the prophets, comes to Elisha to tell him her tale of sorrow. Her husband, though a good man and a servant of the Lord, had died leaving some debt unpaid, and the harsh creditor was come upon her, claiming her only son as his slave, in discharge of his father's debt. The precise object of the woman in making this statement to the prophet, is not clear. She must have been aware, that he had no means of defraying her debt from his own resources. She might have thought he would apply to the king on her behalf, or that he would use the influence of his character and position with the creditor, to induce him to forego his claim. To both these courses there were objections, more likely to strike the mind of Elisha than that of the applicant. It was undesirable that he should compromise his independence, and the dignity of his office, by seeking favors of the king; and he would not like to use the power which his character gave, by inducing the suitor to submit to a loss by foregoing a claim which might be harsh, but which was yet such as the law sanctioned and allowed. He preferred

that the debt should be paid—but how? He asked the woman what she had left in the house, and she told him that there was nothing but a little oil. It is indeed remarkable, that poor people in Israel who are reduced to the last extremities, generally have a little oil left. So the woman of Zarephath had, beside a morsel of bread, nothing remaining but a small quantity of oil. Such facts, much better than any labored statements and illustrations, show the very great and conspicuous importance of oil to this people. It seems to have been the most essential necessary of life, next to bread. On learning this, the prophet told her to borrow as many vessels as she could, and to *fill them* out of the one containing this small portion of oil, and sell what she thus obtained to pay the debt, and to deliver her son from the danger. She did this; and the miraculous supply of oil ceased not while there remained one vessel to be filled.

The Jews have a notion, that the husband of this woman was no other than Obadiah, the well-known intendant of Ahab's household; and they suppose that the debt was incurred while he maintained the Lord's prophets in a cave. This, they say, he reckoned upon paying in time out of the proceeds of his office; but being soon deprived of that office through the influence of Jezebel, he was reduced to poverty, and died without paying the debt. They even fancy that the harsh creditor was no other than king Jehoram himself. We need not say that there is no scriptural foundation for these conjectures, which seem to have been devised in order to supply a more cogent reason for the Divine interference, through Elisha, for this poor widow's behalf. But surely this is not needed; and the fact that her husband was known to Elisha, and was one of the sons of the prophets (which, by-the-by, Obadiah was not), supplies a sufficient reason for the interest the prophet took in her sad case.

We wish, however, to direct attention to the law under which this sad emergency was produced. As with us, the property of one who died insolvent became chargeable for his debts; but the principle which operated in determining what

constituted property, was carried farther than with us, and created all the real difference in the case. Children were regarded as the property of the father in a sense so absolute, that it was in his power to sell them to pay his debts. The law expressly provided, that in the case of poverty, a man might sell himself, and also his children.* It was by an extension of this permission, and in virtue of another law, which ordained that a thief, who had not wherewith to make restitution, should be sold,† that creditors were allowed to seize the children of their debtors in payment. The law made no express provision in the case; but we see by the present and some other passages, that this usage was common among the Hebrews, and was recognized as having the force of law. There is a manifest allusion to it in Isaiah l. 1—"Which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you? Behold, for your iniquities have ye sold yourselves." Our Lord himself uttered a parable respecting a creditor, who having found a large sum due to him, commanded the debtor to be sold, with his wife, his children, and all that he had.‡ We thus see that the usage was common among the Hebrews, to the latest times of their commonwealth.

The custom was not peculiar to them. It was general in ancient times. The Romans, the Athenians, the nations of Asia, and divers other peoples, exercised the same right over their children, in this and most other respects, as the Hebrews. The parents sold them in their poverty; and creditors seized the children of their debtors as freely as their cattle and movables. Romulus gave to a father every kind of power over his children; and that not only during their nonage, but throughout their lives, and to whatever dignity or power they might attain. He might imprison them, or flog them, or compel them to labor in his fields, or even kill them, or sell them for slaves. Numa Pompilius moderated the severity of this law by enacting, that when a man had married with the consent of his father, the latter no longer had power

* Exod. xxi. 7; Lev. xxv. 39.

† Exod. xxii. 3.

‡ Matt. xviii. 25.

to sell him for a slave. Apart from this restriction, the practice of selling their children had a very long existence among the Romans. Eventually it was forbidden by the emperors Dioclesian and Maximilian, that any free persons should be reduced to slavery because of their debts. The paternal rights over children were originally exercised by the Athenians with the same rigor as by the Romans; but the severity of these customs was moderated by Solon. When Lucullus governed Roman Asia, he found the practice of the Asiatics in respect of the selling of children for the payment of debt, and the eventual seizure of the parents themselves, when no children were left, to be such as struck even his Roman mind as appalling; and he labored to ameliorate the great evils which he witnessed.

In our own day, the absolute right of parents in the disposal of their children exists in the East, in all, or nearly all, its ancient force. In regard to selling them, which is the point under notice, it may suffice to refer to the practice of a Christian nation, the Georgians, who habitually sold both their sons and daughters, and who still do so, as far as they can, notwithstanding the laudable efforts of the Russian government to suppress this odious traffic. We have ourselves known children to be offered for sale by their parents, in the streets of a Mohammedan city, during a time of famine.

It will be seen that the two things—the sale of children by parents, and their seizure by creditors—merge into each other, as the right of the creditor in this matter accrues from the right of the father. There is no instance in any nation, of a creditor being empowered to seize children, where the father himself did not possess the right of selling them.

Forty-Ninth Week—Sunday.

THE PROUD MIND OF THE FLESH.—II KINGS V. 11, 12.

THE deeply interesting and suggestive history of Naaman the Syrian, who came to Samaria to be healed of his leprosy, and was healed by bathing seven times in the Jordan at the command of Elisha, is one on which volumes might be, and actually have been written.* It especially abounds with matter from which, by nearer or remoter analogy, instruction in things spiritual may be drawn; and seeing that, in its first aspect, it is no more than a simply told incident in the history of Elisha, we scarcely know any passage of holy writ of the same extent, which more remarkably bears out the declaration of the apostle, that "*all Scripture* is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for instruction in righteousness." The history, or rather the anecdote of Naaman, is "profitable," not for one of these things separately, but for all of them.

The point of this history to the consideration of which our mind is to-day most drawn, is Naaman's near failure of cure, by reason of his having settled in his own mind the mode in which it was to be done, and his scorn of the simple and naturally inadequate instrumentality prescribed by the prophet.

We, knowing much better than Naaman did, the character and claims of Elisha, are apt to be amazed at the petulance and pride of Naaman. Yet in fact there are few of us—are there any?—who have not manifested many times in the course of our career, as much, or more, resistance to the demands upon our faith, and to the enforced exigencies for the humiliation of "the proud mind of the flesh," as ever Naaman did, and often with far less reason. Let us rather admit, that the demand upon the faith of Naaman, and the

* We have before us one old folio volume of about 900 pages, upon seven verses of this history.

extent to which he was required to bend down his natural reason, formed somewhat of a severe exaction from one so raw and inexperienced in the things of God. Yet it is the common course of the Lord's dealings with those whom He brings under the operation of his healing grace. The course is paternal. As a father deals with his children, so deals He with us. He demands obedience, He exacts submission, He requires faith; and then, the mind being brought into the right state, He teaches, He leads, He heals. So his soldiers at their enlistment are subject to the same discipline as the world's soldiers. Obedience, discipline, are first of all exacted. This is the foundation of all things, and facilitates the education and training which go to complete the good soldier for the spiritual no less than for the world's warfare.

This fundamental requisite is generally enforced upon us in the same way as in the case of Naaman, by the Lord's refusing to be bound by the course of proceeding which seems to us best, and pursuing a course of his own, to which our unqualified submission is demanded. And often, in the course of our career, we are checked in the same manner, with rigorous claims upon our submission, until we are brought into the state of having no will of our own, but are content to be still in the Lord's hands, leaving him to dispose of all things for us, and recognizing in all matters, and that readily and cheerfully, his way as the best. This refusal to be bound by our courses, is a right which the Lord exercises for our good, by bringing us into a state of affectionate and constant dependence upon him in all things and as to all times. Hence we are continually taken at unawares, with incidents which we did not expect, or could not calculate upon, but the right reception of which, or the contemplation of our constant liability to which, serves to hedge up our way when we become prone to wander, and to instruct well in all the lessons of his school.

"I am a scholar: The great Lord of love
And life my master is, who from above,
All that lack learning to his school invites."

And in that school it is as often by his disciplines—by his rod, as by his book, that He teaches us to profit.

It is only by the grafting of our will into his, that we can bear much fruit—any fruit; and no branch was ever yet grafted without being cut to the quick. In what He allows us, or in what He takes from us, in his dealings with us, or in his action upon us through others, the same object is always kept in view, of teaching us our dependence upon him; and it is well with us—very well, then *only* well—when our will so works with his, that in all we see, or hear, or enjoy, or suffer, we strive to realize for ourselves that which He strives to teach—to see his will, and to have no will but his.

This dependence upon him, and this submission of all things to him, is health to our souls and marrow to our bones; and therefore, and for our profit, in so far as the Lord loves us, will He care to bring us into this state by all the dispensations of his providence and grace towards us. He is a great king. He is our sovereign master; and often the soul that shrinks most keenly from man's despotisms, submits the most cheerfully to hold all things, from the least even to the greatest, at the absolute disposal of him whose imperial prerogatives are not only beyond dispute, but give that which man most needs, and which he can nowhere else find—REST for the soul amidst all life's perturbations.

We may, to a certain extent, take it for granted, that if we have well tilled our ground, we shall in due course have a sowing season; that if we have sown our seed, we shall in due time reap the crop; and that if we have carried it to our barns, we shall at leisure thresh out and eat the fruit of our labor. And so, generally, it comes to pass. Yet we still hold all at our Lord's prerogative; and by wet, by drought, by sunshine, and in a hundred other ways, He will teach us that He reigns; and He is not so tied by the means and husbandry we use, but that for our presumption, unbelief, or unthankfulness, He will use his prerogative in bringing all the labor of our hands to naught. We are thus taught to

walk with more awe and fear before our God, who is, when it so befits him, A CONSUMING FIRE.

There remains, therefore, nothing for us but to shut up ourselves and ours, daily and nightly, in the ark of his protection; to rise up, to dress, to eat, to work, to converse, to lie down with a humble and thankful heart—not as slaves, nor yet as presumers—but as those who know that they are not their own, as those who, if their Lord should say—“Thy silver and thy gold are mine; thy wives also, and thy children, even the goodliest are mine,”—can answer—“My Lord, O king, according to thy saying, I am thine, and all that I have.”

How narrowly should we look, how guardedly should we walk, and how soberly should we use every blessing, if we were under bond to surrender all to a creditor at an hour's warning, and we were beholden only to his courtesy for the bread we eat! Even so, let us walk humbly before God, who is our sovereign, and has our lives, our wealth, our persons at his command—in a moment to take all, if it so please him, from us. Let us daily take all we have as lent one day more from his hand, and use his blessings humbly and purely, as though we used them not; and strive to realize the condition of that holy man, who, when asked over-night whether he would go to such a place on the morrow? made answer—“I thank God, I have known no morrow these twenty years.”

FORTY-NINTH WEEK.—MONDAY.

NAAMAN.—II KINGS V.

IN the remarkable history of the visit of the Syrian general Naaman, to seek the cure of his leprosy from the hands of Elisha, there are a few points that especially awaken our curiosity and interest; and it is to the consideration of these

that we shall limit our claim upon the reader's attention. Some may be disposed to sympathize in the surprise and disappointment of the Syrian, that the prophet sent him away to wash in the Jordan, instead of coming out, and, after praying to the Lord, laying his hand upon him and healing him on the spot. When we allow ourselves to think, this expectation appears highly reasonable, and the process indicated exceedingly proper and becoming. Looking to the result, we know that important objects were realized by the course which the prophet took. Into this we may not enter. But we desire to point out how exactly this course is conformable to the practice of resorting on all occasions to intermediate agencies, which distinguished the miracles of Elisha from those of Elijah, who simply *called* upon God for what he required, and in a great degree from those of our Saviour, to whose mighty works those of Elisha bear considerable resemblance both in their quality and number. Run over the list of these great acts, and observe how constantly this rule applies. When he wants to cross the Jordan, he smites the waters with Elijah's mantle. But it may be remarked that he had, it would seem, simply *called* upon God previously, without the expected result; and it may be that it was this circumstance which gave him the habit of working through intermediate agencies, instead of by direct invocation. In curing the waters of Jericho, he makes use of salt; in multiplying the widow's oil, he works upon the basis of the oil she already possessed; in causing the iron axe to float, he casts a piece of wood into the water; to cure the poisoned pottage, he puts meal into the vessel; to the Shunamite's dead son, he sends his staff; and now, to cure the leper, he sends him to wash in the Jordan. The same tendency of his mind towards the use of material instrumentalities and symbols, is shown even on his death-bed, when predictions of future victories to Israel over the Syrians, are founded upon the shooting of arrows out of the window by the hand of the king.

It has been asked, Why should Elisha refuse, in so decided

a manner, the presents offered by the grateful Syrian, when he returned from the Jordan, cured of his inveterate malady? The reasons for his accepting them were stronger with him, as an Oriental, than they could be to us; for, as we have shown,* such presents were customary, and to decline them when offered, is regarded as an incivility, if not an affront; and it was only the peculiar position in which he stood, and the high obligation he had conferred, which enabled Elisha to do so without offence. There must have been some special reason; for, on a subsequent occasion, we find him accepting, without hesitation, when he was himself in Damascus, the presents sent to him by the king of Syria. But the *onus* of the breach of etiquette lies on the side of Naaman himself. He ought to have presented his presents in the first instance, before he had made his request; and to offer it after the request had been granted, divested the presents of their grace, by giving them the aspect of a poor return for one vast obligation conferred by the prophet. The omission in the first instance, was scarcely Naaman's fault, but arose from the peculiarity of the circumstances—seeing that he went in the first instance to the king of Israel, and was referred by him to Elisha in such a manner, that the prophet already knew his errand before he came, and was thus enabled to send his directions to him the moment he appeared before his door, without giving him time to tender his presents. Offered now, they assumed a different aspect, and Naaman had no longer any right to feel offended at their being refused, and in fact, although pained, was not offended. As the prophet might decline, without offence, presents thus offered, he wisely chose to do so. And why? “Doubtless,” as an old writer remarks,† “the Lord would not that rewards coming from a novice (whose strength was small,

* Thirtieth Week—Thursday.

† *Naaman the Syrian, his Disease and his Cure.* By Daniel Rogers, B. in Divinity, and Minister of God's Word at Wethersf. in Essex. London. Printed by Th. Harper, for Philip Nevil, and to be sold at his Shop in Ivy Lane, at the Sign of the Gun. 1642.

though his wealth great), nor any brute thereof among heathens (who must have heard of the fee as well as of the cure), should disparage and prejudice the grace and freedom of so miraculous a work, as the conversion of a soule and the healing of a leper. And therefore he would have all such sinister constructions to be dasht. God's prophets never stand in such deep needs, that God must be dishonoured by their supply. God scorned to be thought to send for Naaman to possess his treasure or enrich his prophet."

But what are we to say respecting the new convert's request to be allowed to take two mules' burden of earth away with him? That he asked at all, implies that he desired the prophet's sanction for the use to which he designed to put it, otherwise it would have been easy for him to have secured what he wanted anywhere on his way home, without wishing any one's leave. What, then, was that use? It may perhaps be gathered from his own words. He says that this miracle had convinced him that "there was no God in all the earth but in Israel;" and following his request are the words, "for thy servant will henceforth offer neither burnt-offering nor sacrifice unto other gods, but unto the Lord." It will here be observed that Naaman was converted but not yet instructed. He believed in the power and greatness of the God who had healed him, but he still regarded him as the God of Israel, whose power was, if not confined to that land, chiefly exercised there. He would therefore carry a portion of this land with him, that he might, as it were, have an Israel even in Damascus—believing that such worship as he could render would be more acceptable in connection with this sacred soil. Some think he intended to make an altar with it, as the altars of Israel were to be altars of earth. But Naaman was not likely to know this; and Israel did not actually offer the example of any such altars. Besides, local altars were discountenanced by the law, the sacrifices offered at the place of central worship being for and in behalf of all believers; and God might be worshipped, with most true worship, anywhere by proselytes, though not

by sacrifices. This, moreover, would have involved the grievous irregularity of the new convert performing a function reserved to the priests—that of offering sacrifice. If this had been his meaning, much harm might have ensued from Elisha's neglecting to correct the notions and purposes thus indicated. According to the principles of ancient Judaism, the practices here supposed are so exceedingly illegal and dangerous, and might produce so much evil, that the prophet could hardly fail to have pointed out the mistake under which, in his sincere but uninstructed zeal, Naaman labored; and as we do not hear that he did so, we apprehend that something less dangerous, and which might be conceded to the weakness of a novice, must be meant; and there are certainly existing oriental usages, a reference to which may suggest less hazardous explanations. Naaman distinctly intimated his conviction that the land of Israel was a sacred soil, seeing that there alone the true God was to be found; and it was for this reason that he desired to possess a portion of its venerated dust. If, therefore, we look to the uses to which the Easterns apply the soil of places accounted holy, it is possible we may hit upon the right reason for Naaman's singular request. To the Mohammedans at the present day the sacred soil is that of Mecca; and the man accounts himself happy who has in his possession the smallest portion of it for use in his devotions. He carries it about his person in a small bag; and in his prayers he deposits this before him upon the ground in such a manner that, in his frequent prostrations, the head comes down upon this morsel of sacred soil,—so that in some sort he may be said to worship thereon. May it not be that Naaman contemplated forming, with this larger portion of the soil of the sacred land, a spot on which he might offer up his devotions to the God of Israel?

Again, prayer, as among the ancient Jews, is always preceded by ablutions; and under circumstances where water is scanty, earth may be used. May it not be that Naaman, in his compunction at having disparaged the waters of Israel in

comparison with those of Damascus, now, since he had been healed by the waters of the Jordan, rushed into the other extreme, and conceived that no water but that of Israel could be fit for ceremonial ablution; and the water of Israel being unattainable in Damascus, it was quite possible for him to conceive that the earth might be used instead?

Then, again, the appreciation of sacred ground is so intense in the East, that there is a craving desire to be buried in it; and corpses are often carried to great distances for interment therein. When this is impracticable, the next object is to secure a portion of it, so that one may be buried representatively in sacred ground, by being laid upon some of it, or having a pillow filled with it under his head, or even by having a small portion of it placed upon his person. The Jews at the present day partake strongly of this feeling. Such as possibly can, strive to go to Jerusalem to die and to be buried there. Those who cannot realize this, resort to the other expedients; but where the distance and consequent expense requires it to be sparingly used, as in England, a very small quantity is made to suffice—as much as will lie upon a shilling being placed upon each eye.

With such diversified uses and applications of soil counted sacred, it is possible that Naaman had some other and less objectionable object for his two mules' burden of earth than is usually ascribed to him: but these alternatives not being present to the minds of commentators, it was natural enough that they should have perceived no other object than that of making an altar.

FORTY-NINTH WEEK.—TUESDAY.

FAMINE.—II KINGS VI. 25–29.

WE read of another siege of Samaria by the Syrians, in which they so well succeeded in cutting off all the supplies which the metropolis required from the country, that the

utmost horrors of famine were ere long experienced in the crowded city. Not only were the vilest substances sold at an exorbitant price for human food, but an anecdote is related of two women, who contracted together each to contribute her child for their common subsistence. One of the women devours her share of the other's boiled child, and then refuses to give her own for the same purpose; and she who has fulfilled her part of the contract discloses the horrible fact, by appealing to the king against the other's injustice.

To show the extremities to which the people were reduced from scarcity of food, it is stated that "an ass's head was sold for fourscore pieces of silver, and the fourth part of a cab of doves' dung for five pieces of silver." If shekels be meant, the ass's head must have fetched nearly ten pounds of our money, and half a pint of "doves' dung" about twelve shillings and sixpence. As to the ass's head, it is to be remarked that the ass was forbidden food to the Israelites; but this would not restrain them, when mothers had come to eat their own children. The case is not without parallel, even in this. Even in modern warfare it not seldom happens, that soldiers are driven to eat their own horses; and in Plutarch's life of Artaxerxes, an instance occurs of the Persian army being reduced to such distress, that they had to eat their beasts of burden; and even that kind of food became so scarce, that an ass's head would be sold for sixty silver drachmæ.

As to the "doves' dung," most people think that it was a kind of pulse, which has some resemblance to doves' dung, and is even now called by that name. It is preserved by being parched and dried, and is stored up for use chiefly upon long journeys. It is a sort of food which, from its quality of keeping as a dry pulse, would be likely to exist among the stores of a large city, and to acquire a high value when softer food had disappeared. To this interpretation we incline. Some, however, think that it means corn taken from the crops of pigeons; for the birds could go out into the open

country, where food abounded, and would return with full crops to their cotes in town. Others apprehend that it was really the dung of the bird ; but suppose it was employed as manure for cucurbitaceous fruits, such as melons, for which it is now highly valued in the East. But we imagine, that people in such circumstances of famine are little solicitous about the culture of melons, or disposed to incur large expenditure for a future benefit. Men ravening for food of the passing day, are not apt thus to occupy their attention or to spend their money. A few go so far as to suppose, that it was not only doves' dung, but that it was actually bought to be eaten ; and although we think the better explanation has been given, we would not pronounce this to be absolutely impossible, in the knowledge of the extremities to which a starving people may be reduced. We are assured, on the authority of a highly credible historian,* that during the famine which afflicted Egypt in the year 1200, the poorer people in the city of Old Cario "were driven to devour dogs, the carcasses of animals and men, yea, even the dried excrements of both."

There is perhaps no description of a famine on record which supplies so many details which tend to illustrate those which are given in the passage of Scripture now before us. We have ourselves been shut up with famine in an eastern city, and know something of these awful matters ; but nothing in our own experience, however distressing, will bear comparison with the details of the famine in Egypt, which the Arabian historian has furnished.

After noticing the unclean and abominable food to which the people resorted in the extremity of their hunger, we are told that they at length went a step further, and began to feed on young children, and it was not uncommon to surprise parties with children half boiled or roasted. At first this was treated by the authorities as a horrible crime, and those who were found thus occupied, as well as all those who were found to have eaten such food, were burnt alive. But it often happened, that when a miserable wretch, convicted of having

* ABDALLATIF, in his *History of Egypt*.

eaten human flesh, had been thus burned, his carcass was found devoured next morning. Indeed, the monsters ate of it the more willingly, because, being already roasted, it required no further preparation.

When the poor people began first to eat human flesh, the dismay and astonishment were so great, that these crimes became the general topic of conversation among the citizens; but afterwards they became so accustomed to the fact, and even began to conceive a taste for this horrible food, that persons of a better sort might be found who ate it with relish at their ordinary repasts, and even laid up a provision of it. They devised different modes of preparing it; and the use of it being once introduced, rapidly spread through the provinces, so that there was no part of Egypt in which examples of this enormity might not be found. It no longer created the least surprise; the horror which had been first experienced entirely subsided; and every one spoke of it, and heard it spoken of, as an ordinary and indifferent matter. There was at first no scarcity of this food. The streets were swarming with the children of the poor, both of the tenderest years and also older, whose parents had died of the famine, and who had none left to take care of them; for the difficulty of procuring food prevented the friends and neighbors of those who died from taking charge of their children. The poorer people, men and women, lay in wait for these unfortunate children, hurried them off, and devoured them. They were seldom taken with the proofs of their crime. The guilty persons were surprised in this flagrant act but rarely, and when they were not well on their guard. It was most commonly women who were taken; not that these were more guilty than men, but, as the historian supposes, because the women had less presence of mind than men, and could not flee with so much promptitude, or conceal themselves from search. In the course of a few days thirty women were burnt at Misr (Cairo), not one of whom but confessed she had eaten of several children.

When these poor little vagrants became scarce, the wretched

people, now accustomed to this resource to keep themselves alive, infested the streets, seizing and bearing off such children of those who were better off, as appeared for a moment unguarded or strayed abroad, and even rending them with violence from the slaves and nurses in whose charge they appeared.

The historian assures us, that many women had related to him that persons had thrown themselves upon them, in order to snatch from them their infants, and that they were obliged to use all their efforts to preserve them. "Seeing," he says, "one day, a woman with a male child, just weaned, and very plump, I admired the child, and recommended her to take good care of it. On which she related to me, that while she was walking along the banks of the canal, a stout man had thrown himself upon her, and attempted to snatch away her infant; and that she found no other way of protecting it but to throw herself upon the ground and hold it under her, till a cavalier who happened to pass, forced the man to quit her. She added, that the villain snatched eagerly the opportunity to seize any limb of the child that protruded from under her, in order to devour it; and the child was ill a long time from the sprains and bruises it received from the contrary efforts of the ravisher and herself, the one to snatch the child, and the other to retain it."

There are other anecdotes too horrible to be transcribed here. But we may mention that in one case, a slave was playing in the dusk of the evening with a child newly weaned, belonging to a wealthy private citizen. While the infant was still at his side, a female beggar seized a moment when his eyes were turned from it, to snatch up the child, and rent it, and began on the spot to devour its quivering flesh.

The government punished these enormities when they became known, long after the public had ceased to regard them with horror. Abdallatif says, that he one day beheld a woman wounded in the head, and dragged along through the market-place. She had been arrested while eating a small child roasted, which had been seized with her. This incident

made no stir in the market; but every one pursued his own business, without showing any marks of astonishment or horror—a circumstance which occasioned the narrator more surprise than the crime itself. But, as he remarks, these were now among the things to which the people were accustomed, and which had therefore no longer any power to astonish. Even adult persons were inveigled away by the more reckless wretches, and murdered in order to be eaten. This was particularly the case with physicians, some of whom were called away as if to visit sick persons, and never returned, while some who did return, reported the dangers they had escaped. The following circumstance acquired great notoriety, and was related by the commandant himself, who, in the painful circumstances in which he was placed, behaved with more firmness and discretion than king Jehoram. A woman came one day to seek his office. She was without the veil—a mark of strange disorder—and seemed overwhelmed with affright. She said she was a midwife, and had been called professionally to a certain family, where they had presented her with some *sickbadj* upon a plate, very well prepared, and seasoned with spices; that she observed that there was a good deal of meat in it of a different kind from that usually employed in making *sickbadj*, which had excited in her extreme loathing; and having found means of drawing aside a little girl, so as to ask her what that meat was, the child said—“Such a woman, who was so fat, came to see us, and my father killed her. She is here in this place, cut up in pieces, and hung up.” That upon this she had gone to the place, and had found there quantities of human flesh. The commandant, having received this declaration, sent with her persons who surprised the house, and arrested all they found there; but the master escaped, and afterwards managed to purchase his pardon.

Even the bodies of the recent dead were frequently devoured by the surviving relations. Nothing was more common than for those who indulged in this revolting practice, to allege that it was the body of their son, their husband, or of

some other near relative. An old woman was found eating the flesh of a male child; and she excused herself by saying, that it was her daughter's son, and not the child of another and it was more fit the child should be eaten by her than by any other person.

We have given but a small selection from the illustrative facts which this single famine offers, and have no need to resort to the accounts of other eastern famines, which present the same features, although seldom with the same intensity. Such things, as the eating of children by their own mothers, occurred in the famines produced in Jerusalem by the sieges of Nebuchadnezzar and of the Romans. For the former we have the testimony of Ezekiel (v. 10), and for the latter that of Josephus, who furnishes details nearly, if not fully, as horrible, as those we have supplied—all strikingly and emphatically fulfilling the words of Moses:—"The tender and delicate woman among you, which would not adventure to set the sole of her foot upon the ground for delicateness and tenderness, her eye shall be evil toward the husband of her bosom, and toward her son, and toward her daughter; for she shall eat them for want of all things secretly in the siege and in the straitness, wherewith thine enemy shall distress thee in thy gates." Deut. xxviii. ; xviii. 56, 57.

FORTY-NINTH WEEK.—WEDNESDAY.

THE WET CLOTH.—II KINGS VIII. 7-15.

THE Lord has won to himself honor among the heathen. In Israel we have seen kings sending to consult heathen gods; among the heathen we behold a king sending to consult the God of Israel through his prophet. The great Benhadad lies on a sick-bed; and having heard that the famous prophet of Israel, who had healed his general Naaman, was come to Damascus, he sent a great officer named Hazael to

ask him if he should recover of his disease. He arrived with the usual complimentary present ; and it was in this instance such as became a great king ; for no less than forty camels came laden with all the good things of Damascus. It is not, however, to be understood that each camel was burdened with as much as it could carry ; for it is and always has been usual in the East—especially in gifts to or from kings—to render honor both to the giver and the receiver by distributing the articles among a number of human or animal bearers, greatly disproportionate to what they are able to carry—ten or more men, camels, or horses being employed to carry what would be but a light burden for one. It is a piece of state ; and as such has a parallel to the state custom among ourselves of six or eight strong horses being employed to draw carriages which one or two might pull with ease.

Still the offering was royal ; and we do not find that Elisha declined it, as he had formerly that of Naaman. The circumstances were different altogether. No cure, but only an oracular response, was sought ; and the name of the Lord whom the prophet served, would not be in any way dishonored, but rather magnified, by his acceptance of the gifts thus rendered to him in the presence of the heathen. It served to mark the more signally in the eyes of the Damascenes their king's appreciation of the power and greatness of the God whose prophet Elisha was known to be, and of the comparative disparagement which he cast upon his own idols. He had either sought the assistance of his own gods in vain, or thought it in vain to seek their assistance.

The interview between the prophet and the Syrian general is very remarkable, and it is of some importance to the character of Elisha that it should be rightly understood. The reader must refer to the account in the text, and then may consider the sense conveyed in the following account of it.

Hazeel opened his mission thus : "Thy son Benhadad saith, Shall I recover of this disease?" Elisha promptly replied : "Go, say unto him, Thou mayest certainly recover." That is, the disease which laid him upon his bed was

not mortal; he might certainly recover from it, and would recover, if let alone. This was all that was required from him, and he gave it. But he knew more, about which he was not consulted. He read the heart, the purposes, and the future life of the man who stood before him, and was willing to let him know it. So, after a pause, he added—as addressed to Hazael himself and not as part of his response to the king: “Howbeit, the Lord hath showed me that he shall surely die.” Much misapprehension has arisen from regarding this as part of the response to be borne to the sick king—though the change of personal pronouns in the two sentences might alone suffice to show the difference: “Thou,” in the first; “He,” in the second. Having said this, the prophet looked steadfastly at Hazael, until the latter quailed beneath that searching gaze; and then the man of God turned his head aside and wept. Why wept he? Hazael himself respectfully asked that question. Elisha answered that he wept because he clearly saw the misery and desolation which this man would hereafter inflict upon Israel. On hearing this, the Syrian exclaimed, “But what is thy servant—a mere dog—that he should do this great deed!” He was not offended, as the current version would seem to imply, or he would not have called it a *great* deed. But he asked how could a person of comparatively low condition like himself have such high influence upon the fate of nations. The prophet answered that the Lord had disclosed to him that he should become king over Syria.

Hazael then returned to his master, and in reply to his anxious inquiries, delivered the message the prophet intended for him, but suppressed the intimation given to himself that he should really die. But the very next day, it would seem that Hazael accomplished the purpose he had probably long contemplated, and which the prophet had detected. He put his master to death, and in such a manner that the crime remained undiscovered, and the king was supposed to have died of his disease; and dying apparently childless, the

wicked and unscrupulous general was enabled to secure the object of his ambition.

The mode in which this regicide was committed is very singular, and has been variously understood. It is said, "He took a thick cloth, and dipped it into water, and spread it upon his face, so that he died." We have interpreted this as Hazael's act, as is commonly done; but there is an ambiguity in the original which renders it really uncertain whether this was done by the king's order for the purpose of allaying his burning fever, and so *caused* his own death, or that Hazael did it either violently, so as to smother him, or by making what he knew would prove a fatal application, under pretence of affording relief. From the mere circumstances of preparation (supposing it Hazael's act), the latter seems to us to have been the case; and it consists entirely with his presumed object, of destroying the king without leaving any marks of violence that might lead to detection.

What our translator calls "a thick cloth," seems to mean some part of the bed furniture—probably the thick quilted coverlet still in use. It is an eastern practice in some kinds of fever to wet the bedding, and it is in such cases often done with good effect; while in other kinds of fever such an application would be dangerous, if not fatal. With reference to fevers of the former class, Bruce, speaking of the disorders common in the region of the Red Sea, says,—“Violent fevers, called there *nedad*, make the principal figure in the fatal list, and generally terminate the third day in death. If the patient survive till the fifth day, he very often recovers, by drinking water only, and throwing a quantity of cold water upon him, even in his bed, where he is permitted to lie without any attempt to make him dry, or to change his bed, until another deluge adds to the first.” We have ourselves received exactly this treatment, under the orders of a native physician, in a fever that seemed likely to be fatal, and we certainly recovered—though whether by reason of this treatment or in spite of it, we know not. Now, it may be supposed that Benhadad's fever was not of the sort to

which such treatment can bring relief; but Hazael recommended this mode of treatment with the knowledge that it was likely to be attended with fatal results; or else that the complaint *was* of this description, and was thus treated, and that Hazael took the opportunity of smothering or strangling the king, under the pretence of laying over him a coverlet fresh dipped in water. The coverlets used in the East, where blankets are unknown, being thickly quilted with wool or cotton, become of great weight when soaked in water; and it thus became the fittest instrument for such a purpose that could be found about an eastern bed; while the use of wet bed-clothes in fever would prevent any suspicion arising from the coverlet being found saturated with moisture.

It grieves us to find some right-minded men—such as Dr. Chalmers—assenting to the notion that Elisha put it into Hazael's mind to murder his master. But, in the first place, there is no clear evidence that he did murder him, or had any hand in producing his death; and, in the second place—and supposing that this crime was wrought by his hand—the tone of the narrative suggests that the prophet was rather intimating his knowledge of a purpose Hazael had already formed, than that he was suggesting anything new to his mind. All we can allow is, that Hazael was watching the turn of his master's disease, in the expectation that it would prove mortal, and that he would thus be spared the murder—but with a secret determination that his lord should never rise from that bed; and that the prophet's intimation that the king would recover, led him at once to execute his purpose—being now aware of the result of the disease.

FORTY-NINTH WEEK—THURSDAY.

THE DAY OF DOOM.—II KINGS IX. 1-30.

THE two kings—Jehoram of Israel, and Ahaziah of Judah—are both at Jezreel. Jehoram had received a bad but not

mortal wound in battle, attempting to recover Ramoth-gilead from the Syrians. So he has left the army in charge of his general, Jehu, the son of Nimshi—the very same whom Elisha had long ago been commissioned by Elijah to anoint as king over Israel, while he goes home to be healed of his wounds, and while thus laid up is visited at Jezreel by his nephew of Judah.

At the camp is a very different scene. Jehu is sitting with the officers of the army, when he is called to see a stranger. It is one of the sons of the prophets, deputed by Elisha; and when he has Jehu alone, he takes out a flask of oil, and anoints him king in the name of the Lord, with a commission to execute the Lord's judgments upon the house of Ahab. When he had done this he fled, and Jehu returned to his company. This affair had not passed unnoticed, and the officers were curious to know what "this mad fellow"—one whom they must have seen from his appearance to be a son of the prophets—could possibly have wanted with their general. He told them that he was indeed a mad fellow, for he had anointed him king over Israel. On hearing this they rose as one man, and leading him to a place at the top of an external stair, in sight of the troops, they laid their rich robes for him to stand on, and proclaimed "Jehu is king!"

Their readiness in throwing off their allegiance to Jehoram is something remarkable. But it was known that the house of Ahab was in this generation doomed to extinction. This was a thing people were not likely to forget. It was known that Elisha, who had sent this man, was a commissioned prophet—authorized to declare the will of the Lord, who had reserved the right of appointing whom He saw fit to the kingdom. And it is probable that the military were dissatisfied with the rule of a house, so completely under the influence of one bad woman, and the errors and crimes of which had first and last brought so much discredit upon the nation. Add to this, that in the absence of a fixed succession to a throne which so many successful adventurers had already

won, loyalty sits but lightly upon the soldiery; and they are very prone to vote a popular commander into the throne when it becomes vacant, or even to make it vacant for him.

Jehu evinced his fitness to rule, by the promptitude with which he decided on his course of action. He determined to set out at once for Jezreel, and to be the first to declare to Jehoram that his reign had ended.

This relative position of the two parties in the action forms the foundation of perhaps the most striking, forcible, graphic, and yet concise description of a revolution in all literature. If it were not in the Bible—the literary beauties and excellencies of which are to many swallowed up in its higher and holier claims—this is such a piece of writing as would be entered in “Readers,” “Speakers,” “Beauties,” or “Elegant Extracts,” as the most masterly record of a revolution to be found in all the world.

There was usually in ancient times a watch-tower over the royal residence, where a man was always stationed, night and day, to keep a good look-out in all directions, but especially in that direction from which any sort of tidings could be expected. What he beheld that he deemed of any consequence he declared below in the courts of the palace. The “Agamemnon” of Æschylus opens with the soliloquy of such a watchman—

“Forever thus? O keep me not, ye gods,
Forever thus, fixed in the lonely tower
Of Atreus’ palace, from whose height I gaze
O’er-watched and weary, like a night-dog still
Fixed to my post: meanwhile the rolling year
Moves on, and I my wakeful vigils keep
By the cold star-light sheen of spangled skies.”

In the present case, the frequency of reports from the seat of war, and the king’s anxiety for intelligence, naturally kept the attention of the watchman much in that direction. At length he is heard to call out, “I see a company!” and then the king, in his anxiety for news, sends out a horseman to learn the tidings. Again the watchman reports that the

horseman had reached the advancing party, but there was no sign of his return. Jehu had in fact ordered him to the rear. On this another was sent out, whom the watchman follows with his eyes, and then renders the same report as before; but by this time they had all come nearer; and the watchman was able to declare that, from the manner in which he drove, it was probably Jehu himself—"for he driveth *furiously*." Hence it is that the name of Jehu has become a by-word for a fast driver. Yet it is perhaps doubtful that it is so intended. Josephus seems to have read it in his copy of the Scripture that Jehu drove not "furiously" but "slowly;" and when we take into account that, in the time between the first appearance of the party, and that of its coming within such a distance as enabled the style of driving to be distinguished, sufficient time had elapsed for *two* successive journeys to him from the city, there may appear some probability in this interpretation.

On hearing that it was Jehu, the king ordered his chariot and went forth himself to meet them. This he would hardly have done had he any suspicion of the truth; but that the commander should have left the army without orders, seemed so strange a circumstance as excited to the utmost his anxiety and interest. It might be supposed either to imply that the Israelites had been utterly beaten by the Syrians, or that the army had revolted against its commander, who had fled to court. To this, and not, as we apprehend, to any intimations of Jehu, is to be applied his words, when they meet, ominously in the plot of ground that had once belonged to Naboth—"Peace, Jehu!" which may be read as the ordinary salutation of peace in meeting; or, if read interrogatively, "Peace, Jehu?"—or, as given paraphrastically in most of the versions, "Is it peace?"—or, "Bring ye peace?"—can indicate no more than the wish to know that he brought no evil tidings from the seat of war. The answer suggests that it *was* put interrogatively. That answer was: "What peace, so long as the whoredoms [idolatries] of thy mother Jezebel, and her witchcrafts, are so many?" From this it would

appear that the fatal predominance of the influence of Jezebel in the reign of her son, as well as of her husband, was the chief ground of public discontent and apprehension; and the most ostensible fault of this king—the least bad of Ahab's house—was his passive submission to her influence. If there had been anything more flagrantly evil to allege against the king himself, it would most certainly have been thrown in his teeth on such an occasion as this. These words, which no one would dare to utter who had not cast away the scabbard of his drawn sword, disclosed all to the king. Coming as they did from the general of the forces, attended by the chief commanders, their full meaning and awful significance became in a moment plain, and the unhappy king saw that the doom which had been so long impending over the house of Ahab, had come down at last. He said to the king of Judah who had gone with him in his separate chariot, "There is treachery, O Ahaziah;" and forthwith turned his horses for flight, as his only chance. But Jehu was not the man to leave his work unfinished. He drew his bow "with all his strength"—with all the strength which a man throws into the stroke upon which hang his fortunes. His aim was sure, and the winged mischief he sent forth found its rest in the heart of the king, who sank down dead in his chariot.

Jehu had been commissioned to execute the Lord's judgment upon the house of Ahab; and his relentless nature concurred with his own interest in giving the widest possible interpretation to his commission—while he was careful, in every fresh deed of blood, to declare himself the Lord's avenger, who did but execute the orders given to him. No doubt, he was the appointed minister of delayed judgment; but we cannot fail to see that he used that commission for the purpose of sweeping away from his path all those from whose vengeance or hate any disturbance might, even by remote construction, be apprehended to his future reign. At this moment he chose to recollect that the king of Judah was Ahab's grandson, and to suppose that he was included

in his commission. This monarch had fled, and, in the pause which Jehoram's death occasioned, had gained some distance; but Jehu sent his servants in pursuit of him, with orders to slay him. He fled swiftly, but so closely followed as to receive a mortal wound. His chariot, however, bore him off, far westward of Jezreel, to Megiddo, below Mount Carmel. There he died; and was carried by his servants in his own chariot to Jerusalem, where he was buried in the sepulchre of the kings.

Meanwhile, Jehu looked upon his bloody work with grim complacency, and directed the body of his slain master to be taken from the chariot, and thrown into the plot of ground. "Remember," he said to Bidkar his chief captain—"remember how that, when I and thou rode together after Ahab his father, the Lord laid this burden upon him: Surely I have seen yesterday the blood of Naboth, and the blood of his sons; and I will requite thee in this plat, saith the Lord. Now therefore take and cast him into the plat of ground, according to the word of the Lord."

This reminiscence completes the first act of this awful tragedy, which reads like the old Greek dramas—but far less old than this—of accomplished fate. To it we owe the knowledge of the fact, that the appointed executor of the doom was himself the witness of its being imposed. All is complete.

FORTY-NINTH WEEK.—FRIDAY.

JEZEBEL'S END.—II KINGS IX. 30-37.

WHAT would be the thing that Jezebel would be likely to do, when tidings of these doings reached her—when she saw that her son was slain—that her power was gone—that the hour of doom was come—and the destroyer was at the palace gates? Did she hide herself in the sacred recesses of the harem, which scarcely he would violate? Did she, like

some pagan heroine, strike the dagger into her own bosom? Broke she forth into bitter wailings at the desolation of her house? None of these things did Jezebel; but what she did became her character. The Jezebel she had been, that Jezebel she was to the last.

She saw that her doom was sealed; but she determined to let it be seen that she feared not, mourned not, and to cast one bitter and burning word upon the head of the destroyer, such as should haunt and scorch him all his life. As, for this purpose, it was necessary to show herself, if but for a moment, instead of casting herself upon the floor and tearing her garments and her hair, she applied herself to her toilet, and arrayed herself carefully, even to the painting of her eyes, to let it be seen that she appeared as a queen, and not as a suppliant or a mourner, as the neglect of her person would have implied. This was her motive, and not, as some in ignorance of eastern manners have supposed, from any idea of making an impression by the charms of her still splendid person upon the stern heart of the avenger. This painting of the eyes, still a general custom of the female toilet in Western Asia, amounted to putting the face in dress, just as laying on patches, or applying color to the cheeks, did formerly in this country. This custom, which the translators of the current version of the Bible did not understand, and which they therefore rendered into "painting the face," consists in tinging the eyelids with a black color, from a black metallic powder. In performing this operation the eye is closed, and a small ebony rod, smeared with the composition, is squeezed between the lids, so as to tinge their edges with the color. This is considered to add greatly to the brilliancy and power of the eye, and to deepen the effect of the long black eyelashes of which the Easterns are excusably proud. The ancient Egyptians practised this long before the date of the present transaction. Figures of painted eyes appear in the monuments, and the implements used in the operation have been actually found in the tombs, with some of the composition remaining in the vessels. To



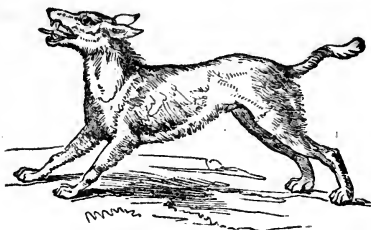
a European the effect is at first unpleasant; and it used for a time to remind us of a chimney-sweeper who had cleansed his face as well as he could, but had not succeeded in clearing the soot from his eyelids. But one soon comes round to Asiatic notions in such matters.

Thus set forth, Jezebel presented herself at the window or kiosk over the palace gate, when the noise of the chariot-wheels announced the arrival of the new master. When he looked up, she returned his glance with a stare of defiance, and cried out—"Had Zimri peace, who SLEW HIS MASTER?" Jehu made no reply, but called out to the eunuchs, who appeared behind in attendance on her, to throw her out of the window. The slaves saw in him their future master; and the words had scarce passed his lips before she was hurled down in front of him, as he was entering the gates. He passed over her, and entered the palace, the hoofs of his horses and his chariot-wheels red with her blood, without pausing to see whether she lived or died. He took possession, and after a while sat down to refresh himself with meat and drink, after that morning's bloody work. The coolness of this iron-hearted man is astonishing, but not without parallel. He probably ate with zest, and with as little saddened thought as a hunter who has spent the morning in hunting unto death the fatted deer. And why not? he would have asked. He had done a meritorious duty that day, and who had more right to eat and drink in the gladness of an easy conscience? It may be so. We had rather that he had accepted his task with reluctance, and

had performed it with a leaning to mercy's side, than that he should have performed it with the tiger-like instincts and atrocious circumstances of one delighting in blood. But Jehu was perhaps the best man for the dreadful work in hand. Human sympathy and tender-heartedness are not the qualities one looks for in a public executioner, or such as fit him for his dreadful task ; and Jehu was an executioner.

In the midst of his good cheer, the new king chose to remember Jezebel, and said to those about him—"Go, see now this cursed woman, and bury her ; for she is a king's daughter." Presently they returned with horror to inform him, that they found no more of her than the skull, the feet, and the palms of the hands. The street-dogs had eaten the rest ; and this was at the palace gates. Were there none at hand, even there, to fray off the vile brutes from the corpse of the woman before whom, yesterday, the nation trembled ? We can hardly think but that there were some who looked on, and saw it all, but forbore to interfere,—whether from the brutal joy which low minds take in the abasement of the great—or, as likely, because they feared to do aught which might bear the aspect of an interference between the savage king and his prey. That king heard the account, and declared that in this also a part of his task as doom-worker had been accomplished. "This," said he, "is the word of the Lord, which He spake by the mouth of his servant Elijah the Tishbite, saying, In the portion of Jezreel shall dogs eat the flesh of Jezebel : and the carcass of Jezebel shall be as dung upon the face of the field in the portion of Jezreel ; so that they shall not say, This is Jezebel."

In illustration of this shocking end, even of the corpse of Jezebel, it remains to remark, that the more than half-wild street-dogs of the East, living upon their own resources, and without owners, soon make a rapid clearance of the flesh of dead bodies left exposed, whether of human creatures or beasts. Among other instances it is recorded, that a number of Indian pilgrims were drowned by the sinking of a ferry-boat in which they were crossing a river. Two days after a



spectator relates:—"On my approaching several of these sad vestiges of mortality, I perceived that the flesh had been completely devoured from the bones by the Pariah dogs, vultures, and other obscene animals. The only portion of the several corpses I noticed that remained entire and untouched, were the bottoms of the feet and insides of the hands; and this extraordinary circumstance immediately brought to my mind the remarkable passage recorded in the second book of Kings, relating to the death and ultimate fate of Jezebel, who was, as to her body, eaten of dogs, and nothing remained of her but the palms of her hands and the soles of her feet. The former narration may afford a corroborative proof of the rooted antipathy the dog has to prey upon the human hands and feet. Why such should be the case, remains a mystery."

FORTY-NINTH WEEK.—SATURDAY.

HEADS.—II KINGS X.

THE great body of Ahab's descendants, seventy in number, and many of them of very tender age, were at Samaria, "with the great men of the city who brought them up." This would suggest that the existing usage in Persia and some other eastern countries, by which the king throws upon his nobles the cost of maintaining a numerous progeny,

existed at this ancient date in Israel. In this case the king, as a great favor, gives one of his sons to some one whom he supposes able to bear the expense, to be brought up and educated according to his rank. The young prince soon becomes the cuckoo in the sparrow's nest—the little despot of the house—who must not be denied anything, or be in any way checked or controlled. The simple threat to complain to his father or to his mother, if any of his wishes are left ungratified, or any of his impulses checked, is quite sufficient to fill the house with terror, and to make all subservient to his will, however unreasonable. Hence, besides the great expense, the inconvenience and the subversion of domestic comfort are such, that the distinguished favor is received with little real gratitude—although it cannot be declined, and must be received with expressions of the profoundest thankfulness and devotion.

To the persons in charge of the young princes in Samaria, Jehu *wrote*—for we now begin to hear of written communications more frequently than of old—a curious epistle. He assumed their devotion to the house of Ahab, and told them that, since they had the resources of the capital at their disposal, they had better set up one of the likeliest of the young princes as king, and uphold his cause by force of arms. There was a latent irony in this letter; as the writer must well have known the real state of the case, and how little likely it was that they would take up the cause of a fallen house—known to have been doomed of God. It so happened. The elders of Samaria, having conferred on the subject, sent in reply their unreserved submission to Jehu, declaring their readiness to obey his orders in all things. His orders were that they should send the heads of these seventy princes to Jezreel, and themselves appear there “to-morrow about this time.” The great ones of Samaria shrunk not from this frightful test of their obedience. The heads were sent in baskets to Jezreel; and when Jehu left his palace in the morning, his sight was greeted by two piles of gory heads, heaped up on each side of the gate. He

gloated his eyes for a moment upon the appalling spectacle, and then, looking up with a bold front, he said to those around, in that voice of hard sarcasm which seemed to have belonged to his character, “Ye be righteous: behold, *I* conspired against my master and slew him; but WHO SLEW ALL THESE?” By which it appears that he concealed the orders to this effect that he had sent—and which no one else dared disclose—desirous of making it appear that this had been the spontaneous act of the leading men of the metropolis, then present, in testimony of their adhesion to his cause. None of course dared then to contradict his account of the matter, although the truth eventually transpired.

This cutting off of heads in collective masses, and making them into heaps, is or has been frightfully common in the East; and an Oriental, familiar with blood and beheading from his cradle, would read this portion of Scripture with little, if any, of the disgust and horror, and certainly with none of the surprise, with which it inspires us. The commonness of this also in ancient times is demonstrated by the numbers of heads severed from bodies which, under various circumstances, appear in the Egyptian monuments. Heads have always in fact been regarded as the best trophies of victory in the East.

Among various nations, the heads of enemies slain in battle, of robbers, and of persons put to death by the royal order (not in the ordinary course of justice), are presented to the king, and afterwards at the palace gate. There used to be, and there still are, niches in the palace gate (Porte) at Constantinople for the reception of heads recently taken off; and they were formerly seldom empty, though at the present day rarely occupied. It used to be not unusual in Turkey and Persia to meet a Tartar (or king’s messenger) bearing behind him a bundle containing the head—pickled, if the distance were great—of some pasha or satrap, whom he had been sent to decapitate, and which he was bearing to his sovereign in proof that his orders had been executed well. This has respect to single heads, or to small numbers

of men. But when the numbers are great—as after a battle, a massacre, or the rout of a band of robbers—the heads are, as in the present instance, heaped up pyramidally, faces outward, on each side the palace gate; and the builder of this horrid pile, if a man of taste and fancy, usually reserves a picturesque head, such as one with a fine long beard, to form the crown of his handiwork. Indeed, we have it on credible authority that these men make little scruple of taking off the head of a bystander for the purpose, if they find not one in their stock equally becoming for the apex of the pile. In fact, nothing so much shocks a European in the East as the frightful cheapness of human life, and, with it, of human heads. In Persia it has not seldom been known for the king to express his displeasure at a town or village by demanding from it a pyramid of heads of given dimensions. Sometimes the eastern conquerors conceive the wish to form such piles of heads into permanent monuments of the transaction; and this is usually done by erecting pillars for the purpose of inlaying them with the heads of the slain. There are many of these monuments—some of long standing, in Turkey and Persia. The most recent of these known to ourselves, are two pillars on each side of the road outside one of the gates of Bagdad, erected above five-and-twenty years ago, and inlaid with the heads of two hundred Khezail Arabs who had been slain or captured in an engagement with the troops of the pasha.

Jehu soon after went to Samaria himself, to take possession of the capital. On the way he met a gay and gallant party of princes from Judah, proceeding on a visit to the court of Israel, and whom the tidings of the revolution had not reached, so rapid had been Jehu's movements. These, in his still unslaked thirst for blood, he ordered to be slain on the spot; and it is quite possible that, like the early Moslem conquerors, he sincerely thought that, while performing these and other atrocities greatly beyond his commission, but under cover of it, he was doing God service, and suffered not himself to perceive that he was far more following the

ferocious instincts of his nature, or of that sanguinary excitement under which he labored, with an under-current of selfish policy, which taught him that, after such a beginning as he had made, the more complete riddance he accomplished of all the adherents of the house of Ahab—whether from sympathy of principles or from alliance of blood—the more completely the power of future reaction would be weakened. Jezebel's question—"Had Zimri peace, who slew his master?"—rang constantly in his ears; and he was answering it after his hard fashion—which seemed to say, "Zimri had no peace because he slew *only* his master; I slay more, that I may have peace." Hence also the massacre of the Baalites—whom he slew, not more assuredly from zeal for religion, than from the conviction that among them the most attached partisans of the fallen house were to be found—and whom he seduced into an avowal of their apostasy by pretending that he was himself inclined to favor the worship of Baal even more than Ahab. That it was possible for a large number of persons to be imposed upon by this pretence, after what Jehu had done, painfully evinces the extent of religious corruption in Israel. Something may, however, be allowed for the still imperfect knowledge of the transactions at Jezreel. News travelled but slowly in those days; and those who had come over with the king to Samaria—his personal followers and guards—had perhaps been instructed not yet to disclose the full particulars of the great tragedy at Jezreel.

Fiftieth Week—Sunday.

HEART-READING.—II. KINGS 8-11.

LET us to-day recur to the fact that, when Elisha looked steadfastly in the face of Hazael, and the latter perceived that the prophet was reading his heart, "*he was ashamed.*"

"Ah," it will be said, "and there was good reason why he should be ashamed, for there was murder in his heart." That there was murder in his heart we do not quite know; but we do know that, whether this were so or not, there was great reason why he should be ashamed in the presence of one whom he believed to know his most secret thoughts. This we know; because we believe the man lives not, and never did live, who could stand such inspection without quailing before it. Is there one that reads this who can affirm that he could stand with unblenched cheek before the man whom he believed to be viewing his naked soul—divested of all the purple and fine linen which cover its littleness, its foulness, its deformities, its sores, from the view of the outer world? Is there one who could endure, without confusion of face—without a quivering frame—the keen anatomy of his character, his conduct, his spirit, by even the most friendly hand in the world? Would he be content that any human eye should trace the tortuous meanderings of feeling in regard to any one matter in which he has ever been engaged—the unholy thought—the ungenerous imputation—the low suspicion—the doubt, the dislike, the covetousness, the hate, the contention—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, the pride of life—that more or less enter into and defile, with the prints of villanous hoofs, the fairest gardens of life?

We rub on pretty well by ourselves—indeed, far too well. If the conscience be tender enough to make us aware of the plague of our own heart, and to smite us with the sense of our sins and our short-comings, we too generally find ourselves in a condition to deal gently with our own case. The act of self-accusation is soon followed by one of self-excusation; and in time the hand acquires good practice in trimming the obvious asperities and sharp angles of his own character into roundness. Very soon

"Excuse

Comes prologue, and apology too prompt."

No man hateth his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth

it too well. He knows that no one will handle the sore places of his character so softly as he himself does—that no one will confine himself so much to the oil and the wine, or abstain so wholly from rough medicaments and harsh operations. This, he thinks, is knowing himself better—is a more careful balancing of all the circumstances of his case, than can be expected from others, or is possible to them. They will not, he thinks, take the same trouble to understand him so thoroughly, to allow for all his difficulties so unreservedly, to adjust the balance of his good and evil so nicely, as he himself does. It is partly for these reasons—and partly because he abhors that less friendly eyes than his own should look behind the outer veil he presents to the world—and because he would not that any should be privy to the great secret which lies between him and the world—that he shrinks from the too near inspection of his fellow-creatures.

In this we show how much more fear we have of man than of God. To us it is of infinitely less concernment, both for this world and for the world to come, what man thinks of us than what God thinks—what man knows than what God knows; yet while we shrink with such instinctive dread from the too near survey of a fellow-sinner, we manage to get on very quietly, with small trouble of mind, in the perfect knowledge that One who cannot be mistaken—who sees through all disguises, and from whom nothing can be for a moment hid, and who understands us far better than we ourselves know, or than our nearest friends or keenest enemies imagine—has a sleepless eye fixed with unceasing vigilance upon our hearts.

This keen susceptibility to the inspection and good opinion of man, and this comparative indifference to the constant survey of God, is a familiar thing, and strikes us little, because it is familiar; but it is nevertheless one of the strangest anomalies of our nature, and is beheld with astonishment and grief by the angels of God. In their view it is an inversion of the whole order of life and being. To them God is all—his inspection is all; and that different state of things, which

gives more *practical* importance to the survey of a sinful fellow-creature like ourselves, must present a greater mystery than any of those deep problems in material or spiritual nature, which men have vainly labored to solve for a thousand years. To us it is plainer. Evil is, alas! more intelligible to man than to angels; and the good and the true is more intelligible to them than to us. It is sin which has cast a veil between our souls and God—a veil transparent to him, but opaque to us. He sees us as clearly in our deformity as He did in our beauty; but we have ceased to see him, or to see him as He is. There was a day when man welcomed God's inspection, and rejoiced that

“God was ever present—ever felt.”

But he had no sooner fallen than the consciousness of God's presence became irksome to him, and he sought to hide himself from his sight. We do the same, and for the same reason; for we are our father's heirs. There is a bird of which we are told that it plunges its head into darkness, and because it no longer sees its pursuers, believes itself unseen by them. This was the very thing that Adam did when he hid himself among the trees in the garden, and it is the thing that we do daily. We do not *realize* the unseen. We live by sight, and not by faith.

How different would be our conversation and our walk, if we lived and moved in the ever-present consciousness that the unseen Eye was upon us and noted all our steps, and that the opinion of us, hereafter to be pronounced in the presence of the assembled universe, as the foundation of final and unchangeable judgment—fixing our lot forever—shutting us up in despair, or opening all the golden doors of joy—is a matter of inconceivably more importance to us than all that the world can think or say, can offer to us or deprive us of. Let us believe, that to walk and act from day to day with this as a vital consciousness about us—as a check to sin, an encouragement to faith, and a stimulus to duty—without any supreme anxiety but to walk so as to please

God—is a most pleasant life—is the very antepast of heaven. There is no bondage in it. It is perfect freedom; and is happiness as complete as this world allows. It relieves us from many masters, and redeems from bondage to a thousand fears. O, the blessedness of being freed from this slavish reference to erring man's judgment of our conduct and our motives, by being enabled to realize the presence, and to welcome the inspection of One who, although He be of purer eyes than to endure iniquity, is incapable of harsh, unjust, or unkind judgment—who has become to us, in Christ Jesus, a kind and loving Father, and longs with deep yearnings of paternal affection to pour out upon us all the fulness of his everlasting love! It is quite impossible for any one to be truly happy until this great work—the reversal of the ordinary influences upon his life—has been wrought within him, making God first and man second in all his thoughts; until the great matter becomes God's judgment of us, and the small matter man's; until, in answer to all injurious thoughts and imputations, we can answer with Paul—"It is a small matter for me to be judged of you or of man's judgment; *for I serve the Lord Christ.*"

FIFTIETH WEEK—MONDAY.

ATHALIAH.—II KINGS XI. 1, 2; II CHRON. XXII. 10.

JEZEBEL is dead; but her daughter Athaliah lives, and the mother's spirit yet haunts the earth in her.

Athaliah had been married to Jehoram, the eldest son of Jehoshaphat, the good king of Judah. We hear nothing more of her than the simple fact of this marriage, until the time to which we have come; but, considering the spirit she now evinces, and recollecting the nature of the influence which her mother had set her the example of exerting over, first her own husband, and then her sons, we may not be far

wrong in ascribing to this true daughter of Jezebel much of the evil which characterized the reign of her husband Jehoram, and her son Ahaziah. The former no sooner mounted the throne than he destroyed all his brothers,—a piece of eastern state policy, indeed, but alien to the spirit of Judaism; and which her own later conduct enables us to attribute to her influence over her weak husband.

To that also may be ascribed the extent to which this king went into “the ways of the kings of Israel, like as did the house of Ahab.” Indeed, it is all but expressly said so; for, as a cause for this, it is immediately added—“for he had the daughter of Ahab to wife.” So Ahab-like, indeed, was Jehoram’s conduct, that it was only the Lord’s regard for his covenant with David which prevented the same doom upon his house as had been denounced upon Ahab’s. He was, however, not suffered to escape punishment. His realm was invaded by the Philistines and Arabians, he was bereft of all his treasures, and his wives and children were carried away captive. Athaliah only remained, and the youngest of his sons, Ahaziah. To crown all, his latter days were full of torture from a grievous disease, of which he prematurely died; and the people marked their sense of the ignominy of his reign by refusing his corpse a royal burial. No burnings of costly incense honored his funeral; and although his remains were not cast out from the city of David, he was denied a place in the sepulchre of the kings.

His son Ahaziah reigned but one year; and being as much under Athaliah’s influence as his father had been, he followed the same course. It is expressly stated that “his mother was his counsellor to do wickedly.” The end of this unhappy prince we have already seen.

When the corpse of her son was brought to Jerusalem,—when she heard how horridly her mother, and how treacherously her brother, had been slain,—that her son’s kindred had been cut off at “the pit of the shearing-house,” and that the worshippers of Baal had been immolated in Samaria,—she caught the strong contagion of blood-thirstiness from the

report of these doings. She saw herself a stranger in a strange land—an alien by birth and by religion,—without common sympathies between herself and the people among whom she occupied so high a place, and without support from the remaining members of the family to which she had become allied. All the strong ones were gone. What hindered that she should herself seize the dropped reins of the government, and guide the fierce steeds of ruin which threatened to whirl her to destruction? Her son had been slain because he was the grandson of Ahab and Jezebel;—what had she, their daughter, to expect from the spirit which had gone abroad, and from the ulterior designs of Jehu, unless she entered upon a bold course of re-action, which might insure both her safety and her greatness? There have been those who deemed themselves compelled to leap into a throne to save themselves from utter ruin; and we would fain believe that this was the case with Athaliah.

But what of the house of David,—surely that was not extinct? No: there were many who had a right to the throne,—all of them young, children of Ahaziah, her own grandchildren. These stood in her way; or, though impotent now, might live to become a terror to her. Such natures as hers are incapable of relents or tenderness, or account the feelings of natural pity as weaknesses to be crushed down, when they stand in the way of selfish interests or daring hopes; so, though blood of her blood, the young princes perished. As mother of the king, she had great power, high influence, and many dependents, which rendered her, in the absence of the king and of a reigning heir, the most powerful person in the land. She was thus enabled to accomplish all her objects; and Judah beheld the strange sight of a woman seated on the throne of David. She lacked not ability for that place. The conception and the realization of this object by a woman, among a people to whom the ostensible rule of females was unknown, shows that her talents were great; but far greater was her wickedness, and had she been as eminent for virtues as she was for crimes, it would have been impossi-

ble for her long to maintain her footing in a station promised and covenanted to the house of David. With that house her connection had been extinguished by the very steps which she had took, to

“Wade through slaughter to a throne,”

and she stood in Judah as a princess of Tyre and of Israel--in the former capacity an upholder of Baal, and in the latter the representative and avenger of Ahab's slaughtered house. Under such auspices, idolatry became rampant in Judah; the very abominations which, with his strong and bloody hand, Jehu had put down in Israel, re-appeared in the neighboring realm, which had hitherto been comparatively free from these grosser abominations. It would have seemed to a cursory observer, that nothing had been gained by the repression of idolatry in Israel; that the same thing existed still, the place only having been changed, just as the piece of wood which disappears for a moment under the water comes up again a little way off. No doubt the cause of the Baalite worship was strengthened by large accessions of fugitives, who stole away from Israel when the change of affairs in Judah offered them a prospect of that safety and protection which they could no longer find in Israel.

It does not appear that Athaliah attempted to avenge on the priests of Jehovah the massacre which Jehu had made of the priests of Baal, or that the worship of the Lord was forbidden by her, or his worshippers persecuted. Had that been the case, the temple itself would probably have been applied to idolatrous uses. From this she abstained, partly, as we have already explained, because idolatry was not adverse to the worship of other gods; and partly, because her sagacity must have shown her the danger of the attempt. The worship of Jehovah was therefore permitted to exist on sufferance. It was tolerated, while that of Baal was patronized and favored. A temple had been erected to the Phœnician god in the holy city; and for its furniture and decoration, the Lord's house was stripped of its treasures and

“dedicated things,”—a fact which transpires incidentally in 2 Chron. xxiv. 7 ; and it is there ascribed, it is curious to observe, not to Athaliah herself, but to her sons. What sons ? We thought they had all been destroyed. Certainly her sons by Jehoram had been lost in captivity ; and her grandsons, the children of Ahaziah, had also perished. Some suggest that, after the death of her husband, she had married another man, and that these were her children by him. But this is untenable ; because Ahaziah, who succeeded his father, had reigned but a year ; and even supposing that she had married immediately on the death of Jehoram, and assuming that this sacrilege took place towards the close of her reign, the eldest of any children she might have had by a second marriage could not have been more than six years old. It is not even said that the Baalite temple was built by her. It merely transpires that it was in existence at the time of her death. Putting all these circumstances together, it would appear that the erection of this temple was among the enormities committed at her suggestion in the time of Jehoram, and in which, particularly, the sons of Jehoram, brought up under the influence of such a mother, actively exerted themselves. We thus arrive at the fact, that it was not less for their own sins, than for the sins of their father and their mother, that these princes were sold into captivity, and heard of no more.

FIFTIETH WEEK.—TUESDAY.

A CORONATION.—II KINGS XI. 4–16 ; II CHRON. XXIII. 1–15.

FOR all that appears in the narrative, the six years of Athaliah’s reign were quiet and undisturbed ; and she doubtless flattered herself, that her throne was established, and that the people were contented with her government. But they were only silent—only waited because they knew not

what to do. They had no leader; and, what was more, they had no ostensible object to fix their attention; for there appeared not, nor was there supposed to exist, any claimant of the throne of David to rouse them to action.

At length, when the power of Athaliah seemed most secure, it began to be secretly whispered, that a young scion of the royal house had escaped the massacre. And it was so. The youngest of the doomed, Joash by name, then a mere infant of a year old, was saved by his aunt, Jehoshabeath, daughter of king Jehoram, and wife to the high-priest Jehoiada, who privately introduced him and his nurse into the temple, where he was preserved and brought up in the chambers of the high-priest. When the child was seven years old, Jehoiada considered the time was come to put an end to this unseemly usurpation, and to restore the true heir to the throne of his fathers. The present state of things, besides being a great public wrong, was a scandal to religion, not to be endured one moment longer than necessity compelled. The high-priest took his measures with great prudence and skill. He communicated the fact, with his plans, to those on whom he could rely; and rejoiced to find a great readiness on all hands to enter into his views, and carry out his designs.

The Sabbath day was chosen for the demonstration, because then there would be a great number of the people present, and still more, because he could then obtain a double force of priests and Levites; for at the change of the weekly turn of service, he would be enabled to detain those who were to go out, and add them to those who had come in for the service of the ensuing week. For these to enter the temple in arms would have prematurely awakened suspicion; they were therefore furnished with the swords and spears which, as we now first learn, were deposited within the temple. Even the officers of Athaliah's guard, or at least some of them, had been gained over, and lent the important sanction of their presence to the proceedings. Indeed, we may presume that Jehoiada would hardly have taken this

bold step, had he not previously ascertained that the troops were not hearty in the service of Athaliah, and were prepared to hail the restoration of the royal line with gladness. All being ready, and the Levites properly stationed to guard the person of the young king and the approach to the temple, when the people assembled at the morning sacrifice, they were astonished at this strange display of military armament within the temple, wondering what this might mean. But, while astonishment held them mute, the high-priest appeared, conducting a fair boy to a stage under the pillar which formed the usual station of the kings when they came to the temple. He then, with a loud voice, proclaimed who he was, and proceeded to anoint him, and to place the crown-royal on his head, while the trumpets sounded, and the people hailed the act with loud acclamations of "Long live the king!"

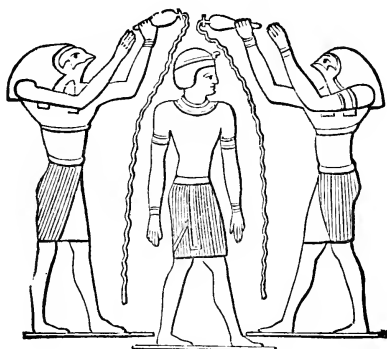
The noise of this rapturous uproar in the temple reached the palace, and Athaliah hurried off to learn its cause. What she there beheld, revealed the truth to her at once. She rent her clothes, and shouted, "Treason! treason!" But no voice responded to her cry; no friends gathered around her; no arm was lifted in her cause; and on a word from Jehoiada, she was hurried forth from the temple and put to death. Hers was the only blood shed in this well-managed revolution, except that of Mattan, the high-priest of Baal, who was slain at the altar, when the people hastened to destroy the idol temple. We do not recollect any revolution of such great importance that took place so peacefully, and at so little cost of blood.

The kings of Judah usually succeeded each other with little if any ceremony, without even the anointing; the solemn inauguration of the founder of the dynasty being usually considered sufficient for his descendants. The only kings whose accession was attended with ceremonial observances were Saul, the first king; David, the first of his line; Solomon, who had an elder brother aspiring to the crown; and now Joash, in whose person the broken line was restored

By this it is seen, that the coronation was rather an exceptional than a customary ceremony, resorted to only when peculiar circumstances seemed to require the solemn public recognition which it involved.

The ceremonies are more particularly described in this case than in any other, though still with great conciseness. "He brought forth the king's son, and put the crown upon him, and gave him the testimony: and made him king, and anointed him; and they clapped their hands, and said, God save the king!"* Again, it is stated that "the king stood by a pillar, *as the manner was*, and the princes and the trumpeters by the king; and all the people of the land rejoiced, and blew with trumpets."

There is nothing in the law respecting the anointing of kings, only of high-priests; but as Samuel anointed the two first kings, and as it was an ancient custom to anoint them, this came to be regarded as a most essential part of the ceremony. Its antiquity is evinced by the monuments of Egypt, which exhibit this anointing of kings by priests.

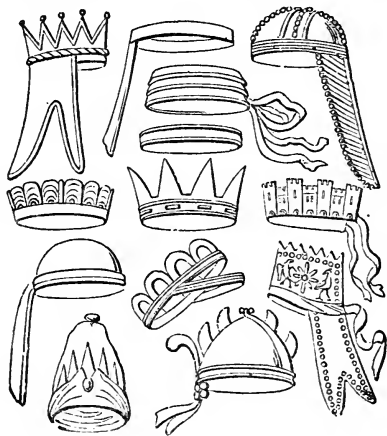


The kings were usually, but not indispensably, anointed with the same "holy anointing oil," stored up in the temple, as

* Rather, "Long live the king;" or more literally, "Live the king;"—answering to the French "Vive le Roi."

was used in the anointing of the priests; but the Jewish Rabbinical writers tell us, there was this curious difference in the form of anointing, that the king was anointed in the form of a diadem encircling his head, to show that he was the head of the people; but that the high-priest was anointed in the form of a cross, one line drawn in the oil, running down his forehead, crossed by another line drawn between his eyebrows. The Scriptural expression, as well as the Egyptian monuments, would, however, rather suggest that the oil was poured out somewhat copiously upon the head. One who had been himself royally anointed, describes the oil with which Aaron was anointed, as running down his beard to his garments. Ps. cxxxiii. 2.

After the king had been anointed, the officiating priest, or prophet, gave the king what the Jews call the kiss of majesty or greatness, but what we should call the kiss of homage. This was upon the forehead, or between the eyes. It is recorded that Samuel so kissed Saul; and, although the act is not afterwards historically mentioned, it was probably retained, as there is a distinct allusion to it in Psalm ii. 12. "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry." The crown was then placed upon the king's head. This was probably a stiff cap



or turban, enriched with gold and jewels, such as are still used in the East, and which was doubtless worn, as at present, only on occasions of high state.

The "testimony" was then, as in the case before us, put into the royal hands. This was the book of the law, and while the prince held it, he entered into a covenant with God, to observe and keep his commandments as set forth therein. Then he entered into an engagement upon oath with the people, to govern them with justice, and to violate none of their rights and privileges; while the people, on their part, took a kind of oath of allegiance, and promised faithful obedience to him. The trumpets then sounded, and the people hailed their king. But the ceremonies of the day were not complete until the new sovereign had been conducted in high state from the temple to the palace, and was put in actual possession of the kingdom by being placed upon the throne, where none but the king dared, it is said, to be seated on pain of death. But if a king were proclaimed when another was in possession of the throne, the guards of the new monarch, to supply this defect in the ceremonies, would place him upon some kind of eminence, so as to raise him above the rest of the people. Thus Jehu was acknowledged as king by his captains, when they extemporized a throne for him, by setting him at the head of the stairs, and spreading their clothes under his feet.

On such an occasion many sacrifices were offered, and a splendid feast was held, at which the nobles and high officers were entertained with great state and magnificence—in fact, a coronation feast. The poor also were liberally cared for, and there were few who were left unprovided with "a loaf of bread, a good piece of flesh, and a flagon of wine."

FIFTIETH WEEK—WEDNESDAY.

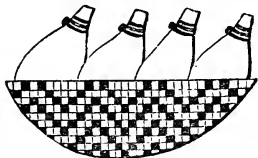
POSTHUMOUS JUDGMENT.—II KINGS XII. ; II CHRON. XXIV.

THE conduct of the high-priest Jehoiada in respect to the restoration of David's line in the person of Jehoash, suggests to us that he was a man of energetic and resolute character. In this we should probably be mistaken.

There are few men whose character can be safely estimated from an isolated act. The greatness of the occasion, the importance of the responsibilities devolved upon them, and the vital character of the interests confided to their care, often impel men of no distinguished energy to some one great and decisive action ; but the occasion over, they subside to the ordinary level of their character,—and we may search their after-history in vain for deeds answerable to the greatness which the one great act appeared to promise.

In the case of Jehoiada, however, a little attention to the chronology will enable the reader to perceive that he was a very aged man. He was a hundred years old when he placed the crown of Judah on the head of Jehoash, and he lived thirty years longer—dying at the great age of a hundred and thirty. As the period of human life had been reduced to its present rate before the time of David, this age must have been as remarkable in the time in which Jehoiada lived as it would be in our own. A man of such constitutional stamina as to be able to live to the age of a hundred and thirty, may not be physically older at a hundred than an ordinary man at sixty or seventy ; still at such an age, he had reached what is, even for him, the time of life at which men love quiet and seek repose, and when little of vigorous or energetic action is expected. Thus we may account for the fact that, during the remainder of his life—in part of which he held supreme power as regent for the young king, he exhibits a kind of passive character,—enduring, for the sake probably of quiet, evils which he might have been ex-

pected to prevent or remove. The high places, for instance, were not abolished even by him ; and under him occurred a most gross misappropriation by the priests, to their own use, of the funds obtained from the people for the repair of the temple, which had fallen into a dilapidated condition. That the high-priest had any part in this malversation is not to be imagined ; but such vigilance might have been expected from him as would have rendered it impossible. It was the king himself who first moved in this matter, and authorized the collection of funds for this important work : and when, after some years, his attention was again directed to the subject, and he found that neither had the work been done, nor was the money which had been collected forthcoming, he was much and justly displeased ; but it was arranged that, in future, the dues proper to this object, and the voluntary contributions of the people, should be put into a chest, with a hole in its lid, placed near the altar, and which was not to be opened but in the presence of the king's accountant. The money was then told out, and placed in bags, which seem to have been delivered sealed, a certain amount in each, to those trustworthy men to whom the charge of the work was confided. We see here a distinct indication of a practice still followed in the East, where large sums of money are concerned, as in the disbursements of the government, and in the taxes and tributes paid to the crown. The money is in such cases deposited in long narrow bags, each containing a certain sum, and carefully sealed with the official seal. As this is done under the authority of the government by responsible public officers, the bag or purse passes current for the sum marked thereon, so long as the seal remains unbroken. The antiquity of this custom is attested by the monuments of Egypt, in which ambassadors from distant nations are represented as bringing their tribute in sealed bags to the king ; and the same bags are deposited



intact in the royal treasury. This custom is so well established in the Levant at the present day, that "a purse" has become the name for a certain amount of money thus made up,—now usually about five pounds sterling. In the receipt and payment of large sums this is a great and important public convenience, in countries where the transaction of large accounts by paper is but little used,—and where, the currency being chiefly in silver, great trouble and much loss of time in counting loose money is spared. Bankers and merchants resort to the same expedient, when the seal of the firm can be regarded as a sufficient guarantee for the amount contained in the bag.

The money thus raised in Judah sufficed to put the fabric of the temple into a state of thorough repair, but not enough remained to provide the sacred structure with vessels of gold and silver, for which a supplementary collection seems to have been made; for it appears, from 2 Chron. xxiv. 14, that even these wants were eventually supplied.

The great high-priest, who had rendered such essential services to the house of David, was at his death honored with the high and singular privilege of being buried in the sepulchre of the kings. During his lifetime, and under the check of his presence and oversight, Jehoshaphat reigned well. But he was no sooner dead than the nobles who retained a predilection for idolatrous practices, made their appearance at court, and so won upon the king by their obsequious attention, that he was soon seduced from the service of the Lord, and was led first to tolerate, then to sanction, and at last to practise, idolatrous rites; and when at length he dared to introduce such rites into the temple itself, and the high-priest Zachariah, the son of Jehoiada, ventured to raise his voice against these abominations, the king, by a word or sign, gave him over to the rabble, who stoned him on the spot. This act of the king—in slaying the son of his benefactor, his near relative, the friend and companion of his youth, regardless of the sanctity of his person and of the place in which he stood, and while he was in the discharge of a pub-

lie duty—is altogether one of the most atrocious in the Hebrew annals. This Jewish martyr did not, like the first Christian martyr, pray with his last breath—"Lay not this sin to their charge;" but in conformity with the severer spirit of the Jewish dispensation, his dying prayer was exactly the reverse,—“The Lord look upon it, and require it.”

And He did look upon it;—He did require it. With that deed ended the peace and prosperity of Jehoash's reign. The Syrian king, Hazael, invaded the land,—the first time this power had appeared in the southern kingdom,—and threatened Jerusalem. The force was small,—much less than Jehoash had at his command; but the king and his large army sustained a most disgraceful defeat; and he then thought that he had no alternative but to buy off the Syrians by the sacrifice of the treasures and precious vessels of the temple, as well as of the accumulations in the royal treasury.

He seems to have been wounded, for it is stated that “they left him in sore diseases.” But his bed screened him not from the popular indignation—insomuch that two of his servants, reckoning upon impunity, if not applause, from the people, murdered him upon his sick-couch. That they were nearly right in this, is shown by the fact that his son Amaziah, who succeeded, dared not, until some time after, “when his kingdom was established,” call the murderers to account. Indeed, the nation gave its solemn posthumous judgment upon the demerits of this king's reign by refusing his corpse a place in the sepulchres of the kings, although he was allowed a tomb within the city.

It was thus in Judah that public opinion expressed its final and unalterable verdict upon the worth of its kings; and, considering the importance which the Hebrews attached to sepulchral honors, the prospect of this posthumous judgment may have had more influence upon the conduct of the kings than we can readily apprehend. It is to be recollected that the sepulchres of the Jews, and their public cemeteries, were outside the towns, as is still the wholesome custom in all eastern lands. Only kings were

privileged to have their family sepulchre in a town, as at this day we see the sepulchre of the Osmanlee princes in Constantinople. The only exception is now in favor of individuals eminent for their sanctity ; and the Jews also made the like exception, as we see by the case of Jehoiada, and of Huldah the prophetess, both of whom were interred in Jerusalem. For a king to be refused a place in the royal sepulchres was a great dishonor ; and this was as far, generally, as the Hebrews cared to go in their judgment upon their dead princes. That which would have been a great honor to a subject—to find a grave in the city, was a sufficient disgrace to a king, unless his remains were also deposited in the sepulchre of his fathers. To exclude *him* from burial in the city altogether would have been a frightful ignominy. The reader of the history of the kings will do well to note the differences as to the modes of their burial. It is always indicated, and that clearly for the very purpose of intimating the final public judgment on the character of the deceased king. There was something like this in Egypt,—or, indeed, the very same practice. Every man was brought to a sort of trial after death ; and if it were proved that the deceased had led an evil life, his memory was condemned, and he was deprived of the honors of sepulture. Even the sovereign himself was not exempt from this kind of public inquest after his death. At the present day the Jews retain a fragment of this custom, by interring evil characters ignominiously in a separate and neglected part of the burial-ground. We are not without some trace of the ideas on which this custom is founded, when (formerly) suicides were buried in the public roads,—and when, as at the present day, executed murderers are buried within the walls of their prison.

FIFTIETH WEEK.—THURSDAY.

PETRA.—II KINGS XIV. 1-20; II CHRON. XXV.

WHEN Amaziah felt himself in a position to put the murderers of his father Jehoash to death, it is mentioned to his praise that, out of regard to the law of Moses, he abstained from including their children in their doom. This remarkably intimates the previous prevalence of the contrary practice, and that Amaziah would have followed it, had not his attention been called to the prohibition in Deut. xxiv. 16. The custom of including the unoffending family in the doom of their parents was formerly prevalent throughout the East. Mohammedanism has checked, if not suppressed, it in western Asia; but in the pagan East frightful examples of it still occur. In our own recent war with China, the late emperor, displeased at the ill result of Keshen's operations against us, issued a decree ordering that the unhappy general should "be cut asunder at the waist: and that those who officially attended him, whether small or great, *his relations, and all who appertain to him*, and those who are arranging affairs with him, be all indiscriminately decapitated." In the same decree, another general, Paoutsung, is ordered to be put to a slow and ignominious death by having his flesh cut bit by bit from his bones; and it is added, "Let his native place be made desolate for a hundred lee around, and let his relations be sentenced to the punishment of transportation."

Under a young king of warlike tastes, the kingdom was soon astir with military movements and preparations. Amaziah was anxious to ascertain the military resources at his command; and caused a general muster to be taken of all the males fit to bear arms, from twenty years old and upwards; and the number was found to be three hundred thousand. Some have thought this number incredible. But why so? It is expressly said to be the number of all fit to

carry arms—that is, all the adult male population from twenty to sixty—such as it was usual in ancient warfare to call out on great occasions, all Orientals being more or less familiar with the use of arms. The numbers given in Scripture are only high with reference to modern European circumstances, in which warfare is a distinct profession, which can never as such be followed by such large proportions of the population. Having this in view, and recollecting that the present is expressly stated to be the number of those qualified to bear arms, it seems to us small rather than large; for as the number of such is generally about one fourth of the population—it would make the entire population of the kingdom of Judah only one million two hundred thousand—which we take to be much too little. Josephus, who copies these numbers, was aware of this inference from the number stated, and little suspected that it would ever be doubted from its largeness, and he therefore states that this three hundred thousand was only a selection from the whole number fit to bear arms. This we do not believe; for not only is it contrary to the plain meaning of the text, but it is plain that Amaziah would tax the powers of his own kingdom to the utmost before he thought of hiring, as he did, one hundred thousand men out of Israel for a hundred talents of silver. If he could have got more than three hundred thousand in his own kingdom, he would not have gone to this great expense for another hundred thousand.

The object he had in view was the reduction of the Edomites, who had, in the time of his father, shaken off the yoke of Judah. But when about to march, a prophet demanded, in the name of the Lord, that the mercenaries from the northern kingdom should be sent away, for that no success would be granted to an expedition in which they took part. Amaziah objected, naturally enough, that it was hard to throw away all the money he had expended to procure their assistance; but when the man of God answered, “The Lord is able to give thee much more than these,” he submitted, and sent the army of Israel away—thus affording a splendid

example of faith, which makes our hearts warm towards him, and which it is lamentable to find unsustained by the later incidents of his career. The Israelites, however, regarded it as a slur cast upon them, and were highly exasperated, as the inhabitants of the towns and villages were made to feel on their homeward march. The campaign against Edom was quite successful. Amaziah was victorious in a battle fought in the Valley of Salt, at the south end of the Dead Sea; and pursued his march to Selah, the metropolis of the Edomites, and acquired possession of it. This Selah was afterwards known to the Greeks as Petra (both names meaning *a rock*), the same city which had been shut up for ages in a ravine of Mount Seir; and the recent restoration of which to our knowledge, with its singular remains, and the innumerable excavations, many of them with richly sculptured façades, which line the cliffs of this deep enclosed valley, have excited the wonder and admiration of the present generation. But all these things were the work of a later age than that of Amaziah—though certainly the valley was even then the metropolis of Edom, and many of the excavations were probably of as old or even older date. The place is mentioned in the prophets as “the strong city;” and its inhabitants as “building their nests on high among the munitions of the rocks”—an expression which would suggest that the excavated caves in the cliffs were not originally designed for tombs, but for human habitations.

When a man stands upon the brink of a precipice, he usually feels a strong inclination to cast himself or others down. It was probably the experience of this strange sensation, when he looked down from the edge of some tall cliff into this or some other of the deep valleys of Edom, that put into the mind of the king of Judah the atrocious idea of inflicting upon the defeated Edomites a memorable punishment for their revolt, by casting them down from the cliffs of their own mountains. No fewer than ten thousand were thus destroyed; and the king, whose head was plainly

turned by the intoxication of success, doubtless thought he had in this done a great deed.

By all the rules of ancient reasoning, Jewish or pagan, Amaziah should have considered that this victory over the Edomites demonstrated the impotence of their idols, and the greatness of Jehovah, to whose worship he should therefore have been the more attached—the rather as this victory had been promised to him by the prophet as the reward of his faith. But instead of this, the king, by a monstrous perversity of spirit, took a foolish and wicked fancy to the gods of a defeated people, and thereby forfeited the favor of Him to whom he owed all his greatness. Henceforth he acted as a man whose judgment had been taken from him.

He was admonished by a prophet—whom he repelled by the stern rebuke—"Who made thee of the king's counsel?" and by the threat of punishment. So the prophet ceased, with the fearless remark—"I know that God hath determined to destroy thee!"

Exalted in his own esteem by his victory over Edom, Amaziah seems to have entertained the notion of reviving the obsolete claims of the house of David to reign over all Israel; and it may be that the long unbroken line of kings in Judah, descended from David, gave them a great superiority in their own esteem, and in that of the nation, over the kings of the short and rapidly succeeding dynasties in Israel. The king of Israel must have been greatly surprised to receive a declaration of war, in the shape of a challenge from Amaziah, in the words, "Come, and let us look one another in the face"—words that have a friendly appearance enough, but which had a most unfriendly meaning. To this challenge the other returned a most significant and sarcastic answer in the shape of a parable:—"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.*" The sovereign contempt so neatly conveyed in this message, smote the proud spirit of Amaziah, and made him more eager for the conflict.

So he marched ; and not long after was seen marching back again—a prisoner in the hands of the victorious Israelites, whose king entered Jerusalem in triumph.

The conqueror did not, however, attempt to annex the territory, or any part of it, to his own. He was content to seize all he could lay hands on—not sparing the precious things of the temple. He then departed, leaving Amaziah on the throne—but not until he had cast down a large piece of the wall of the city as a memorial of his triumph. How a memorial, when it was without doubt speedily built up again? But the freshness of the masonry, and the recollection of the people from age to age that *this* was the part of the wall which the king of Israel threw down, would for a long time render it a monument of the transaction; for none but a conqueror could thus deal with the wall of a great city.

As this incident brings the history of Judah and of Israel into connection, we may here note that the conqueror in this case was Jehoash, son of Jehoahaz, son of Jehu. During the reigns of Jehu and his son, Israel had been brought very low by Hazael, king of Syria. But after that king's death, his realm became so weakened under his son Ben-hadad, that Jehoash was enabled to recover most of the advantages which had been lost by his predecessors, and to restore the kingdom to a comparatively prosperous condition. It was, however, left to his successor, Jeroboam II., not only to drive the Syrians from all their acquisitions beyond the Jordan, but actually to enter Damascus as a conqueror.

As for Amaziah, his folly, and the disgrace he had brought upon the holy city—more intolerable than its conquest by a foreigner, rendered him odious to the people. A conspiracy was formed against him, and he fled from Jerusalem to the fortress of Lachish ; but the conspirators sent after him, and slew him there.

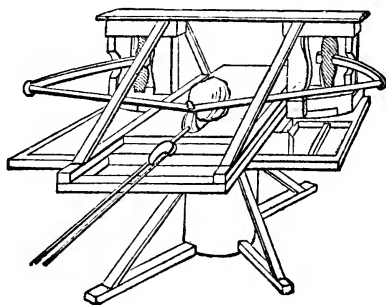
FIFTIETH WEEK—FRIDAY.

ENGINES OF WAR.—II KINGS XIV. 21, 22; xv. 1-7;

II CHRON. XXVI.

THE facility with which Jerusalem had been taken in the time of Amaziah, seems to have made a strong impression upon the mind of his son Uzziah, and to have rendered him studious of means by which cities might be defended. The ordinary fortifications, in their strongest form, were applied to the walls of Jerusalem and other towns; but beyond this, we now first in history or monument hear of military engines for the defence of towns, mounted upon the walls. It is said of Uzziah:—"He made in Jerusalem engines invented by cunning men, to be upon the towers and upon the bulwarks, to shoot arrows and great stones withal." And it is immediately added, that "his name spread far abroad." It may be asked, Were these properly "inventions?" We have no doubt that it is so stated; that is to say, that the word does signify "invented;" and if inventions, they were new inventions, for to speak of old and well-known things as the invention of cunning men, would have been unusual and absurd. We therefore conclude that they were invented for Uzziah—he probably suggesting the want, the object; and the "cunning men" devising the means, under his encouragement and at his expense, of giving effect to his views. "It is not said that the inventors were Jews." No; but as it is not said that they were not Jews, the inference is that they were—the rather, as the sacred historians usually record the fact, when any great or curious works are wrought by foreigners. There seems an unaccountable reluctance in these days to regard the Jews as inventors in any sense. But why not? They were at least as ingenious and competent as any other ancient people; and they had such wants as lead to the inventions ascribed to them. Why should the people so high in literature—of which their monuments are the most

ancient in the world—be below other nations in capacity for the material arts? Here, 800 years before the Christian era, inventions are ascribed to them which must have wrought a most important revolution in ancient warfare; and if we can establish no prior claim for another people, why should not the Jews be allowed whatever credit belongs to the invention? It cannot now be said we lack materials for judging of the claims of others. We possess sculptures and paintings at Nineveh and in Egypt, ascending to a much higher date, and abounding in representations of the defence and attack of towns, without any trace of military engines of the sort here said to have been *invented* under Uzziah's auspices; and until evidence can be produced for their earlier existence, we shall rest content with this testimony. It is indeed a remarkably corroborative fact, that Pliny assigns a Syrian origin to these inventions, and in his view, as in ours, Palestine belonged to Syria. Such engines for throwing stones and darts, once invented, continued to be used in the siege and defence of towns down to the invention of artillery. The engines for throwing stones are known in military history by the name of *balistæ*, and those for casting darts, *catapultæ*. They varied in power, like our cannon. Some of the *balistæ* used in sieges threw stones of *three hundred*, some of a hundred, some of fifty pounds weight, while those employed in the battle-field cast still smaller weights. The darts projected from the *catapultæ*, varied in like manner



from small beams to large arrows, and their range exceeded a quarter of a mile, or 450 yards. All these engines were constructed upon the principle of the sling, the bow, or the spring, the last being an elastic bar, bent back by a screw, or a cable of sinews, with a trigger to set it free, and contrived either to impel darts by its stroke, or to cast stones from a kind of spoon formed towards the summit of its spring.

Josephus records, that engines of this sort were employed with tremendous effect in the siege of Jerusalem by the Romans. The defenders of the city had three hundred engines for projecting darts, and forty for casting stones, which they had taken from the Romans, and which practice taught them how to use. Among the engines employed by the Romans against the city, however, were some exceeding in power any they possessed. Some of them discharged a stone weighing a talent to the distance of two furlongs, and with such terrible force, that not only did it destroy the foremost men, but with unspent power rushed through their masses, sweeping away whole files of them in its course. The same historian, in describing the siege of Jotapata, where he commanded the defence, says, that the darts and stones were thrown from the engines with such power, that numbers of people were destroyed at once by them. The force of the stones, in particular, were such, that they broke down the battlements, and carried away the angles of the towers. He adds, that a man standing near him had his head knocked off by a stone cast from a machine nearly three furlongs distant.

This king Uzziah, wisely considering public security as the best foundation of public prosperity, put the country in a state of vigorous defence; and was enabled to hold a strong hand over the nations which had been the troublers of Judah. He repelled the Philistines and Arabians; he established his power over Edom, and fortified Elath, the port on the Red Sea; and, awed by his power, the Ammonites submitted to him. He organized his military force; and, as men had been more at command than efficient weapons, he laid up abundant

stores of good weapons and shields in his arsenals. He also built strong castles on the frontier, as well as towers through the open country towards the desert, for the protection and refuge of those who were out with their flocks in distant pastures. "He loved husbandry;" and, both by his example and encouragement, he promoted agriculture, planting, and the breeding of cattle.

These wise measures produced, under the Lord's blessing, a rapid return of prosperity to the country, which does not seem to have been materially injured by the great earthquake which happened in this reign,* and by which several cities in Israel also were swallowed up—indeed, the northern portion of Palestine, in the parallel of the Lake of Tiberias, usually suffers more than the south from such visitations.

Thus Uzziah became great, not by his own wisdom, but because he was a righteous man, and was therefore "marvellously helped till he was strong." But, alas! "when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction." He could not see why, to all his honors, that of exercising priestly functions should not be added, seeing how closely the regal and sacerdotal functions were connected in other nations. Accordingly, one day he went into the temple itself, which he could not lawfully enter, and attempted to offer the incense upon the golden altar. But he was followed by the high-priest, and by eighty other priests, who resisted the sacrilege, who remonstrated with him, and warned him of the danger he incurred by this trespass. But the king was angry; and while he stood thus wrathful, with the censer in his hand, the priests perceived the undoubted signs of leprosy upon his person, and hastened to thrust him out as unclean, from that holy place. Yea, in his horror, shame, and confusion, he himself "hastened to go out." He was never again seen in public. He lived in seclusion as a leper, while his son Jotham administered the public affairs of the kingdom.

Josephus says, that the earthquake which is noticed as

* Amos. i. 11; iv. 1; Zech. xiv. 5.

having taken place in this reign, occurred at the moment of the king's trespass. He adds, that a rent was made in the temple, through which the sun shone upon Uzziah's face, and he was immediately struck with the leprosy. He also states, that outside the city, at the place called Eroge, half the mountain broke off from the west side, and rolled down four furlongs, and remained at the base of the cliffs on the eastern side of the ravine, so that the roads, as well as the king's gardens, were spoiled by this obstruction.

It is observable, that as a leper, Uzziah was not allowed, after death, a place in the sepulchre of the kings; but he was interred in the field which contained that sepulchre.

FIFTIETH WEEK—SATURDAY.

POLITICAL COMBINATIONS.—II KINGS XVIII.; II CHRON. XXVIII.

DURING the long reign of Uzziah in Judah, which lasted fifty-two years, no fewer than six kings sat upon the throne of Israel. He ascended the throne in the twenty-seventh year of Jeroboam II., the fourth king of the house of Jehu, who seems to have had the most prosperous reign that had for a long period been known in Israel. He extended the successes of his father against the Syrians, and ceased not until he had made himself master of Damascus and of Hamath. It is reasonably conjectured, that the weakness which had fallen upon this recently powerful kingdom, may have been owing to the pressure on the other side of the great Assyrian power, which was already advancing westward, and soon appears historically upon the scene.

Of all the five kings after Jeroboam, only one died upon his bed. The history sounds much like this:—B murdered A, and reigned in his stead; C murdered B, and reigned in his stead; D murdered C, and reigned in his stead; E murdered D, and reigned in his stead. Jeroboam's son

Zechariah, was, in the first year of his reign, publicly assassinated by one Shallum, who mounted the throne, but occupied it only one little month, being then in his turn slain by Menahem, who of course ostensibly avenged the murder of Zechariah, but who, instead of seating the heir of Jehu's house upon the throne—and such doubtless existed—sat down in it himself. One locality refused to recognize him; but was treated by him with such ferocious barbarity, as effectually checked all further opposition. It was in this reign that the Assyrians under Pul, first threatened the land of Israel. Menahem well knew his incapacity to cope with a power so formidable. He did not attempt it, but sent a thousand talents of silver to propitiate the invader, and induce him to forego his purpose. Pul, having other important work on hand, took the money, and turned aside for the present, allowing the kingdom a respite, during which Menahem died on his bed, leaving his throne to his son Pekahiah, who, lacking the military experience and fierce energy of his father, was unable to maintain his influence over the army, but was after two years assassinated by Pekah, the chief captain of the war-chariots—a step on which he would hardly have ventured, but in the assurance that the army would sustain him in it.

It was in the reign of this Pekah that both Uzziah and his son Jotham died in Judah. It was in this reign also that the Assyrians, under their new king Tilgath-pileser, appeared once more with hostile purposes against Israel—purposes not so easily turned aside as those of Pul had been. If the Assyrians regarded Menahem as a tributary prince under their protection, the murder of his son, and the establishment of a new dynasty in the person of the usurper, without their concurrence, may well have supplied to the Assyrians an ostensible *casus belli* had any been wanted. But it is likely that this great conquering people did not condescend to want or to allege any ground or pretext for their incursions. Tilgath-pileser seems to have wanted not only the plunder of the country, but the *persons* of the people—

to be sent for the replenishment of his own land, not peopled in proportion to its extent—and to replace, by useful captives, the large drafts upon the industrious population, which their schemes of extensive conquest obliged them to make for military service. Tilgath-pileser seems, however, contrary to the expectations and fears of the nation, to have satisfied himself with sweeping away the tribes east of the Jordan, and with the possession of all their wealth. His object does not appear to have been territorial acquisition—for he established no hold upon the land he had desolated, but, satiated with the rich plunder and the abundant slaves the east afforded, and perhaps called away from the prosecution of the enterprise by other objects—Pekah was left in undisturbed possession of the western territory.

About this time the kingdom of Damascus, under Rezin, again rises into temporary importance; and the king of Israel, as well as all the neighboring potentates, who have all had occasion to feel their impotence singly against the power of Assyria, hasten to contribute their united help against the common enemy. Damascus was, by its geographical position, in the van of the great conflict, and the common support which was agreed to be rendered to it in this great emergency, accounts for the temporary importance it once more acquires. As for the Israelites, all their hopes of future safety rested upon the opposition which Damascus, thus supported, might be able to offer to the further progress of the Assyrian arms. Judah, however, not having been hitherto molested by the Assyrians, prudently kept itself aloof from this great alliance; and it was this, probably, with other unknown causes, which drew upon it the arms of Rezin and of Pekah, both of whom separately defeated Ahaz in battle, and inflicted great miseries upon the people. After his victories, Pekah marched off a great number of prisoners to Samaria; but, amid this history of bloodshed and war, it is pleasant to find that the Israelites were not forgetful of the ancient brotherly covenant between the tribes. Their hearts were smitten at the misery of their

brethren, when the unhappy captives appeared under the walls of Samaria ; and a prophet named Oded, stood forth, and with the full sanction of public approbation and applause, forbade the king to hold them captive ; and Pekah, finding that he expressed the feeling of the princes and people, consented, with good grace, to release them. They were tenderly treated by the Israelites ; they were well fed ; other clothes were given to replace those which the soldiers had rent from them ; they were mounted on asses, and conducted carefully to Jerusalem, where they were delivered up to their countrymen. Such instances of amenities in ancient warfare engage our special sympathy and interest, from the extreme rarity of their occurrence ; and they are valuable for the indications which they offer, of the warm undercurrent of true and humane feeling and sympathy, beneath the hard and frozen surface of public strife.

The war, however, went on. The kings of Syria and Israel united their forces, with no less purpose than that of deposing the house of David altogether, and of setting up some obscure person, known only as "Tabeal's son," upon whose subserviency they could calculate.

This unwise menace united all parties in Jerusalem in a stout resistance ; and, while the besiegers held possession of the open country, the siege was protracted, until matters became so urgent, that Ahaz ventured upon the desperate remedy of applying to the king of Assyria for deliverance. This application was accompanied by professions of homage, and with an offering of the gold and silver of the palace and the temple. Tilgath-pileser willingly accepted such handsome payment, for doing what he was ready to have done without pay. Marching down upon Damascus, he compelled its king to turn back and attend to his own affairs. Rezin was defeated and slain in battle ; and the conqueror took possession of the extinguished kingdom.

Soon after Ahaz proceeded to Damascus to pay his respects to the Assyrian conqueror, to whom he had in fact tendered his submission in the words—"I am thy servant

and thy son," when he applied for aid. The payment of tribute was the price of protection; and the relations of submission were made so heavy and galling, that although thus temporarily relieved, he was rather distressed than strengthened in the result; besides that he incurred much odium by having thus voluntarily rendered himself tributary to Assyria, and subjected his people to the heavy exactions necessary for the payment of the tribute. He had moreover greatly failed, by manifesting so little reliance upon the Divine protection, which had been promised him by the prophet Isaiah.

His visit to Damascus was also otherwise damaging to him. He saw there an elegant altar, and resolved to have one like it in the temple at Jerusalem, to be used for the regular services, while the old brazen altar was set aside for occasional use. The high-priest Urijah did not resist this so far as he ought to have done. But when the king proceeded further, and sought to introduce more distinctly idolatrous matters, he appears to have been resisted; and then he shut up the temple altogether, and set up altars at every corner of Jerusalem, besides establishing high-places for the worship of strange gods in every city. There seems, in fact, to have been no abomination of idolatry into which this infatuated king did not fall. He is even said "to have burned his children in the fire," in the fatal valley of Ben-Hinnom. He died at last, unlamented by the righteous, and his body was not allowed a place in the sepulchres of the kings.

Fifty-First Week—Sunday.

TEMPTING THE LORD.—ISAIAH VII.

THERE is one incident in the history of Ahaz which does not appear in the regular narrative, but which we find in the book of the prophet Isaiah.

When the tidings first came of the alliance into which the

kings of Syria and of Israel had entered against Judah, the heart of Ahaz "was moved, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind." At this juncture the prophet received a command to go forth, with his son Shear-jashub, to meet the king "at the end of the conduit of the upper pool, in the highway of the fuller's field."

What Ahaz was doing there is not stated; but as his being engaged in some matter evincing his apprehensions from the threatened invasion, would afford peculiar point and emphasis to the message with which the prophet was charged, we incline to concur in the conjecture that he had gone out to see whether the fountain could not be stopped, or its waters diverted, so that it might not be used by the enemy, who would thus be prevented from carrying on a protracted siege. This is rendered the more probable by the fact, that this is recorded to have been done by his son Hezekiah, when threatened with a siege by the Assyrians, as well as in later sieges of the city,—especially during the crusades, whence it happened that the besiegers were much distressed for water, which does not appear to have been ever wanting to the inhabitants. In this case, Ahaz, who, like his grandfather Uzziah, appears to have been a man of an inventive turn of mind, must have the credit of devising a defensive resource, which was afterwards found of so much importance.

On such an occasion the king would be attended by many of his counsellors; and, as a considerable concourse of people might be found at this place of waters, the publicity would be given to the prophetic utterance necessary to inspire the alarmed inhabitants of the city with confidence.

Arrived at this place, Isaiah exhorted the king to dismiss all alarm—to rely with confidence on the protection of Jehovah, who, through him, conveyed the assurance, that the confederacy to subvert the line of David in favor of Tabeal's son "shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass." It is clear, however, that the words of the prophet made no impression upon the king, who had, perhaps, already more than

half made up his mind to the course he afterwards took. Perceiving this want of faith, the prophet continued with vehemence—"Ask thee a sign of the Lord God: ask it either in the depth, or in the height above!" Had he possessed the spirit of David, and of many of his nearer ancestors, Ahaz would have been greatly encouraged by the assurance which the prophet gave, and would have put entire confidence in it without further proof. But since he appeared wanting in this strength of faith, the Lord, in condescension to his infirmity, invited him to ask a sign of assurance, which, however miraculous, should be granted, to strengthen his feeble faith, and to satisfy him that the prophet spoke not without due authority from One well able to perform all that He promised. But Ahaz, with keen perception, saw in a moment that, by accepting such a sign, he would leave himself altogether without excuse before the public in following the course to which his own judgment was already inclined. It would, he thought, take away his liberty of action, by compelling his judgment to go where his heart would not follow. He therefore declined the proposed sign, under an affectation of pious humility and deference to the law, which is no less curious than lamentable:—"I will not ask; neither will I tempt the Lord." This has an apparent allusion to the text, Deut. vi. 16, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

Here the question arises, What is "tempting God?" This is an important question, and has not always been rightly understood. It seems to mean simply the putting the power, the goodness, or will of God, to an unauthorized and uncalled-for *test*. A test implies, not faith, but mistrust. If one lays untold gold in the way of a servant, in order to test his honesty, this is not because that servant is trusted, but because he is mistrusted. If confidence in him were perfect, the test would not be needed. It is not possible, as some have thought, to tempt God by any degree of trust in him, so that the occasion for that trust arises in *the path of duty*, and is not voluntarily and needlessly sought

out for the purpose of a test. Take an instance. When Ezra was about to cross the desert with his caravan of Jews returning to Jerusalem, he was quite aware of the perils of the journey from the attacks of the Arabs, who would not be likely to permit so rich a caravan to pass through their wild territory with impunity. He might have had a guard of soldiers for the asking; but he was afraid to ask, lest he should dishonor the Lord in the eyes of the Persian king, to whom he had stated that the God he served was well able to defend his people. He dreaded lest this heathen king should construe such an application into distrust of that protection in the sufficiency of which he had boasted, and that thus some dishonor might be reflected upon that high and holy name. He therefore committed himself and party, in solemn prayer, to the Almighty, and then plunged fearlessly into the perils of the wilderness; and the Lord responded to this call upon him,—for they all arrived safely at Jerusalem, without any molestation from “the liers in wait by the way.” This was trust, not test—not tempting. Ezra had a well-grounded confidence in the Lord’s protection;—he had no wish to try it. He knew it already; and, being assured that he was in the path of duty, he felt that he might trust in it, and boldly rest upon it.

The case that most perfectly contrasts with this is that which our Lord’s temptation supplies. Being upon the summit of a high tower, Satan tempted him to cast himself down—needlessly, out of any path of duty, in order to test the promise—“He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.” This had been a venturesome, foolhardy, and presumptuous test of God’s promises, undertaken in a waging spirit, and not growing out of any of the circumstances which the course of life presents; besides being a falsely literal application of those grandly hyperbolical expressions, by which the Lord strives to render intelligible the greatness of his love for and care over his people.

That the refusal of Ahaz did excite displeasure is clear from the strong words of the prophet:—"Hear ye now, O house of David: Is it a small thing for you to weary men; but will ye weary my God also?" The king had wearied or tried the patience of the prophet by seeming to question his commission;—that, however, was comparatively a small matter;—but now he must try the patience of God himself, by refusing the tendered attestation. But he should not so escape his responsibility. A greater sign than any his heart could have devised was forced upon him. He refused to ask a sign;—"Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign. Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and to choose the good. For before the child shall know to refuse the evil and to choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings."

On this remarkable passage much has been written and said, and various interpretations have been offered. That in its *ultimate* signification it has reference to Christ, cannot be doubted, for St. Matthew affirms it. But this could not well have been a sign to Ahaz, since its accomplishment did not in his time take place. It seems, therefore, that the prophet speaks of the birth of a child which should soon take place of some one then a virgin; and that, before the child so born should be of age to discern between good and evil, both the nations he dreaded—Israel and Syria, should cease to be kingdoms. As this could be known only to God, it would constitute a sign to the house of David of the truth of what He had affirmed by his prophet. But in delivering this prophecy, language was designedly employed which would also mark a more important event, and carry the mind of the hearers onward to the future birth of One who should more fully answer to all that is here said of the child to be born, and to whom the name IMMANUEL (God with us) should be more appropriately given. It had, we know, this effect; for the Jews ever after entertained the opinion, founded on this pro-

phcey, that the expected Messiah would be born of a virgin. We have thus some reason to be thankful for the churlish obstinacy of Ahaz, since his refusal to ask a sign produced this splendid link in the chain of prophetic testimonies to the coming Saviour.

We may wrestle with God, like Jacob, in prayer for his blessing; but we may not wrestle with him in a gladiatorial spirit,—to try, as it were, if He be indeed so strong as He tells us that He is.

To accept the sign which He offers, and to which He invites one, is not, as Ahaz foolishly alleged, to tempt him. He would not offer it unless there were cause; and, under certain circumstances, to decline it when offered is an insult to him. Had this been to tempt the Lord, then still more greatly would this king's son, good Hezekiah, have tempted him by even asking a sign that his life would indeed be spared. Yet this is not mentioned to *his* blame; and if he did in this somewhat err in the other extreme, the error may with probability be ascribed to his keen remembrance of the displeasure which his father's self-willed refusal of a sign excited.

FIFTY-FIRST WEEK.—MONDAY.

THE ASSYRIANS.—II KINGS XVII., XVIII. II CHRON. XXXII.;
ISAIAH XXXVI.

A VERY important event in the history of the Hebrews is the withholding of their tribute from the Assyrians by both the kings of Israel and Judah. The king of Israel was Hoshea, who had slain his ancestor—"his friend," Josephus says—and reigned in his stead; while the throne of David was occupied by the pious Hezekiah, the son of Ahaz. This measure appears to have originated in the expectation of being sustained by Egypt, which had at length become alive to its own danger from the steady progress in empire of sc

great a power as Assyria, and saw the importance of encouraging the barrier kingdoms. It is clear that both received such assurances from Egypt, as gave them ground to expect that Pharaoh would afford them vigorous aid, in any difficulties that might arise from the assertion of their independence. It was so clearly his interest to do so, that the sincerity of his assurances cannot be doubted; and that he did not eventually fulfil the expectations it had raised, is accounted for by the peculiar circumstances of the country, which deprived the reigning king of the confidence of the army, and indisposed them to work out his objects. This had been foreseen by the contemporary prophets, who strongly discouraged all reliance upon the help of Egypt.

This stoppage of tribute soon brought the forces of the Assyrian king upon Israel. There was no help from Egypt, and the country was easily subdued; all, save Samaria, in which the king had shut himself up with the remnant of his forces, and where he held out for three years, vainly expecting the help from Egypt which never came. At length the city fell: Hoshea was sent off in chains to Nineveh; and the kingdom of the ten tribes ceased to exist. This was in the year 721 before Christ. According to the policy followed by the eastern conquerors with regard to those nations or provinces they designed to incorporate with their own domains, Shalmaneser sent away beyond the Euphrates the flower of the conquered nation, comprising all those distinguished for their rank or wealth, or for their abilities or qualifications in useful arts. To replace these, new settlers were brought from the East; and being merely designed to keep the land in occupation, formed a much less numerous and valuable population than that which had been removed. This policy was further carried out by Esarhaddon, the grandson of Shalmaneser, who gleaned the remnant of native Israelites, and substituted an additional draft of foreigners. These strangers gradually combined with the dregs that remained of the Hebrews, and the population thus constituted took the name of Samaritans, from the city of Samaria.

They were all originally idolaters; but believing in national or territorial deities, they thought it necessary to learn something respecting the God of the land into which they had come. The Assyrian king thought this a reasonable wish, and sent back from Assyria a Jewish priest to teach them "the manner of the God of the country." The result was, that they combined the worship of Jehovah with that of their native idols. But in time the idolatrous dross got purged out, and eventually the Samaritan system of belief and practice became as pure as that of the Jews, though less exact in some of its observances. In some respects it may have been purer, as the Samaritans would have nothing to do with the mass of oral traditions with which, even before the birth of Christ, the Jewish system became disfigured and overladen.

The process of the Assyrian conquerors, as described by the sacred historians and the prophets, is remarkably corroborated by the Assyrian cuneiform inscriptions, as deciphered by Major Rawlinson; and it is not by any means unlikely that further research may bring to light accounts of the expeditions of the Assyrian kings in Palestine. We copy some sentences in corroboration. The king, in the first instance, is called Temen-bar, and all the inscriptions make the kings speak in the first person. The inscription begins with an invocation, which Rawlinson ingenuously confesses his inability to follow. He perceives, however, that first there is a list of gods; then the favor of all these deities, with Assarac at their head—the supreme god of heaven—is invoked for the protection of Assyria. The king then goes on to give his own titles and genealogy. He calls himself king of the nations who worship Husi and Assarac; king of Mesopotamia; son of Sardanapalus, the servant of Husi, the protector, who first introduced the worship of the gods among many peopled nations. Then the king proceeds to register the various military glories of his reign. "These campaigns," says Rawlinson,* "are almost all described in the same

* *A Commentary on the Cuneiform Inscriptions of Babylonia and Assyria.* London, 1850.

terms; the king of Assyria defeats the enemy in the field, subjugates the country, sacrifices to the gods, and then generally carries off the inhabitants, with their most valuable effects, into captivity in Assyria; replacing the people with colonists drawn from the nations immediately subject to him, and appointing his own officers and prefects to the charge of the colonists, and the administration of the new territory." "In the third year Ahuni, son of Hateni, rebelled against me. The country beyond the Euphrates he placed under the protection of the god Assarac, the Excellent, while he committed to the god Rimmon the country between the Euphrates and the Arteri. . . . Then I went out from the city of Nineveh, and, crossing the Euphrates, I attacked and defeated Ahuni, the son of Hateni, in the city of Sitrat, which was situated upon the Euphrates, and which Ahuni had made one of his capitals. The rest of the country I brought under subjection; and Ahuni, the son of Hateni, with his gods, and his chief priests, his horses, his sons and his daughters, and all his men of war, I brought away to my country of Assyria."

The phrase frequently occurs that in the places conquered "I raised altars to the immortal gods." Those that adopted the Assyrian religion seem to have been spared—a curious analogy to the Moslem propagandism by the sword: "The cities which did not acknowledge the god Assarac I brought under subjection." So again: "By the grace of Assarac, the great and powerful god, I fought with them and defeated them: twenty thousand five hundred of their men I slew, or carried into slavery; their leaders, their captains, and their men of war I put in chains." "I took the city of Arama, which was the capital of the country (Ararat), and I gave up to pillage one hundred of the dependent towns. I slew the wicked, and I carried off the treasures."

Egypt was by this time the principal object of attention to the Assyrians; and the king deemed it advisable to secure Tyre and other strong cities on the coast before dealing with Hezekiah. This occupied attention many years—

for Tyre in particular made a most vigorous and protracted resistance—and meanwhile Shalmaneser had died, and Sennacherib, his son, succeeded. This king prosecuted the war with vigor and overwhelming force, and at length applied himself to the reduction of Hezekiah's fortresses. This prince was then really alarmed, having seen cause to abandon all hope from Egypt; and he therefore sent to Sennacherib, humbly acknowledging his fault, and offering to submit to any demand that might be made upon him. The Assyrian required, as the price of his forbearance, three hundred talents of silver, and thirty of gold. This was a heavy sum for Judah to pay, and it was not raised without extreme difficulty. It obliged the king to take all the silver in the house of the Lord, all the treasure in the palace, and even to strip off all the gold with which the doors and pillars of the temple had been overlaid. Whether he was enabled thus to raise the entire sum, is not clear; but it is certain that, after Sennacherib had taken Ashdod, which was regarded as the key of Egypt, he changed his mind, and concluded that it would be unsafe to leave so doubtful a power as that of Judah unbroken in his rear. He therefore resumed his military operations against Judah; and, while engaged in reducing the fortified towns of Lachish and Libnah, sent two great officers—the chief of the eunuchs, and the chief cup-bearer, these being the offices which the names Rabsaris and Rabshakeh imply,—with a large force, to demand the unconditional surrender of the king and capital. In that case they were to be left alone till the king returned from the conquest of Egypt, when he promised to transport them to a better land than their own. This is curious as an indication that the application of this well-known policy of the eastern conquerors was set forth as anything but disadvantageous to those brought under its operation. It shows also that it was already notorious that the persons thus expatriated were well treated and much encouraged in the lands to which they were removed. There is, indeed, a marked distinction in the language addressed to

the rulers, and that intended for the citizens. Poor Hezekiah is abused most vilely, and overwhelmed with scorn and insult; while the material advantages to be realized by submission are studiously placed before the eyes of the people. The dignity of independence, the pride of nationality, were of small account in the eyes of these Assyrians. The gasconading language of these commissioners, as recorded in the pages of Isaiah, well marks the arrogant and boastful character of the Assyrians, and is in remarkable conformity with the tone of the inscriptions to which we have already referred—as is also the religious tone and pretence to a divine commission which is advanced. The language used was indeed so insulting and blasphemous that Hezekiah conceived from it that the Lord himself would hear and avenge his own cause, and, encouraged by the prophets, he gathered confidence from that which seemed calculated to intimidate him.

He was, in fact, by this brought into the state of feeling proper to his condition—and which, if he had earlier realized, much distress and anxiety would have been spared to him, and *we* should have been spared the display of that vacillating indecision which forms the only drawback in the character of this righteous man and excellent king. He certainly ought to have known—and it was not for want of prophetic teaching that he did not know—that a king walking, as he had done, in the paths of righteousness, and striving, as he had striven, to advance the glory of God, was *entitled*, under the peculiar covenants of the Hebrew theocratical constitution, to expect, and even to demand, the protection of the Divine King of the land and people. No sooner, therefore, did he realize the sufficiency of this—no sooner did he cast himself in entire confidence upon the Lord's protection—than his heart was cheered by the promise of a great deliverance.

FIFTY-FIRST WEEK.—TUESDAY.

THE SIMOOM.—II KINGS XIX. ; II CHRON. XXXII.

THE prophet Isaiah, in promising deliverance from the haughty Assyrian, clearly indicated the mode in which it would be effected. It was, that he should hear a rumor which would be the means of compelling him to abandon his designs upon Judah, and that eventually he would return disappointed and unsuccessful to his own land, to perish there by the sword.

The rumor had already reached him by the time Rabshakeh joined him at Libnah. It was that Tirhakah, the great king of Ethiopia, whose warlike exploits remain to this day recorded on the walls of a Theban temple, had undertaken the task to which the king then reigning in Lower Egypt was unequal ; and in the determination not to allow the Assyrians a footing in that country, was moving down in great force against them. This made Sennacherib anxious to proceed to Egypt at once, without any longer delay in Judah ; and he was therefore highly exasperated at the ill success of Rabshakeh's threatening mission to Hezekiah—and not the less so as he had no leisure to punish his obduracy, and saw reason to conclude that the reduction of the strong fortresses would be a less easy matter than he had reckoned. He, however, sent a terrible letter to Hezekiah, threatening what he would do on his return, and full of even more awful blasphemies than those of his foul-mouthed commissioners against the God in whom Hezekiah trusted, and deriding his power to save.

The king took the letter, and having read it, went at once to the house of the Lord, spread out the letter as it were before him, and poured out his soul in earnest prayer. The answer was a strong denunciation of the pride and blasphemy of Sennacherib ; and the Lord's determination to bring him low, is expressed in most strong and decided

language, concluding with the remarkable words—"I know thy abode, and thy going in, and thy coming out, and thy rage against me. Because thy rage against me, and thy tumult is come into mine ears, therefore will *I put my hook in thy nose*, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way that thou camest." The mode of punishment thus indicated, is curiously illustrated by a bas-relief from Khorsabad, where captives are led before the king by a rope passed through the mouth and nose.

What followed between this and the great judgment upon the Assyrian host, is not recorded in Scripture; and we are left to collect it from other sources—as Herodotus, Josephus, and, as cited by him, the Chaldean historian Berosus. By all these accounts Sennacherib did go to Egypt; and the Egyptian account, as preserved by Herodotus, is, that the king Sethos, having prayed to his god, and being encouraged by a dream, resolved to march against the invaders with a body of artisans and shopkeepers, seeing the soldiery would not follow him. The night before the expected action, an army of mice invaded the Assyrian quarters, and gnawed asunder their bow-strings and the thongs of their shields, whereby, being for the time disarmed, and thunder-struck by the prodigy, they retreated in confusion "by the way that they came,"—intimidated, perhaps, also by the rumor of Tirhakah's near approach, and by the dread of meeting him in this condition. The historian adds, that this current tradition was in his days attested by a statue of the king in the temple of Vulcan, bearing in his hand a mouse, with the inscription, "Whoever looks at me, let him be pious."

One does not know what to make of this story. The omission of Tirhakah's name in it is suspicious; and it may be conjectured, that the Assyrians were actually driven back by him; and that the rest is an appropriation to Egypt of a disjointed version of the judgment that afterwards actually befell the Egyptian host. But that the resemblance suggests such imitation, the story fits in well enough to the sequel, as it supplies or strengthens the motive for an abandonment of

the design upon Egypt; whence, it would seem, the army returned through Judah, perhaps with the intention of resuming operations against Hezekiah. Accordingly, it is stated by Berosus, that it was on the return from the Egyptian war to Jerusalem, and in the first night of the siege, that the calamity befell the Assyrian which broke his strength. And this we take to be an important testimony, from an indifferent authority, to settle the question *where* and when the doom that befell him took place. The prediction, also, in Isa. xxxvii. 33, that the king should not come *into* the city, nor exhibit any of the usual operations of siege before its walls, seems to become more emphatic when understood to imply that he should come *to* the city, but should not be allowed time to commence the usual proceedings.

The sequel is thus told: "Then the angel of the Lord went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians one hundred and fourscore and five thousand; and when they rose early in the morning, behold they were all dead corpses." How is this to be understood? Not, surely, as Dr. Johnson remarked, "that an angel went about with a sword in his hand, stabbing them one by one." Either some terrible known agency, such as that of the pestilence, or the hot poisonous wind, was employed, or some extraordinary and unknown operation took place. In either case, the Divine power is equally manifested; and assuredly nothing could be easier than for that power to extinguish so frail a thing as the life of man at a stroke. The tens of thousands were but an aggregate of individuals, whose breath was in their nostrils. Berosus says it was a pestilence. It has been objected that no pestilence is so suddenly destructive. Yet we do read of instantaneously destructive pestilences in Scripture, as in the wilderness and at Bethshemesh; and it may be remarked of even the natural pestilence, that in the same variety of the disease death supervenes at a certain number of days (not more in any case than seven) from the commencement; and if, therefore, any number of men were smitten with this disease at one time, they would all die at

the same time, or within a very few hours of each other. If this were the case here, the Assyrians who died before Jerusalem may have been smitten with the pestilence before they left Egypt. But we do not think that it *was* the plague. The almost immediately mortal pestilence so often mentioned in Scripture, and known from other ancient authorities, was clearly not the plague: none of the symptoms described agree, and it is probably an extinct disease. It is not now known, even in the East, though there is abundant evidence in history, tale, and song of its former existence. Of the glandular plague, the present prevailing epidemic of the East, there is no certain trace in history anterior to the third century, even in Egypt.

Some have thought the powerful natural agent employed was the hot pestilential wind, or simoom, which is often represented as suddenly destroying travellers, and indeed whole caravans. The effects of this wind are felt most strongly in the heart of the great deserts, and with mitigated effects the further one recedes from them. It has become the fashion lately to deny those effects, or to set down the accounts we have received as gross exaggerations. But these denials are founded with too little discrimination on the accounts of travellers who did not traverse the regions where this visitation is most severe, nor do they often occur in the most fatal form even in those regions, or else they would be quite impassable. The counter-evidence is wholly negative, and is not adequate to countervail the evidence of history, and of those who know those regions well. The testimony of five persons who tell us what they did see, is of more importance than that of fifty who tell us what they did not see. In this case, however, the fifty, traversing countries on the distant borders of the desert, did experience some slight inconvenience from a hot wind; and fancied this was the fell simoom of which they had heard, and that, after all, it was not so calamitous as had been reported. But experiences brought from the heart of the desert would be far more conclusive. Dr. Russell, in his *Natural History of Aleppo*,

rightly distinguishes between the weak and strong simoom, calling the latter the "true simoom." This never reaches so far north as Aleppo, nor is it common in the desert between that city and Basrah on the Euphrates. It is in the great Arabian and African deserts of sand that the effects of the wind are strongest and most disastrous. Dr. Russell was careful to collect and compare the accounts given by the Arabs, and thus states the result:—"They assert that its progression is in separate and distinct currents, so that the caravan, which in its march sometimes spreads to a great breadth, suffers only partially in certain places of the line, while the intermediate parts remain untouched. That sometimes those only that are mounted on camels are affected, though most commonly such as are on foot, but that both never suffer alike. That lying flat on the ground till the blast passes over, is the best method of avoiding the danger; but that the attack is sometimes so sudden as to leave no time for precaution. Its effects sometimes prove instantly fatal, the corpse being livid, or black, like that of a person blasted by lightning; at other times it produces putrid fevers, which become mortal in a few hours; and that very few of those who have been struck recover."

It is willingly granted, that in this strong manifestation the simoom does not naturally reach Palestine. But if this were the agency employed in the destruction of Sennacherib's host, it had been a small matter for the Lord to cause it to blow beyond its usual range, upon that special mission of doom. It might be an objection to this agency, that such a wind would be destructive to others than the Assyrians. The power of God to prevent it from hurting any but the destined victims, is a sufficient answer to us. But to many it may not be so, and therefore we willingly point to the defined currents in which the wind moves, at a greater or lesser elevation from the ground, as containing an agency—a wheel within a wheel—which, under the Divine guidance, might be made effectual for sparing whom He pleased, and for smiting whom He saw fit. Upon the whole, therefore,

it seems probable, that the simoom was indeed the agency by which this great judgment was brought to pass. It also appears that not all the Assyrians were slain. The king himself (reserved for future judgments), and many others, escaped; and these were doubtless such as lay beyond the borders of the current of pestilential air.

FIFTY-FIRST WEEK.—WEDNESDAY.

THE DIAL OF AHAZ.—II KINGS XX.; ISAIAH XXXVIII.

It must have been very soon after the ruin of Sennacherib's host, if not just before that event, and while the Assyrians were absent in Egypt, that Hezekiah fell sick of a disease which he knew to be mortal. The prospect of death at such a time was very grievous to this good king. The personal grounds are obvious; but there were also public grounds which might render the prospect of dissolution distressing even to one to whom death itself had no terrors. He had no son: for it is certain that Manasseh, who succeeded him, was not then born; and the land had not yet begun to recover the late ravages;—so that his death would have left the nation in a distracted condition, and would probably have exposed it to many new calamities.

He prayed, therefore, to be spared; and his prayer was granted, the prophet Isaiah being sent to tell him that fifteen years should be added to his life. To assure him that this recovery was indeed miraculous—not a chance, but a token of the Lord's special favor to him—and to give him due confidence in the promise, a token was given in the going backward of the sun's shadow, "ten degrees upon the dial of Ahaz."

This is the first time that we read in Scripture of any instrument for measuring time; and its connection with the name of Ahaz, is another instance of the ingenious tastes of

that unhappy king. It is also the first mention of a dial in history. This may, however, like the tasteful altar which he saw and fancied at Damascus, have been a foreign curiosity, which, or the idea of which, he introduced, rather than an invention of his own, or made under his auspices.

Indeed, it is a somewhat remarkable corroboration of the usual ascription of the art of dialling to the Chaldeans, that this first scriptural mention of the subject connects it with the name of a king whose personal intercourse with the Assyrian neighbors of the Chaldeans at Damascus, as well as his fondness for foreign novelties, are equally notorious. In connection with this point of the case, it is worthy of further note, that the princes of Babylon sent to inquire of Hezekiah respecting the wonder that had been done in the land.

Strictly, however, we know not that this was a dial. The Hebrew language has no word for such an instrument. The word so translated means "steps," or "degrees"—so that it reads "the steps" or "degrees of Ahaz." This has led many to suppose that this famous "dial" was no other than a kind of stair, framed and proportioned with such art, that the shadow upon the steps, or cast by the steps, expressed the time of the day and the course of the sun.

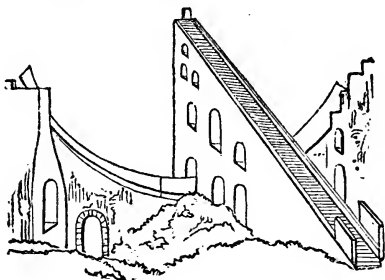
Among the opinions of the Jewish Rabbis on this subject, is that of Rabbi Elias Chomer, quoted with approbation by Grotius, that the dial of Ahaz was a concave hemisphere, in the midst of which was a globe, the shadow of which fell upon several lines engraved upon the concavity of the hemisphere, and which lines are said to have been twenty-eight in number.

This description corresponds nearly with that which the Greeks knew by the name of *scapha*, or boat, and *hemisphairion*, or hemisphere, and the invention of which they ascribe to the Chaldeans, having been introduced to their knowledge by Anaximander, who travelled in Chaldea at the time of the captivity.

The difficulty in the present case is to understand what is

meant by the *steps* or *degrees* of Ahaz. They may mean lines or figures on a dial-plate of any kind, or on a pavement; or they may signify a set of steps to the palace of Ahaz, or to a staircase which stood apart elsewhere. On the whole, however, the "steps of Ahaz" seem to have been some distinct contrivance constructed to mark the divisions of time, rather than any part of the house, accidentally found to be serviceable for that purpose. It stood probably in one of the courts of the palace—for it must have been so placed, and was of such dimensions, that the king, now convalescent but not perfectly recovered, could view the phenomenon from his chamber or pavilion. May it not have been situated in the "middle court" mentioned in 2 Kings xx. 4?

Although we do not conceive that we are bound to the literal signification of "steps," yet if it can be shown that a kind of stair, scientifically constructed, may be or has been used for the purpose indicated, we should be inclined to give it the preference. Now, this is actually the case, as a single glance at the annexed engraving will show. It represents a



sort of dial in Hindustan, near Delhi, the construction of which would exceedingly well suit all the circumstances recorded respecting the dial of Ahaz. It seems framed to answer the double purpose of an observatory and a dial. It is a rectangled hexangle, whose hypotenuse is a staircase, apparently parallel to the axis of the earth, and bisects

a zone or coping of a wall, which wall connects the two terminating towers right and left. The coping itself is of a circular form, and accurately graduated to mark, by the shadow of the gnomon above, the sun's progress before and after noon; for when the sun is in the zenith he shines directly on the staircase, and the shadow falls upon the coping. A flat surface on the top of the staircase of the gnomon fitted the building for the purposes of an observatory.

As respects the miracle itself, the fact is clear that the shadow was made to recede ten degrees upon the dial. Of the way in which this was accomplished nothing is said—nothing offered to our belief. We can see that there are several modes, all miraculous, in which it might be done. Various agencies may be suggested; and it may be that there was no agency at all, but that it was brought to pass directly by the simple operation of the Divine will.

Some have supposed that, to produce this effect, the earth was made to retrograde upon its axis for a space corresponding to that marked by ten degrees upon the dial. This would certainly have produced the effect intended; but it would doubtless have produced something more. Such a reversal of the order of nature, and disturbance of the solar system, could hardly have happened without such results as would be remembered through the world to the end of time. Yet history records no such event; and its local character is indirectly recognized in the fact that the prince of Babylon sent to inquire respecting the wonder that had been done *in the land*. Besides, in the course of human conduct it is not deemed wise “to leap over the house to unbar the little gate;” neither do we find that the Almighty is ever redundant in manifestations of power, but rather sparing—employing just so much power, and no more, as may be needful to produce the intended result. It is therefore not likely, judging from the analogy of the Divine operations, that the earth would be sent backward in its course to produce an effect which might be accomplished by means as sufficient, and as

truly miraculous, though with less derangement to those laws on which God has established the universe, and which he does not himself disturb without a most adequate cause.*

In the case before us, the effect upon the shadow might have been produced by a miraculous deflection of the rays which fell upon the dial, so as to throw back the shadow to the extent required. This also best agrees with the statement of the sacred writer, who speaks only of the retrogression of *the shadow*.

There are some who suppose that the phenomenon might have been produced by the simple refraction of the rays, through the sudden interposition of a different medium. That such refraction takes place when rays of light pass through a denser medium, is a well-known physical fact. The most striking illustration is perhaps found in the observation made, on the 27th of March, 1703, by P. Romauld, prior of the cloister of Metz, that, owing to such refraction in the higher regions of the atmosphere, in connection with the appearance of a cloud, the shadow of his dial deviated an hour and a half.

However produced, the retrogression of the shadow upon the dial of Ahaz was certainly of a miraculous nature. Nothing less than this could have been satisfactory to Hezekiah as a sign; and nothing but a divine communication could have enabled the prophet to predict its occurrence at that time and place. Besides, the king was allowed to make his choice, whether the shadow should go backward or forward; and he avowedly chose what appeared to him the most impossible to any power less than God's.

* See also Twenty-First Week, Saturday.

FIFTY-FIRST WEEK—THURSDAY.

JOSIAH.—II KINGS XXII., XXIII. ; II CHRON. XXXIV., XXXV.

It is a dismal thing to see how often, in life and history, an ungodly son comes after a godly father. So Hezekiah, one of the most pious of the Jewish kings, was succeeded by Manasseh, undoubtedly the most impious who ever sat upon the throne of David. He was but a child of twelve years when his father died. Yet we may be sure that he had been well brought up, and fully instructed in the things of God ; and as “the child is father of the man,” it is probable that the influences to which he is subjected before he is twelve years old have the most abiding influence upon his character. The seed sown may seem to have been lost—rotted in the ground ; yet after many years it may germinate, and grow, and bear much fruit. So it was with Manasseh,—who, after a long period of wickedness without example in Judah, fell into captivity and trouble, and in his bondage remembered the holy lessons of his childhood ; and, turning to God, was forgiven, restored to his country and his throne, and spent the rest of his life in repairing, as far as he was able, the evil he had done.

The history of the war that led to his captivity is not given. But the Assyrians had recovered strength, in the course of years, under Sennacherib’s successor, Esarhadon, who eventually marched into Palestine, and sent away the remnant that still lingered upon the mountains of Israel, while his generals were despatched against Jerusalem. The city was taken, and Manasseh was sent away in chains to Babylon, then belonging to Assyria. He returned to his throne as a sworn tributary of Assyria. On the same terms, his son Amon, who followed rather the evil than the good example of his father, reigned ; and subject to the same conditions, Amon’s son, Josiah, mounted the throne, at the early age of eight years.

Notwithstanding that difficulty of obtaining a good education upon a throne, which appears to have been the ruin of his grandfather Manasseh, this prince was the best and most beloved of kings who sat upon throne since David, and was approached by none in his zeal against idolatry and his devotedness to the Lord. He extirpated every trace of idolatrous abominations, root and branch, throughout the country,—abolishing even all the high places, which previous kings had spared, and which even high-priests had tolerated. He extended his holy researches even into the neighboring territory—once of Israel; and at Bethel performed the task which had been, more than three hundred years before, by name allotted to him. And here note, that this king and Cyrus of Persia are the only personages in Scripture predicted by name long before their birth. The accomplishment of the prophecy against the altar of Bethel, delivered in the time of Jeroboam, was in all respects complete. At once to defile that altar, and to inflict posthumous dishonor upon the leaders of the corrupt worship there celebrated, he caused their bones to be taken from the sepulchres and burned thereon. In this labor a noticeable incident occurred. Observing an inscription upon one of the tombs, but not being near enough to read it, he asked what it was, and was told by the people of the place—"It is the sepulchre of the man of God who came from Judah, and *proclaimed those things that thou hast done* against the altar of Bethel." Then he said—"Let him alone; let no man move his bones." So they let his bones alone; "and," as the historian fails not to observe, "with the bones of the prophet that came out of Samaria;" justifying the worldly sagacity of the astute old knave in giving the order to his sons—"Lay my bones beside his bones,"—in the calculation that, besides the impossibility of distinguishing their remains after the lapse of so much time, all the contents of the sepulchre would be spared from defilement for the sake of the man of God. The notice taken of this inscription by the king would suggest that there were no inscriptions on the other sepulchres, and that it was not

usual for the Jews to put any inscriptions upon their tombs,—nor, indeed, have any ancient tombs been found in Palestine with inscriptions upon them. This inscription was probably placed upon the tomb by the old prophet's order, for the very purpose which it now accomplished, by indicating the tomb as that of "the man of God."

The thorough search which was made in the temple for the removal of every relic of idolatry or superstition which former kings had introduced, brought to light the autograph copy of the law written by Moses; and, in opening it, the eye fell upon the passage, Deut. xxviii. 15–68, declaring the doom which awaited the nation if it fell into idolatry. Offered to the attention thus, in an old manuscript written by that holy and venerable hand, it made an extraordinary impression,—which may in part, although still imperfectly, be understood by him who has been privileged to examine some one of the most ancient manuscripts of the Scriptures now existing; and whom the very oldness of the vellum, and the antique style of the writing, with the knowledge of the long ages through which its existence may be traced, seem to take back so much nearer to the time of the writer, and give a vividness to his impressions of ancient truth which no modern copy can impart. It is a curious feeling, which one must experience fully to appreciate. And if this be the case in respect of manuscripts which still fall far short of the time of the writers, how still more intense would it be in the presence of an autograph copy! Suppose, for instance, we had the autograph of St. John's Gospel, and read on the last page the words—"This is that disciple that testifieth of these things, and wrote these things; and we know that his testimony is true;"—would not this, written under his own hand, give an intensity to our conviction of the truth of his testimony, such as we had never before been able to realize in the perusal of the printed copies, or even of the most ancient manuscripts? It is a matter of feeling or impression, which some will understand, and which some hard intellects will not. To ourselves, the impression made

upon the king's mind by the denunciations under the hand of Moses, which he too well knew the nation had incurred, is very intelligible. His anxiety was so great, that—Jeremiah being doubtless absent at his home in Anathoth—the king sent at once to "Huldah the prophetess," to inquire whether this judgment would indeed be executed. The answer was, Yes; that the sentence had already gone forth, and would soon be executed; but that his eyes should be spared from beholding it. He was spared: for he died.

The death of Josiah took place in consequence of the resistance which he offered to the march of the Egyptian king, Pharaoh-Necho, through his territories, with an intention to take advantage of the waning of the Assyrian power, by wresting from it some of its acquisitions west of the Euphrates. This put Josiah into a serious difficulty. If he allowed this march without opposition, he would be regarded by his Assyrian masters as unfaithful to his duty,—as his engagements certainly bound him to regard the military resources of his kingdom as available for Assyrian objects. To suffer the unmolested passage of the Egyptians, would be to take his part with them against the Assyrians. It put him to deciding for the one power or the other; and he decided to adhere to his Assyrian allegiance, remembering how much the kingdom had formerly suffered for trusting to the Egyptians, and how strongly that trust had been denounced by the prophets.

The Egyptian king was sincerely desirous of avoiding a collision with Josiah, and sent to remonstrate against the opposition which he offered,—urging that he had a divine commission, and that it would be perilous to interfere with him. Josiah, however, thought that he saw his duty clear, and persisted in opposing him by force of arms. He could doubtless see through Necho's pretence of being sent by God; yet it did make so much impression upon him, and he had so much of misgiving, that he went disguised into the battle. He was defeated; and a commissioned arrow found him, and gave him a mortal wound. His end was much like

that of Ahab ; and he was the only king of Judah who perished in battle. He died quickly of his wound ; and his body was conveyed in his "second chariot" to Jerusalem, for burial. All the nation mourned deeply for him ; and the prophet Jeremiah gave expression to the universal grief in the funereal lamentation which he composed for one so greatly beloved, and so truly mourned.

Much cause was there for weeping ; for with Josiah terminated the peace, the prosperity, and the piety of Judah. With him all the hopes of the nation perished ; and after him nothing is to be found but idolatry and desolation.

FIFTY-FIRST WEEK—FRIDAY.

THREE KINGS.—II KINGS XXIV. ; II CHRON. XXXVI. 1-10.

It is recorded, that on the death of Josiah, "the people of the land" made his son Shallum king in preference to his elder brother Eliakim ; and, as usual, when there was any departure from the ordinary course of succession, and then only, he was anointed. It also claims to be noted, that the same formula, as to the people nominating the king, occurs only after the previous king (as Amaziah and Amon), had come to a violent end, which may suggest, that when a king had been himself prevented from nominating a successor out of the number of his sons, the right devolved on the people of indicating the one that would be most acceptable to them. Their decision was usually in favor of the eldest son ; but with the right of exercising the same power as belonged to the king himself, of passing him over if cause appeared.

It is further remarkable that Shallum, *and all the kings after him*, changed his name on his accession—a custom which the practice of the Roman pontiffs has rendered familiar to us, but the occurrence of which, in the present instance, seems to indicate the increased intimacy of the

Jews with the remoter East, where this practice appears to have had earlier prevalence. The royal name which Shallum took was Jehoahaz,* which, with the fact, that the two kings who followed also took names beginning with *Jeho*, may suggest that names commencing with the sacred name of JEHOVAH, had by this time come to be considered more dignified and fortunate than any others.

But the king of Egypt, on his return from his successful campaign against the Assyrians, paused to enforce the rights which his victory over Josiah had given. Displeased, probably, at the liberty which had been taken of appointing a king out of the ordinary course without any reference to him, or, which is still more probable, wrought upon by the representations of the party of the eldest son, he sent to summon Jehoahaz to appear before him at Riblah in the land of Hamath, one of the most important of his new acquisitions, and which he was busy in fortifying. The new king seems to have gone without personal constraint; but on his arrival he was cast into chains by Necho, who presently sent him to Egypt, both as a trophy of his conquest, and to prevent him from giving any disturbance to his elder brother Eliakim, whom the Egyptian placed on the throne, by the name of Jehoiakim. As a token of homage, Necho required from the new king the moderate sum of a hundred talents of silver and one talent of gold. It seems to be mentioned as a grievance, that the king raised this sum by direct and immediate taxation, instead of paying it out of his own pocket; or, it may be, that the kingdom had become so poor, that the levying of even this small sum was felt as a heavy burden by the people. But it may be noted, that the Orientals generally greatly exceed any western nation in their aversion to taxes—and this is saying much.

Meanwhile a power was growing in the East, which was destined to exercise an important influence upon the destinies of Judah. The Babylonians had succeeded to the heritage of the Assyrian empire, and were not inclined to allow the

* Compare Jer. xxii. 11, with 2 Kings xxiii. 30, and 2 Chron xxxvi. 1.

Egyptians to retain possession of the territories west of the Euphrates, which they had wrested from the enfeebled grasp of the Assyrians. Young Nebuchadnezzar, who was in command for his father, Nabopolassar, came into collision with Necho, at Carchemish on the Euphrates, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim's reign, and gave him so decisive a defeat, as constrained him to abandon all his conquests, and retire to his own country. This event excited much sensation in Jerusalem. Jeremiah the prophet rejoiced in the defeat of Egypt, and foretold that the Chaldean would soon appear and take possession of Judah, and exhorted submission to his arms. The result could be but a change of masters; but as the king of Egypt had shown himself the patron of his personal interests, Jehoiakim concluded that it would be best to adhere to him. This involved the necessity of resistance to Nebuchadnezzar, who had now become king of Babylon. The insanity of such opposition was somewhat disguised by the hope of assistance from the Egyptian king, whose interests were identified with his own; and Jeremiah was subject to much persecution, on the alleged ground that his declarations were calculated to discourage the troops.

The Babylonians at length appeared, and no help came from Egypt, Necho being now advanced in years, and apparently unwilling to provoke the Chaldeans to attack him in his own country. In reducing Judah they seemed to assert their right to the heritage of the Assyrian power; and with that they would perhaps be satisfied, without attempting to invade a country which the Assyrians never had subdued. Deprived of this hope, Jehoiakim saw the uselessness of resistance, and therefore tendered an ungracious and reluctant submission to the Babylonians. In three years, however, he conceived new hopes of help from Egypt, where a new king (Psammis) had ascended the throne; and therefore, knowing that Nebuchadnezzar was employed elsewhere, he ventured to withhold his tribute. The Babylonian king was too much occupied to look after him for a good while; but in the meantime he sent a few regiments of Chaldeans to form the nucleus of a mili-

tary force to be raised on the spot from among the Syrians, Moabites, and Ammonites, and to be employed in harassing the kingdom. In this warfare Jehoiakim was taken prisoner and sent to Nebuchadnezzar, who put him in chains, intending to send him to Babylon. It does not appear whether he gave effect to this intention. The probability is, that the captive king died before it could be executed; and to die among strangers and enemies was a dolorous fate for a Jewish prince. Jeremiah had foretold his doom: "They shall not lament for him, saying, Ah, lord! or, Ah, his glory! He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem."

His son Coniah, who then mounted the throne, prefixed the sacred name to his own and was called Jeconiah,—which is also written Jehoiachin. In spite of the earnest remonstrances and strong denunciations of Jeremiah, he persevered in his father's fatal policy of resisting the Chaldeans. But Nebuchadnezzar soon arrived in person, and the siege of Jerusalem was pressed with vigor. Jeconiah held out for a little time, in the hope that the Egyptians would appear to raise the siege; but when constrained to abandon that hope, he saw the impolicy of exasperating the besieger by a protracted and desperate resistance, and determined to surrender while the hope of favorable terms might yet be entertained. He therefore came out, with *his mother* Nehushta, and chief officers, and placed himself at the disposal of Nebuchadnezzar. We must not neglect to point out that this marked mention of the king's mother is an incidental, but valuable, corroboration of the fact we have already had occasion to state, of the public importance of the queen-mother's office in the Hebrew monarchy.

Jeconiah was not mistaken in calculating that the city would be spared, and the state maintained, in consequence of his timely surrender; but if he also reckoned that the conqueror would confirm him in the throne as a tributary prince, he soon discovered his error. Nebuchadnezzar saw the impolicy of leaving on the throne the nominee of Egypt.

He therefore set the now lustreless crown upon the head of Josiah's youngest son, Mattaniah, whose name he changed to Zedekiah, and sent away Jehoiachin to Babylon, together with his mother, his harem, and his chief officers,—of which latter those, no doubt, were selected who were of the Egyptian party, and, as such, had shown themselves most eager opponents of Jeremiah. Jehoiachin was at this time but eighteen years of age; and he survived in Babylon till long after the entire subversion of the kingdom over which he had so briefly ruled. He seems to have been kept in some sort of confinement until the death of Nebuchadnezzar, but was liberated from restraint by his successor, and was treated with high distinction among the kings of subverted thrones, whose presence glorified the imperial court. By the numerous captives who were eventually removed to the east, he was doubtless looked up to as their natural prince—the sole relic of the house of David; and it is likely, that his influence availed much to secure for them many of the advantages they enjoyed in the land of their captivity.

FIFTY-FIRST WEEK—SATURDAY.

THE LAST REIGN.—II KINGS XXIV. 17-20; XXV.;

II CHRON. XXXVI.

ALTHOUGH Nebuchadnezzar set up a king, he left him but little more than the shadow of a throne to sit on. All the treasures of the temple, as well as of the palace, were taken, and even the golden vessels that remained in the house of the Lord were cut up and sent away. The temple and palace had more than once before this been stripped of their treasure; but Nebuchadnezzar imposed a severer weakening, from which recovery would be much more difficult. He sent away to Babylon, besides the deposed king and his courtiers, all the chief inhabitants of Jerusalem, to the num-

ber of ten thousand, with all “the mighty of the land,”—comprising seven thousand of the most able warriors, with a thousand of the best artisans. The Mordecai of Esther’s history, and the future prophet Ezekiel, were among the captives. There are some remarkable points in the description of these captives. Those which, in the common version, appear as “the mighty of the land,” are in the eastern versions—“the great ones of the land,” and in the Vulgate—“the judges of the land,” but literally, in the original Hebrew, “the rams of the land,”—being, like many other epithets descriptive of the character and conditions of men, derived from animals. In this case, the leadership of the male animal, its strength, and its prominence in the flock or herd, rendered it a suitable epithet for nobles and leading men. Such terms, when they come into established use, suggest little idea of the animal from which they are taken, but only of the quality designed to be expressed. It will be remembered by many of our readers, that Homer sometimes compares princes to rams.

The artisans are described in the version as “craftsmen and smiths.” The first of these terms, in the original, denotes a workman in general, whether in wood, stone, or metal. The second term is more obscure; and it is difficult to see what special trade it may be that is not included in the general term of craftsmen. The term means strictly one that shuts up—an encloser. From this, some think it means a mason, because he builds the enclosing walls and repairs the breaches of towns; while others declare in favor of locksmiths, from their securing of gates and doors. Others fancy that it denotes goldsmiths, whose art consisted chiefly in the manufacture of enclosing rings, and in enclosing precious stones in metal. In fact, the meaning has been sought in almost every art with which the idea of *enclosing* can be connected. Perhaps the greater importance to kings, and to founders and fortifiers of cities, of masons, beyond all other trades, gives the greatest probability to the first of these interpretations, as it became more likely to acquire a designa-

tion distinct from the general term of "worker." It may be that the fortresses built by king Uzziah excited the admiration of Nebuchadnezzar, and made him especially desirous of possessing the masons capable of constructing such works. At all events, it is clear that Nebuchadnezzar had great need of skilful masons, engaged as he was in improving and enlarging his metropolis.

It is distinctly stated that Nebuchadnezzar took a solemn oath of Zedekiah to remain in honorable allegiance to the prince who had placed him on the throne : and this oath he kept so long as he had no temptation to break it. But temptation came, as usual, from the side of Egypt, which had now king Pharaoh-Hophra, the Apries of the Greek historians, whose active and enterprising character, with the success of his warlike enterprises, suggested that he would be able and willing to afford efficient aid against the Chaldeans. Jeremiah the prophet perceived this inclination, and warned the king of the consequences. But eventually, in the ninth year of his reign, after having entered into a secret compact with the Egyptian king, Zedekiah went into open revolt. This soon brought the king of Babylon, with a most powerful army, before Jerusalem ; and a regular siege was commenced, by the building of forts and other military works outside the town, to annoy the city, to cut off supplies from the country, and to prevent sallies. Eager longings were directed towards Egypt ; and hope and exultation rose high within the city when it was known that the Egyptians were actually on the march for its relief. This compelled Nebuchadnezzar to raise the siege in order to meet this new enemy. It is uncertain whether a battle was fought or not. The impression seems to be that, on becoming acquainted with the force of the Chaldeans, the Egyptians declined to risk an action that was certain to be bloody, and probably disastrous, in behalf of the Jewish king, and therefore drew back to their own country, leaving Nebuchadnezzar to pursue his plans at leisure. So when the people of Jerusalem beheld the dust of an advancing army, and were prepared to hasten

forth to greet their deliverers, they found, with bitter disappointment, that the Chaldeans had returned to resume the siege of the city. This interruption had, however, enabled the besieged to recruit their supplies, and so to sustain a more protracted siege than might otherwise have been practicable. This was important, as the military art was, even in the hands of the Chaldeans, so imperfect for the reduction of towns, that, in the case of a city so strong by nature and art as Jerusalem, there was no effectual means of reduction but that of sitting down before the place until the people were starved into surrender—meantime, taking such opportunities as might offer of harassing the inhabitants. So, in this case, the walls being found impregnable, the siege was soon turned into a strict blockade. Eventually, this produced the usual effects of extreme famine and mortality, and it became evident that the city could not hold out much longer. In fact, in the fourth month of the eleventh of Zedekiah's reign, the Chaldeans succeeded in making a practicable breach in the first wall, which the besieged had no heart to defend. But, during the ensuing night, the king, with his family and chief officers, fled, escaping apparently through some vaults that led into the king's garden, aided by the relaxed vigilance which the excitement of success produced in the Chaldean host. But his evasion was soon discovered; and he was pursued, but not captured until he had reached the plain of Jericho. He was sent off by the captors to Nebuchadnezzar, who was then at Riblah, in the land of Hamath—the very same place to which, twenty years before, Jehoahaz had been brought a prisoner to Pharaoh-Necho. Zedekiah could not expect mercy from Nebuchadnezzar; but perhaps did not anticipate the severity of judgment—worse than death—which was executed upon him. His two sons—who must have been of tender years, for their father was but thirty-two years of age—were slain before his eyes; and then his eyes were put out, as if, with fiendish ingenuity, to keep that harrowing spectacle forever present to him, by rendering it the last sight his eyes beheld. In this

condition he was sent off in chains to Babylon, and we hear of him no more, except that he remained in prison in the imperial city to the day of his death.

Not only the king of Babylon, but his chief commander, Nebuzar-adan, seem to have been absent when the city was taken; and those left in command appear to have been in doubt how to deal with it, until orders came from the king. In the next month, Nebuzar-adan himself arrived with a commission to destroy everything, and leave the city a desert. Effectually did he discharge this commission. The temple and other buildings were set on fire—and what the fire spared, and the strong walls of the city, on which fire could make no impression, were broken down by the soldiers. Eleven years before the Chaldeans had well cleared the temple of its gold and silver. What remained was now taken, together with all the utensils and ornaments of brass, and the two pillars, Jachin and Boaz, and the brazen sea with its bulls. It is remarkable that nothing is said of the ark—the most valuable and important of all the furniture of the temple. It could hardly escape the cupidity of the Chaldeans; and yet, had it been at Babylon when Cyrus gave back the spoils of the temple, this would doubtless have been restored. But this is not stated; and it is known that, in fact, there was no ark in the second temple. It seems to us likely that it was taken away; and it is possible that, if it were still in existence at the restoration, the Jews were afraid to point it out as belonging to them, lest the king should take the figures thereon to be idols which they worshipped. It might have been difficult to undeceive him in this; and they knew that a strong point in his sympathy for them consisted in their common abhorrence of idols—he being a worshipper of the sun, and of fire as its symbol. It may have been broken up, however, for more convenient transport to Babylon, being valuable to the conquerors only for the precious metal—as it could not, like the golden vessels, be applied to unconsecrated or idolatrous uses. The Jews have a tradition that the ark

was hidden by the prophet Jeremiah, and that it will not be brought to light until their polity and ritual service is hereafter gloriously restored at Jerusalem.

Fifty-Second Week—Sunday.

THE END.—II CHRON. XXXVI. 13–16.

THE author of the books of Chronicles, approaching the close of his history, indulges us with some reflections on the causes of the catastrophe which he relates. This is unusual in scripture history, where, commonly, the facts are recorded, and the reader is left to his own reflections—unless where a prophet, priest, or angel appears to warn or to exhort. The case being so rare in which the scriptural historian appears as a commentator upon his own narrative, the instance before us claims special notice. The greatness of the event—the awfulness of the consummation—did, however, in this case call for the observations which are introduced. After describing the iniquities of the nation, especially in the latter years, and the obduracy of the king, who “stiffened his neck and hardened his heart from turning unto the Lord God of Israel,” and after distinctly stating that even “*all* the chief of the priests and the people transgressed very much,” he goes on to say—“And the Lord God of their fathers sent unto them by his messengers, rising up betimes and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling-place: but they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, TILL THERE WAS NO REMEDY.” These are awful words — “There was no remedy!” The word “remedy” is to be understood medically—“no healing,” as the marginal reading indicates—and this renders it clear that the analogy in view is that of

the physician who, as long as there is any hope of curing his patient of the disease under which he labors, bestows the utmost solicitude and attention, and leaves untried no means or resources which the art of healing offers. But he sees at length that the disease is incurable—that there is no remedy, no healing for it. There is no hope; and therefore at length, after much reluctant delay, he abandons the case, and leaves the patient to die. The analogy is striking and true. But it may be made still more exact. The disease, we will say, is not essentially mortal—not absolutely beyond the resources of medicinal skill. But the patient is obstinate; he neglects the regimen prescribed; he refuses the medicines offered; and he even loads the physician with insult and contumely, until even his meek and kind spirit is roused to anger, and he leaves the miserable man to perish of the disease which his obduracy has placed beyond all cure.

The judgment which now befell this people, terrible as it was, is even less striking than the patience which had so long endured their perverseness—which had so long withheld the stroke that at last laid them low. Even as it was, the judgment came most gradually, with constant solicitations to repentance, and with warnings from day to day. The whole Jewish nation, both in Judah and Israel, had all along evinced a strong propensity to idolatrous abominations—which would be almost incredible, in the presence of the light with which they were favored, did we not recollect the prevailing ideas of the times, and the condition of all the neighboring nations—and consider the strong tendency of an exceptional system to be absorbed into those which are more prevalent—especially when the latter is more material, unspiritual, and demonstrative than the others. Still, we are scarcely able, in our blessed ignorance of idolatrous enticements, to appreciate the temptations to which the Hebrew people were exposed, and before which they fell, and which brought them into a state from which the jealous endeavors of good kings—the warnings, invectives, entreaties and

threats of a long series of glorious prophets, specially commissioned by God—were ineffectual to rouse them, and to produce a real reformation.

It was for this the nation was carried away captive, and the holy city and its temple reduced to ruin. This calamity came gradually, and, as it were, piece-meal, leaving ample opportunity of repentance while God had not yet forgotten to be gracious. But they repented not. Gradual punishment produced no reform in the religion or morals of the people; for their morals also had become exceedingly corrupt—and the last king was no better than his predecessors, notwithstanding the more abundant and sharper warnings he received. Therefore the long-suspended doom at length came down, and the land was given over to desolation, and the people to what must have seemed their extinction and utter ruin.

The mercy, the justice, and the wisdom of God, are all equally displayed in this event. His *mercy* in bringing this judgment so gradually—from lesser to greater, during the space of twenty-two years—so that most ample warning was given, and abundant opportunity was afforded to the nation, that the successive threatenings denounced by the prophets were not vain words, but would most assuredly be accomplished in their season.

That it was a most *just* punishment for their sins no one ever questioned, and they have themselves constantly admitted it, even with tears. It was, in particular, a most righteous punishment of their idolatry, whereby they forsook God, and so provoked him to forsake them, and to suffer their enemies to prevail over them, as Moses had long since foretold in Lev. xxvi., where the *succession* of the Divine judgments is most remarkably traced out. This is altogether a wonderful chapter, which should be read in connection with the closing portion of the books of Kings and Chronicles.

But also the *wisdom* of God is seen in this. He did not mean utterly to cast off his people, and He therefore brought

them under this great affliction, because, as had too plainly appeared, nothing less would suffice to purify them, and turn their hearts from the love of idols; for in the midst of wrath the Lord remembered mercy, and this was the end He had in view. In their captive and disconsolate state they had abundant time, and their grievous calamities gave them the disposition, to look narrowly into the past, and reflect upon the long course of iniquity and perverseness, which had brought upon them the heaviest judgments of God. Now, "their own wickedness corrected them, and their backslidings reprov'd them," and they failed not to "know and see that it was an evil thing and bitter that they had forsaken the Lord their God, and that his fear had not been in them." In the land of their captivity, the utterances of the prophets, declaiming on the highest authority against their profane and wicked practices, and foretelling all that had now so dismally come to pass, would still be sounding in their ears; and their abject and wretched condition—the known consequence of these sins—made those warnings sink deep into their hearts, and gave them an utter detestation of that which they thus learned to regard as the true cause of all their sufferings. This is no hypothesis. It is certain that, after this captivity—and under occasional inducements, as strong as any to which they had ever been subjected in former times—there was never among them the least tendency to idolatry, but the most intense and vehement abhorrence of it, as the true cause of all their ancient miseries,—so deep and salutary was the impression made upon them by this great affliction, and so effectual the cure.

FIFTY-SECOND WEEK—MONDAY.

THE RESTORATION.—EZRA I.—III.

It had been foretold by the prophet Jeremiah, that, at the expiration of seventy years—dating, it would seem, from the

first expatriation under Jehoiachin—the captive Jews should return to their own land ; and before that, Isaiah had predicted that this should take place under an unborn king called Cyrus, of whom high things were spoken.

When the seventy years had expired, the Babylonian empire had ceased, and Cyrus the Persian had become master of the many realms of which it had been composed, as well as of the more eastern empire of the Medes and Persians. In the very first year of his imperial reign, this king issued a decree distinctly recognizing these prophecies, acknowledging the authority by which they were given, and his obligation to act upon them. He accordingly permitted such as wished, to return to their own country, and to rebuild the temple at Jerusalem ; allowing them also to collect funds from such as chose to remain behind, and with the promise of the royal protection and encouragement in the undertaking.

Accordingly, a large caravan was formed of the more devout and zealous Jews, *as they now begin to be called*, who were liberally supplied with treasure from the bounty of those who, preferring to remain in the east, felt the more induced to evince their less adventurous zeal by the liberality of their contributions. The king also caused to be made over to them the vessels which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple. Their leader, who went with the appointment of governor of the colony, was the lineal representative of the house of David, being the grandson of Jeconiah, and is distinctly recognized by Cyrus as “the prince of the Jews.” He was born in Babylon, and his name was Zerubbabel ; but, as appears to have been usual with the great men of Judah during the captivity, he had another name—that of Sheshbazzar—by which he was known among the heathen.

We need not trace the history of the colony, which is in the main too plainly stated to require illustration ; but there are a few points to which it will be desirable to refer.

The first question that probably occurs to every one who opens the Book of Ezra is, How came Cyrus to be so well

informed of the matters to which his proclamation refers, and to be so impressed with the power of Jehovah as to acknowledge him as "the God of heaven," and that he owed to him all the greatness to which he had attained? "Jehovah, God of heaven, hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and He hath charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah." Now it is not difficult to trace the channel through which Cyrus *might* become acquainted with these matters, and probably did so. At his first coming to Babylon, he found the prophet Daniel there, as an old minister of state,—renowned throughout the empire for great wisdom, faithfulness, and experience. How well he knew and respected his character is shown by the fact, that he not only continued him in office, but, on settling his newly acquired empire, made him superintendent over all the provinces of the empire—an office which must have given him a degree of rank and power scarcely less, if at all less, than equivalent with that of an eastern vizier or European first minister. This position was just the one which rendered him qualified, at this important juncture of affairs, to be of most essential service to his people; and he himself informs us that his attention had been particularly drawn to the fact, that the seventy years of the captivity had expired. Nothing can therefore be more probable—indeed, it is as probable as anything short of absolute certainty can be—that Daniel brought the prophecies of Isaiah concerning himself under the notice of the king; and as he could prove that these prophecies had been written long before Cyrus was born, and as it was seen that in these prophecies his victories were foretold, and the Lord declared himself to be the giver of all his greatness, and claimed him as His "servant"—as one appointed and commissioned to do His pleasure,—Cyrus, as a candid man, possessed of higher notions of the Godhead than mere idolaters could realize—could not fail to acquiesce in the evidence thus presented before his mind; and it is likely that when this disclosure had made its proper impression, Daniel opened the prophecy of Jere-

miah, and showed that the time for the restoration of Israel had come.

After so long an interval, very few of the original captives could be alive. The great body of the existing generation had been born and bred in Babylon, which was thus, in fact, their native country. As a body, they thrived well there; and ceasing to take interest, unless in certain localities, in the culture of the soil, that change of habit and pursuit took place among them which has ever since been maintained,—and they probably followed nearly the same vocations in the ancient as they do in the modern Babylon, and other cities of our own country,—and presented nearly the same aspect to the ancient Chaldeans as they do to the modern Britons, apart, however, from the special odium they have incurred among Christians on our Lord's account. They became then traders, pedlers, money-changers, money-lenders, jewellers, and possibly dealers in old clothes. Upon the whole, they were so comfortable and satisfied with their position, that, although unshaken in their attachment to Judaism, they felt but little disposition to forego their realized advantages, and break up their homes, to encounter the perils of the wilderness, and to undergo the privations and trials to which a small settlement in a deserted country must expect to be exposed. The largest, the wealthiest, and the noblest portion of the nation, therefore, took no part in the movement, except by their sympathies, and by their bountiful contributions in furtherance of the object; and it has ever been the sentiment of the Jews, that the most illustrious part of their nation voluntarily remained in the land of their exile.

Those who did go were such as were animated by stronger desires to behold and possess once more their father's land, and to restore the Lord's house in Jerusalem—and such as were less attached by prosperity and family ties to the land of their sojourning. That the great body of them were of the poorer sort, is shown, among other circumstances, by the fact, that although there were 42,360 Jews who returned, they had but 7337 male and female servants among them; and still

more by the circumstance, that the long and perilous journey across the desert was performed by the greater part of them on foot ; that of those who did ride, the far greater part were on asses, animals never now employed on such journeys ; and that, indeed, the whole number of animals could scarcely have been sufficient for the women and children, even on a low computation. It is probable, however, that although those who had families took them, as they had no intention of returning, a very considerable portion of those who did go were unmarried ; a fact which explains their readiness in contracting marriages soon after their arrival with the women of the neighboring heathen. There were but 435 camels, the animals best suited for the journey, and not more than 736 horses. These, we suppose, were ridden by persons of condition, and the camels by their families. Of mules, then a more favorite animal than now, there were but 245, while the asses were 6720 ; in all, little more than 8,000 animals, for not fewer than 50,000 persons, including servants.

Considering the circumstances of the returned exiles, and the constant opposition which they met with from the strangers who had intruded into the land, or who dwelt upon the borders, together with the time required for the collection of materials, it is clear that strong exertions were made by the pilgrims to forward the great work they had undertaken ; for, by the fourteenth month after their return, they were enabled to lay the foundations of the temple. That was a great day for them, and the ceremony took place with as much of grandeur and solemnity as their means allowed. It is affecting to read, that while the younger men who had been born in a strange land, shouted with joy to see the foundations of this goodly structure laid in the sacred city of their fathers, the older men, who had seen the first temple, "wept with a loud voice," so that it was impossible to distinguish the noise of the shouting from that of the weeping. What wept they for? Not certainly that the foundations were inferior in extent, or because there were marks of littleness in anything then before their eyes,—but because they

looked forward, and saw that there was not the least probability that the structure, the foundations of which were then laid—the effort of a small company of strangers in their own land—would ever make even the most faint approach in splendor and magnificence to the ancient building, on which the long savings of David and the wealth of Solomon were lavishly expended. Some say that they lamented, rather, the absence of the five great things which glorified the first temple, but which were not to be found in the second,—the ark of the covenant, the sacred fire on the altar, the Urim and Thummim, the Shekinah or sacred symbol of the Divine presence, and the spirit of prophecy. But the spirit of prophecy was not then extinct, seeing that Haggai and Zechariah prophesied ; and as for the Shekinah and sacred fire, they could not, until the completion of the building, know that these would be wanting. We think, therefore, that their mourning arose from the perception that the new temple, taken altogether, would be “as nothing in comparison with the first.” So says Haggai (ii. 7, 9), who was commissioned to comfort them by the assurance, that the deficiency of this temple in exterior glory, should be abundantly compensated by the coming of the Messiah, whose presence should give to the second house a glory greater than that which the first house could boast.

The fact that the *noise* of the weeping equalled that of the rejoicing shouts, strikes an English reader as something strange. It will remind him, however, of the frequent phrase, “He lifted up his voice and wept.” The fact is, indeed, that the Orientals do at this day lift up their voices to some purpose when they weep. Silent tears, inaudible grief, are unknown,—loud lamentations and mournful cries, rather than tears, being regarded as the proper and comely expression of grief. In fact, the Scriptures throughout corroborate travelled experience, in showing that sorrow is not only more *demonstrative*, but is more commonly *expressed*, in the East than with us ; so that not only women and children, but grown-up and full-bearded men, are prone to weep and

lament, even under these common crosses and vexations which we should consider insufficient to warrant any *sensible* demonstration of grief.

FIFTY-SECOND WEEK—TUESDAY.

EZRA.—EZRA VII.—X.

ONE would hardly expect, from the zeal with which the work of rebuilding the temple was commenced, that nearly twenty years passed before it was completed. Various circumstances co-operated to produce this slowness. First, the opposition of the people around, and particularly of the Samaritans, who at first wished to be allowed to take part in the great work, but finding themselves repelled somewhat roughly by the Jews, became the most inveterate opponents of the undertaking, and eventually succeeded in procuring an order for its suspension from the Persian court. The discouragements, indeed, were such, that the people began to regard them as a sign that the time for the restoration of the temple was not yet come, and that the commencement period of seventy years should be computed from the destruction of the former temple, and not from the first captivity under Jehoiachin. Thus for some time the work was altogether abandoned, and the people employed themselves in building comfortable dwellings at Jerusalem for themselves. For thus building for themselves "ceiled houses," while the Lord's house lay waste and open, they were severely rebuked by the prophet Haggai, and were at length stimulated to resume their labor, which an encouraging *firman* from the Persian court enabled them to bring it to a successful close.

Few readers of scripture history look to dates so much as they ought to do; and it will surprise many to learn the simple fact that, when Ezra made up his second great caravan of pilgrims for Jerusalem, the new temple had been

completed nearly sixty years, and it was nearly eighty years since the first caravan of pilgrims set out under Zerubbabel, who, with all that generation, had assuredly been long since dead.

Ezra was a learned man and a priest; and came not only with a plenary commission from the crown to rectify the disorders which had crept into his orphan state, but with an important auxiliary force of people and of treasure.

He found the religious and social disorders of the state such as required the exercise of all the powers vested in him; but there was a willing mind in the people, which rendered his task easier than it might else have been. Ezra may be regarded as the legist of the restoration; and the task which devolved upon him, and which he zealously executed, embraced nothing less than the reorganization of the nation according to the law of Moses and the institutes of David. All that belonged to the order of worship, to the rites and festivals, to the classification of families, to the levy of imposts, to the franchises of the Levitical tribe, to the administration of justice—in a word, all the immense details, the complete re-establishment, of the internal organization of the Mosaical state, belonged to the office he had undertaken, and must be regarded as the work of this man, whom the Jews have always regarded as a second Moses. The particulars of his proceedings are not supplied in the book which bears his name—except as regards his zealous labors in abolishing the intermarriages between the Jews and their pagan neighbors, into which dangerous offence even the nobles and the priests had to a large extent fallen, in apparent ignorance that they were transgressing the law. A curious effect resulted—that the young children spoke a mixed tongue, made up out of the languages of both parents—a case analogous to that which occurs at this day in the families of American missionaries in the Levant, where the children, picking up words all around them, will often make up their sentences with words from three or four different languages—English, Arabic, Greek, and Italian.

When the fact of these intermarriages was disclosed to ~~Ezra~~, he rent his mantle and tore his hair, and sat at the temple gates, as one desolate and absorbed in grief. But, at the hour of evening-sacrifice, he rose, and poured forth to the Lord, in the presence of the assembled citizens, a confession on the part of the people, and a prayer on their behalf, well calculated to move the sternest heart. After this, all the people were summoned to Jerusalem; and, alarmed and convinced of the sin into which they had fallen, and the danger they had incurred, they voluntarily offered to leave the matter entirely in the hands of Ezra, promising to obey his orders. These were, that all their foreign wives should be straightway divorced; and zealous commissioners were sent through the country to see the order duly carried out.

There can be no question that such a wholesale divorce throughout the land is repugnant to our notions, and appears to us as awfully, if not needlessly, severe. But we are to recollect that Ezra was there to enforce and re-establish the law of Moses, and that he had hence to decide the matter, in view of the precedent which would thus be established for the generations to come. Such marriages seemed to be forbidden by the law,* and were hence sacrilegious in the eyes of all true Israelites. There can be no doubt that such connections had in former times been one of the principal causes of the ruin of the two kingdoms and their dynasties—idolatry having most generally found entrance into Israel by this road. In the present state of the people the danger was still greater, and the evil less to be endured; and, if the practice were really to be stopped, and such marriages to be discouraged, this was the time for the evil to be cut off at the root. We are not, however, bound to consider that, because this was done by Ezra, it was absolutely right. There may have been something in it of that over-straining of the law, to which the Jews after the captivity became prone; and it may be that this example, under the authority of a personage so deservedly venerable as

* Exod. xxxiv. 16; Deut. vii. 3.

Ezra, tended to furnish a precedent for that readiness in divorcing their wives, for which the Jews were in our Lord's time notorious. It is clear to us that Moses only meant to interdict intermarriages with the devoted nations of Canaan; and, in extending it to signify *all* foreigners, a step was taken towards that rigorous interpretation of the law, which began from this time to prevail, and which can only be explained by the aversion and profound dread with which idolatry was regarded by the Jewish people after the captivity.

FIFTY-SECOND WEEK—WEDNESDAY.

THE WALLS OF JERUSALEM.—NEHEMIAH I.—V.

THE decree of Cyrus, in behalf of the Jews, had reference only to the building of the *temple*. But, in the East, it is so important that a town of any consequence should be surrounded by a wall—and, in the case of the returned captives, it was of such special importance—that they reasonably concluded that the permission to build a temple necessarily implied leave to surround the place which contained it with a wall. The presence of a temple such as they had been allowed to build, raised the city to such a rank, that the absence of a wall would be most strange and anomalous—besides that it was most needful for the protection of the inhabitants, subject as they were to hostile annoyances from all their neighbors, who regarded with malignant hatred the prospect of the re-establishment of the Jews as a people in their own land. So much, indeed, were the inhabitants distressed, and so natural was it that they should conceive themselves free to take this measure for their own safety, that they began to rebuild the town wall as soon as the temple had been finished. This raised a clamorous opposition, especially from the Samaritans, the authorities in charge of whose local government sent a forcible representation on the

subject to the Persian court, urging the danger to royal power on "this side the river" (Euphrates), of allowing this "rebellious city" to be fortified. This procured what they desired—authority to stop the work. The kings of Persia had been willing, when the case was fairly set before them, to allow all that had been literally allowed in the decree of Cyrus—which formed to the Jews their great charter in all the troubles to which they were subjected—but beyond this they would not go, when it appeared, from the records of the realm, that Jerusalem had once been the seat of mighty kings, and that the later sovereigns had constantly rebelled against their foreign masters. Thus, in all the favors granted by the Persian court, and all the renewals of the charter of Cyrus, permission to fortify the town by a wall is studiously withheld, though known to be greatly desired; and Jerusalem remained as a town whose growing prosperity was kept in check, and its peace continually endangered, by the want of a wall; and it still presented to the external view the aspect of a ruined and burned city, surrounded by fragments of broken wall, and by vast accumulations of rubbish and ruin; for in the East people never clear away the *débris* of old ruins till they need to build again on the same foundations.

But, thirteen years after the arrival of Ezra, the housetops of Jerusalem were crowded to witness the arrival of a new civil governor, whose high rank and power at court was evinced by the splendid escort of "captains of the army and horsemen" which attended him. It is the king's cup-bearer. "Only a cup-bearer!" Softly: this designation, which sounds so undignified to us, was one which inspired the citizens with the most lofty ideas of power and influence; and they felt that surely good days were come, since so great a man had deigned to take the government of their poor state, and since "the king of kings" had spared him from his side. This office is mentioned by ancient writers as one of the highest honor and influence in the great monarchies of the East, the fortunate possessor of which enjoyed great influence,

from the peculiar facilities afforded him of access to the royal presence, and might aspire to the highest civil or even military employments without presumption. It was the same with the Assyrians—of which we have a scriptural instance—for that foul-mouthed Rabshakeh, who seems to have held the chief command under Sennacherib, was, as his name, or rather title, imports, “chief cup-bearer” to the king. At the Persian court, the expatriated natives of conquered states and their children might, equally with native Persians, aspire to the highest offices at the court or in the state; and this high place was, in the present instance, held by a pious Jew called Nehemiah, whose patriotic heart felt a deep interest in the welfare of “the city of his fathers’ sepulchres.” A Jew named Hanani, who had come back to the imperial city of Shushan, gave him a saddening account of the state of affairs at Jerusalem—dwelling particularly upon the disadvantages experienced from the still ruined condition of the wall. This afflicted Nehemiah greatly, and he conceived an absorbing wish to be the honored instrument of repairing the desolations of Zion. He felt that, as he was the one of the nation highest in place and influence, the service seemed to devolve upon him; and how could he know but that he had been so prospered and exalted, that he had been placed in this peculiar position for this very end? The thing was not in itself too much for him to ask; but he could not conceal that there was much danger in asking. The king had been used to see him about his person, and his self-love might be offended at the wish of a servant so favored to leave him for some years; and then, although *that* danger were escaped, and the king, in a moment of happy humor, might consent to let him go, with large powers as governor, might he not demur at the very point which was of most consequence—the rebuilding of the walls—seeing that this had, on grounds of public policy, been refused by many kings who had in other respects evinced a favorable disposition towards the Jews? In this perplexity and danger, Nehemiah did exactly the right thing—he cast the matter in earnest prayer upon the

Lord, imploring him "to give him favor in the sight of this man."

Kings do not like the sight of unhappy faces. It looks like a disparagement of their greatness—an insinuation that they have not the power of conferring universal happiness;* and in the Persian court it was a capital crime to appear sad in the king's presence. Nehemiah knew this very well; but when he found that the lapse of time, day after day, afforded him no suitable opportunity of naming the matter to the king, he could not prevent some traces of his trouble from being visible in his countenance. This was noted by the royal eye; and the cup-bearer had reason to tremble when the monarch asked—"Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick?" "This is nothing else," he added, "but sorrow of heart." At these words, Nehemiah confesses that he was "very sore afraid." But he took courage to speak out:—"Let the king live forever. Why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire?" Then the King said, "For what dost thou make request?" This brought the matter to a truly critical point. "So," says this good Jew, "I prayed to the God of heaven,"—a silent prayer, the aspiration of a moment,—the first of the kind recorded in Scripture, but not the first by many that the children of God had sent up on high. He then found his heart strengthened, and he asked for leave of absence, and to be sent to Jerusalem with full powers to build up its walls. This was granted, on his undertaking to return within an appointed time; and he set forth, furnished with such royal letters to the governors west of the Euphrates as were needful to facilitate his object, together with orders for the free supply of materials for the city wall, and for the palace which the governor intended to build for himself.

* So the existing president of the French Republic declines to grant an audience to Abd-el-Kader till he shall have the power of making him happy. A right royal sentiment! —*April, 1851.*

Nehemiah came with the title of Tirshatha,—the same that had formerly been borne by Zerubbabel. The exact signification is doubtful; but it is supposed to come from the Persian *torsh*, “severe,” and to signify something like “your severity,” “your dreadness,”—reminding one of the “*dread* sovereign” of our forefathers.

When Nehemiah arrived, he did not at once make known the full extent of his commission—that he was the bearer of the long-desired privilege of building the walls. But one moonlight night, the third after his arrival, he went out privately with a few attendants, and rode quite round the outside of the town, making a complete survey of the walls in their ruined state. The next day, however, when the chief persons attended his levee, he said to them, “Ye see the distress we are in; how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire: COME AND LET US BUILD UP THE WALL OF JERUSALEM, THAT WE BE NO MORE A REPROACH.” We may easily imagine the thrill of surprise and joyful excitement these words produced, and the zeal which they inspired. Nehemiah, all whose narrative is in the first person, proceeds to state—“Then I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me, and also the king’s words that he had spoken unto me. And they said, Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good work.”

No time was lost. They went to the work with vigor, and men of all trades—every one, young or old, that could be of the slightest use, was engaged in this great work—the governor and chief persons being always present to encourage them. The danger was great from their old enemies, whose animosity was excited to frenzy when they saw that the Jews were thus securing themselves against them. All kinds of scoffs and insults were showered upon the undertaking. A bitter sarcasm of Tobiah the Ammonite is recorded: “Even that which they build, if a fox go up he shall even break down their stone wall.” At last, seeing the work proceeding so vigorously, they took counsel to put a stop to it by force

of arms. This coming to the knowledge of Nehemiah, he took remarkable precautions for safety. Every one was kept on the alert—every workman was armed—and the governor, who had put all his attendants and guard to the work, withdrew half of them to be constantly in arms by the men who wrought on the wall. Nehemiah was ever present, with a trumpeter by his side, and the people were enjoined to hasten to him whenever the trumpet sounded. The vigilant precautions had the effect intended. The enemies knew their plot was discovered; and the great work was in a short time brought to a close. Nehemiah declares that, during the time the work was in progress, “Neither I, nor my brethren, nor my servants, nor the men of my guard which followed me, none of us put off our clothes, saving that every one put them off for washing.” The whole work was completed in fifty-two days.

FIFTY-SECOND WEEK—THURSDAY.

ABUSES RECTIFIED.—NEHEMIAH V., XIII.

NEHEMIAH’S high office, as royal cup-bearer, was not only most honorable, but must have been highly lucrative. This is shown by the fact that he was able, probably without any serious detriment to his fortune, to gratify his own generous and patriotic feelings by declining to receive the dues and supplies for his table to which he was entitled, and which former governors had received. He defrayed the whole expenses of his government out of his own private purse. This must have been at a great cost; for he not only maintained a large and liberal establishment, but entertained a hundred and fifty of the principal Jews frequently, if not daily, at his table,—besides that on him devolved the expense of receiving and providing for the Jews who were continually coming into the city of their fathers from foreign parts.

Some idea of his expenditure in victuals alone may be formed from his own statement:—"Now that which was prepared for me daily, was one ox and six choice sheep: also fowls were prepared for me; and once in ten days store of all sorts of wine. Yet for all this required not I the bread of the governor, because the bondage was heavy upon this people." This indicates a large expenditure,—heavy for a private purse, and probably equal to that of some of the later kings. But it reads small beside the greatness of Solomon; and the comparison might suggest some curious reflections as to the relative condition of the nation at the two periods. Solomon required for his household daily thirty oxen and a hundred sheep, "besides harts, and roebucks, and fallow deer, and fatted fowl."

Cares still more painful than those connected with the restoration of the wall soon engaged the attention of the Tirshatha. Usury, that great trade in money for which the Jews ever since the captivity have been notorious, was found to be in full vigor in Judah; and as there had been of late much scarcity, those who had any command of money reaped a rich harvest from the exigencies of their brethren. Some had sold or pledged the liberty of their children; others had mortgaged their fields, their vineyards, their houses—the heritage of their fathers; others had borrowed money at extortionate interest to pay the king's taxes. Thus, in various ways, the body of the people were ground to powder, and all their available possessions went to add riches to the rich.

The grievance became intolerable; and the wretched people, whose confidence in Nehemiah gained strength every day, ventured to bring their complaints before him. His anger, when he heard of these doings, was very great, and he felt the necessity of dealing with this great evil in the bulk. After having, therefore, sharply rebuked the chief persons and magistrates for the sanction they had given to this disgraceful traffic, he convoked a general assembly of the people. He then set forth the wrong of this oppression in such forcible language, that no one ventured to answer

him, or to gainsay his demand for the liberty of the enslaved Hebrews, the restoration of the heritages, the remission of the debts, and the foregoing of the enormous interest which had been exacted. They in fact promised to meet his views, and he made them confirm the promise with an oath. Perceiving, however, the visible, though undeclared, distaste of many to this proposal, Nehemiah significantly shook his lap, and said, "So God shake out every man from his house and from his labor that performeth not his promise, even thus be he shaken out and emptied." All the people said "Amen;" and it is gratifying to learn that every one of the persons who had subjected themselves to this censure performed his promise. The act of Nehemiah in shaking his lap, resembles that of Paul, who *shook his raiment*, and said, "Your blood be on your own heads; I am clean."—Acts xviii. 6. Significant acts of this kind are still very common in the East. By shaking his garment, or his lap, as if to clear it from dust, a person expresses his dissent from, or reprobation of, that which is done, said, or asserted, and his disavowal of any responsibility in connection therewith. When performed inadvertently, in the presence of others, such acts are considered rude and ill-omened, and the person who shakes his garment subjects himself to sharp reproof. In their quarrels, both men and women accompany the curses they liberally bestow on each other by the shaking of their robes, and such expressions as—"Thus may it be with thee."

In the present day, Nehemiah's stringent measures would be regarded as an interference with the rights of property and of trade. But it is to be remembered that the Israelites were as a band of brothers, bound to assist each other freely in their distresses, and between whom such dealings as these were expressly forbidden. Usury in the abstract—that is, the trade in money—was not, as some suppose, forbidden by the law. Jews might lend money on interest to foreigners, but not to their fellow-Israelites, not only for the reason stated, but because this employment of money is mainly an

exigency of commerce ; and the Hebrews were intended to be, not a commercial, but an agricultural people, each with his own landed heritage,—and among such there could be little real need for this traffic in money. So we see that it was when they got to dwell among foreigners that they took up this trade ; and they had now to be reminded that they were not to carry it on at the expense of their brethren.

Nehemiah gladly co-operated with Ezra, who remained as a great teacher of the law, in all his efforts for the instruction of the people, and the restoration of the Mosaical institutions. A large portion of the Book of Nehemiah is occupied with an account of the revival of the great and beautiful Feast of Tabernacles,—preceded, on this occasion, by the public reading of the Law at the commencement of the ecclesiastical new year. This reading was, by the law, to take place at the commencement of every seventh year ; but the wholesome custom seems to have fallen into entire disuse, until thus revived. It was done with great solemnity, and with an earnest desire that the people should be really instructed. The fact was, however, that during the captivity the people had materially altered their language ; and although the pure old Hebrew was cultivated by and known to the learned, the mass of the people spoke the Chaldee dialect, which resembled the Hebrew pretty nearly, but was still so different from it as to render the old language only partially intelligible, to those who knew the Chaldee merely. So was Chaldee unintelligible to those who knew only the Hebrew,—of which we have a remarkable instance in the time of Hezekiah, when the Chaldean general Rabshakeh refused to deliver his insulting speech in Chaldee (which it would from this appear the nobles of Judah understood), but persisted in speaking in Hebrew, avowedly that the people, who crowded the walls, might understand what he said. Now the case is reversed ; and the people understand Chaldee, but cannot follow the Hebrew. And here also it may be noted, that the present handsome alphabetical character, in which Hebrew manuscripts are written and books printed, and which is probably

more gratifying to the eye and pleasant to a reader than any other alphabetical character in existence, was borrowed from the Chaldeans during the captivity,—the old Hebrew character being far less handsome. This old character was, however, retained by the Samaritans in their copies of the Law ; and it is hence known as the Samaritan character. Thus it curiously happened that the old people obtained a new written character, while the old form remained in possession of the new people.

It is clear that simply to read the Books of the Law in Hebrew would have been an unprofitable service ; and yet Ezra did not feel authorized to translate the lections off-hand into Chaldee ; in fact the Jews never have read the books in their public services in other than the sacred language. To meet the difficulty, Ezra, standing upon a raised platform of wood with several Levites, read the Law out in pure Hebrew—which was translated, sentence by sentence, to the people by the Levites into the vernacular tongue. Some, indeed, deny that the Hebrew was at this time unintelligible to the people, and hence urge, that the Levites did not *translate* what Ezra read, but made it intelligible by an explanation of all the difficult passages. It seems to us that, if the language of the people was at this time in such a state that in no long time later, as all admit, Chaldee became the vernacular tongue, that tongue must even at this time have been so much more familiar to them than pure old biblical Hebrew, as to have rendered some verbal explanations of the latter indispensable, if the people were to be “made to understand” what Ezra read. Those who have looked to the case of languages in a state of transition, will feel assured that much of what was read could not be understood by the people—owing to differences of pronunciation, of vowels, and of terminations—as well as from the occurrence of words and phrases which had gone out of colloquial use, and had been exchanged for Chaldean words and forms of speech ; and such will conceive that the Levites’ labor of love consisted in repeating from different sides of the platform, to the people

around, what Ezra read in Hebrew, with the substitution of the corresponding Chaldee for such words and expressions as they felt to be in that language not easy for the hearers to understand. Whether they besides gave any exposition of the text, is a different question. They may have done that also; and it is not unlikely that they did, considering how ignorant of the Law the people had become. The scene must altogether have been highly impressive and interesting,—the more so, as it seems to have become the model of the synagogue services. That it made a salutary impression on the minds of the people, is shown by the zeal and gladness of heart with which they forthwith applied themselves to the celebration of the long-neglected Feast of Tabernacles; and once more the picturesque booths of green boughs appeared in their courts and upon their house-tops.

FIFTY-SECOND WEEK—FRIDAY.

THE PERSIAN COURT.—ESTHER I., II.

NEHEMIAH was not the only Jew who rose to high office at the Persian court. A still higher office than his, even that of prime minister, had, before him, and even before Ezra, been held by Mordecai. The deeply interesting story of the chain of providential circumstances by which this man was led to that eminent post is recorded in the Book of Esther. A story so familiar in all its details to every reader, needs not to be recapitulated in order to connect the remarks we have to offer on some of its circumstances.

The king who figures in this history is called Ahasuerus, and it has been much disputed to which of the Persian kings the name is in this instance applied. It is agreed that the king who sent, first Ezra, and then Nehemiah, to Jerusalem, is Artaxerxes Longimanus; and although kings anterior to either have been named, the real alternative seems to lie

between this king and his predecessor Xerxes. We do not mean to enter into this question ; but there is some force in the consideration that the character given of the king in Esther has few traits in common with that of Artaxerxes Longimanus, but has more points of agreement with that which the Greek historians assign to his father. “The king who scourged and fettered the sea, who beheaded his engineers because the elements destroyed their bridge over the Hellespont, who so ruthlessly slew the eldest son of Pythius because his father besought him to leave him as the sole support of his declining years, who dishonored the remains of the valiant Leonidas, and who beguiled the shame of his defeat by such a course of sensuality that he publicly offered a reward for the invention of a new pleasure,—is just the despot to divorce his queen because she would not expose herself to the gaze of drunken revellers,—is just the despot to devote a whole people, his subjects, to indiscriminate massacre ; and by way of preventing the evil, to restore them the right of self-defence, and thus to sanction their slaughtering thousands of his other subjects.”*

The history opens with the account of a magnificent feast which the king gave, in the third year of his reign, to the princes and nobles of all parts of his empire, which lasted a hundred and eighty days,—followed by one of seven days, to all the people of the metropolis, held in the court of the palace-garden. The description of this feast, which is given fully, corresponds to the statements of ancient Persian luxury and magnificence which the Greek authors have sent down to us, and which they state to have been remarkably evinced in their banquets. Their sumptuousness in this respect, indeed, became proverbial. The vast numbers of persons entertained at their great feasts, as well as the long continuance of these feasts, are all points noticed by ancient writers. The Persian kings are recorded to have often feasted as many as five thousand men at once, each time at the expense of two hundred talents. On the march to Greece, those

* AHASUERUS, in the *Cyclopædia of Biblical Literature*.

required to provide for the king and his table companions were ruined, though they tarried but a night ; and this not more from the number to be entertained than from their luxurious and extravagant habits ; and this gave occasion to the sarcasm of Megacreon of Abdera, who called upon the people to bless the gods that it was not the custom of king Xerxes to take two meals in one day ; for, had they been called upon to provide dinner as well as supper, they must either have fled at his approach, or have remained to be utterly ruined.*

The duration of this feast is, however, very extraordinary. It was a half-year, as the Persian year consisted of 360 days. There are few examples of any festivals of such long duration. The apocryphal book of Judith records, that Nabuchodonosor the Assyrian, after his victory over Arphaxad, banqueted all his army, comprising a multitude of men out of various nations, a hundred and twenty days at Nineveh. The most remarkable parallel instance of protracted and abundant feasting is that of a Gaul named Ariamnes, who undertook to feast all the Gaulish nation for an entire year. And he performed his promise ; for he caused tents, each capable of containing 300 men, to be pitched at regular distances on all the principal roads, keeping in each of them boilers furnished with all kinds of meat in abundance, as well as vessels full of wine, and a great number of attendants to wait upon the guests and supply all their wants.† The occasion of Ahasuerus's great feast is not known. Some think that it was to commemorate the dedication of Susa as one of the royal capitals. Those who identify the king with Xerxes, suppose that we have here the festivity in which the king sought, after his return, to drown in himself and others the keen sense of his disgrace. Perhaps the fact, that the feast was held in the third year of the king's reign, may receive an illustration from the custom of China, where the three years' mourning

* *Herodotus*, vii. 119, 120.

† See Athenaus (iv. 13), whose book (*Deipnosophis*) is the great store-house for facts relating to ancient festivity and good cheer.

for the deceased king precludes any public festivity, but on the expiry of which the reigning monarch holds a great and sumptuous festival to celebrate his inauguration.

Some may be surprised to read of *queens*,—first Vashti and then Esther, in the court of Persia. But this is in conformity with ancient history, from which we learn that the king had many wives, one of whom was chosen by him to fill the rank of queen, to whom all the others rendered the profoundest respect, amounting to something very like adoration, as to their mistress, and whose rank was, like that of the king, indicated by a purple band, rayed with white, around the head. This was the usage also in some near countries; for we read that Monimia, the wife of Mithridates, was strangled with her own diadem.

One cannot but sympathize with poor queen Vashti, in her refusal to appear before the drunken king and his jovial com-potators, especially when we consider the gross indecorum, according to eastern notions, of a lady being, under any circumstances, constrained to appear before strangers. Great, however, as must have been her astonishment and indignation at such a demand, it could scarcely equal that which her refusal to obey, even to the most unreasonable extent, the summons of the king of kings must have inspired. That any one should dare to say nay to him—whose will was, in the strongest sense, law to all about him—was a thing of which it would have seemed treasonable to an ancient Persian even to dream; and here the refusal was sent back to the king in the presence of all the high lords of his realm. We have no doubt that this unheard of and terrible audacity sobered them all most completely. We do not ourselves wonder, that when the king's high council, his "wise men," came to consider the matter, they decided that Vashti must have her diadem taken from her. They saw, also, that the question was one of near interest to themselves; for if it went abroad, as it was sure to do, that the queen had flatly refused to obey even the king of kings, what had they and the other princes of the land to expect in their own families from the

example, if this high crime were not condignly punished? But one is amazed at the infantine simplicity of these famous sages, in recommending the issue of a royal decree, in all the languages of this great empire—"that every man should bear rule in his own house!" This is undoubtedly one of the most amusing things in all history. One cannot but imagine the inextinguishable burst of shrill merriment which rung through every one of "the hundred and twenty-seven" provinces of the Persian empire when this sage decree was promulgated.

All these strange matters did, however, but pave the way, in the mysteries of the Divine providence, for the advancement of a Jewish orphan maiden to a post which qualified her to be of high service to her people in a time of great peril. Her name was Hadassah (myrtle), or Esther,—and she was worthy of that name—for it is recorded of her, that she was not only perfect in beauty, but that "she found favor in the eyes of all those that looked upon her;" and it is beautifully noted, that, when in the harem of the great king, she still forgot not the guide of her youth—her uncle and adopted father—"For Esther did the commandment of Mordecai like as when she was brought up with him." She had been a good while in the harem before the purple circlet was placed on her fair brow; and it is affecting to read that her uncle, who might see her face no more after she had entered there, walked daily to and fro before the court of the harem, "to know how Esther did, and what would become of her." This he could do through the eunuchs who went in and out, and by whom also messages and kind inquiries could and did pass between them. Yet it was not known that Esther was of Jewish parentage, as her uncle had, for some reason or other, desired her not to disclose the fact. This was no doubt peculiarly providential, as it prevented Haman from being so much on his guard in his plot to destroy the Jews, as he would have been, had he been aware of the queen's connection with that people.

FIFTY-SECOND WEEK—SATURDAY.

PROVIDENCE.—ESTHER III.—X.

THE great man of the day in the Persian court was Haman, belonging to that nation—the Amalekites—the hereditary grudge and hatred between whom and the Jews the reader will remember. We rather point to this circumstance, because it seems to us to supply the true explanation of the most important circumstances in the history. Thus, many explanations have been sought of Mordecai's reasons for refusing to this mighty lord the obeisance which others rendered, as he stalked forth from the presence of the king, and which was doubtless considered by all as due to his high station. That Haman was an Amalekite, seems to us a sufficient explanation. That a rigid and somewhat stiff-backed Jew should refuse the marks of reverent homage to one of that doomed and abominated race, is in the highest degree natural and probable. And, on the other hand, the same fact, if it does not adequately account for, relieves from absolute insanity the determination of Haman to exterminate the whole nation for the affront of one individual. Had Mordecai been any other than a Jew, the favorite would doubtless have been content to wreak his vengeance upon the man whose quiet scorn provoked him so greatly; but to learn that this man belonged to the very nation which had vowed the extermination of Amalek, opened a wider scope to his vengeance. He could not but call to mind the wondrous passages of the ancient hatred between them, and which even the present demeanor of Mordecai showed to be inextinguishable; and he would then remember, that this hated and hating nation was, as it seemed, completely under his hand—being dispersed, as captives and tributary subjects, through the realm in which he had all but absolute rule. It is, under this view, explicable that the bold and murderous idea—which appeared to him a grand one, no doubt,—should

occur to him, of destroying the whole of this nation in one day. To attribute this determination *merely* to the personal slight from Mordecai, overlooking all these considerations, seems little less than puerile. It was simply the occasion, the exciting cause, the key that opened the gates to a sweeping flood of old hatreds and vengeance.

Haman had only to obtain the king's consent; and the light and careless way in which the monarch placed at his disposal the lives of tens of thousands of his industrious and useful subjects, is perhaps the most shocking example of even oriental despotism on record. If he had not been wilfully blind and besotted—and he was probably drunk—the extravagant sum which Haman offered to pay in compensation for the loss to the royal revenue by their destruction, ought to have awakened his suspicion that Haman was not, as he pretended, seeking the public good, but the gratification of a private vengeance. If it was “not for the king's good” to suffer this people to live, it were preposterous that the minister should pay so heavily from his own purse for the realization of a public benefit. But the truth no doubt is, that the king cared nothing about it; and even when at length he is brought to see Haman's real motives, which were transparent at the first, and he turns upon his scarcely more guilty favorite in a passion of “virtuous” indignation, his wrath is not roused by his having been so nearly led into the perpetration of a tremendous crime, but that Haman should have dared to contemplate the destruction of a race *to which the queen belonged*, and in whose doom she would, by the letter of the decree, have been involved.

The plot seemed perfect. Everything had been well considered and well devised. Swift messengers had been sent to all the provinces, directing the slaughter of all the Jews on a given day, and even the selection of an auspicious day by lot had not been overlooked. What was wanting? Nothing that human calculation could have provided. Yet when the Lord blew upon this grand contrivance, it became as the desert sand before the wind, and overwhelmed the

contriver. Even in the choice of the day by lot, we can trace the movings of the Lord's hand, for the frustration of the design. The Persians have always been greatly addicted to the arts of divination; and even at the present day, all important movements of the court are regulated with regard to astrological calculations, and propitious and inauspicious days. In this case the lot was chosen, and it seems they cast the lot for one month after another to determine in what month the execution should fall, and then for day after day, to fix the day of the determined month. Now we doubt not that it was the Lord's doing, for the confusion of Haman, and to accomplish the secret designs of His providence, that the lot was made to fix the time to the remotest possible period to be within the year, so that the execution was delayed for almost a complete year, affording time not only for the subversion of the plot at court, but for the arrival of the messengers who were despatched with the counteracting decree. It is manifest that, if the interval had been anything shorter, these messengers could not have reached the remoter provinces of an empire which stretched from India to Ethiopia, in time to neutralize the execution of the first decree. It was most probably the perception of this which induced the Jews, in their annual festival in commemoration of their deliverance from national extinction, to give so much prominence to this casting of lots—for they called it the Feast of Purim—that is, the Feast of Lots. To the instructed eye, the determination of the lot is thus seen in a double sense, where to Haman only one sense appeared.

Some reflection has been cast upon the Book of Esther, on the ground that the name of God does not once occur in it. That is true: and it is a remarkable fact. But God HIMSELF is there, though his NAME be absent. We trace him at every step through this wonderful book, and everywhere behold the leadings of his providence. To name one instance among many,—What was it, or rather, Who was it, that kept the king's eyes from slumber, on a night big with the doom of the Hebrew nation? Who moved him to call for the chron-

icles of his reign, and not to summon the tale-reciter or the minstrel to beguile his waking hours? Who moved the reader to open at that part which related to the service of Mordecai in disclosing a plot against the king's life? Who quickened the king's languid attention and interest, and stirred him to inquire what rewards had been bestowed upon the man to whose fidelity he owed his life and crown? Who timed this so, that this glow of kindly feeling towards Mordecai, and this determination right royally to acknowledge his unrequited services, occurred at the very moment that Haman had arrived at the palace to ask leave to hang this very Mordecai upon a gallows fifty cubits high, which he had caused already to be set up, in the assured conviction that the king would not refuse him so trifling a request, and little thinking that he himself was destined to swing high in air upon it? Lastly, Who ordered it so, that, coming with this errand in his mouth, he was only stopped from uttering it, by an order to hasten to confer upon this Mordecai, with his own hands, the highest distinctions the king could bestow upon the man he "delighted to honor." God not in the Book of Esther! If not there, where is He? To our view, his glory—the glory of his goodness, in caring for, and shielding from harm, his afflicted church, shines through every page.

THE END.

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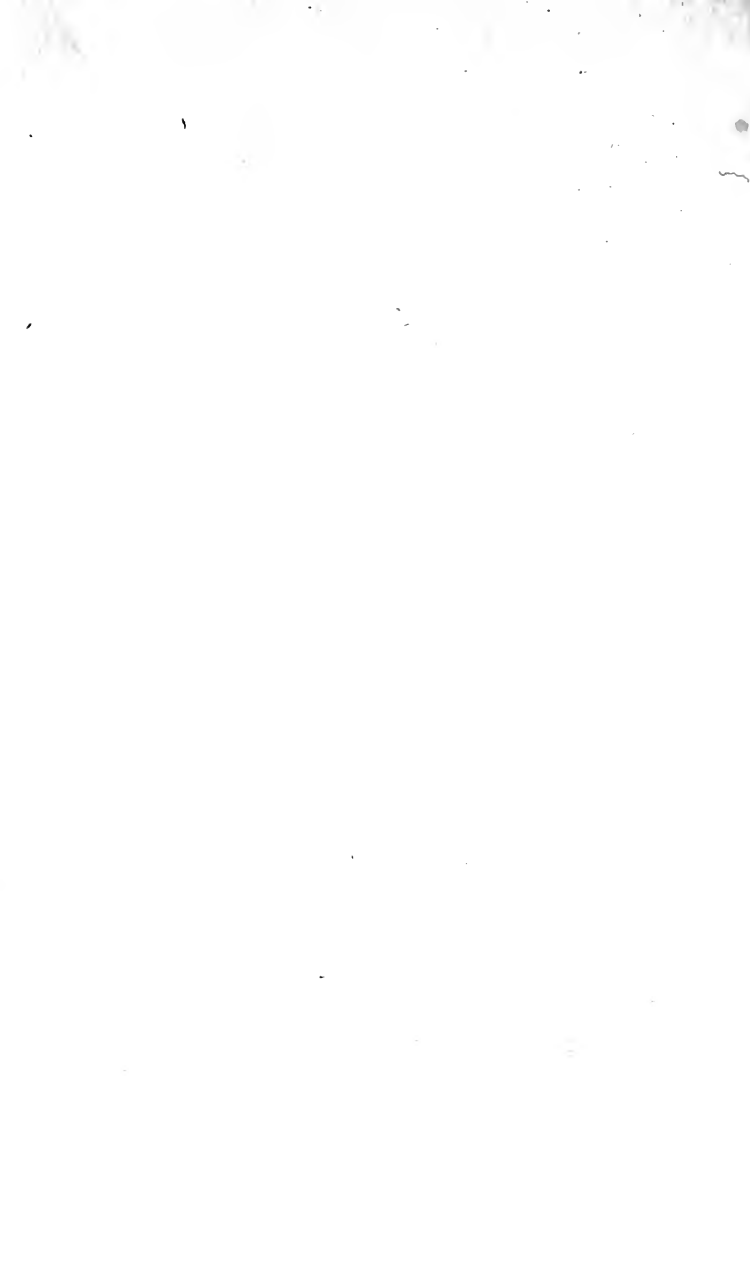
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