

THE
LAW OF SINAI,
AND
ITS APPOINTED TIMES.

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תורת ה' תמימה

THE LAW OF THE ETERNAL IS PERFECT

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PREFACE.

To my Christian fellow-countrymen I would say—The English are a business people. While they devote their genius and their energy to the elaboration of practical science, they give little attention to abstract truths. They rather leave these to the few whose peculiar profession it is to deal with them. Thus, religion and its necessary adjunct, Biblical research, are, for the most part, taken for granted as they are expounded by the representatives of the Church. In this way Judaism has come to be entirely misunderstood. It has been so universally described as a thing of obsolete forms and customs—as incompatible with progress—as the associate of a low standard of morality—as the obstacle preventing the approach to heaven rather than the ladder reaching thither—that the world has grown to believe what few have taken the trouble to contradict, and still fewer to deem inconsistent with a dispensation acknowledged as divine.

The Bible, which might serve as a guide, has been so spiritualized, that even they who read it scarcely allow their judgment to interfere with interpretations which they have been accustomed to regard as authoritative. It has been so mistranslated, that even they who desire to judge are prevented by want of proper materials. A correct version of Scripture might do much—the study of

Hebrew would do more ; but the former would perhaps be antagonistic to the existing interests of an influential clergy—the latter is certainly not to be expected of a people whose whole intent is confined to what is useful and practical.

Meanwhile, Jews are silent ; and, because they have not cared to remove erroneous impressions, it is believed that they cannot. I have written this book in the endeavour to prove the contrary.

Meanwhile, Peers and Prelates, Commoners and Clergymen, have been permitted, without reproof, to utter as facts monstrosities which should have been scorned and repudiated, as red tape has been scorned and repudiated, because it has confined some of the best strength of the country till it has become paralyzed—because it has tied genius to the chariot-wheels of routine, and led captive what should have triumphed as a conqueror.

England has a mission before the world. She is destined to send forth her sons as the pioneers of knowledge and truth ; but, to do this, she must herself cultivate knowledge and truth, especially in their most elevated field—the Scripture. Hitherto she has done this only on erroneous principles.

Englishmen are slow to recognize their faults ; but they are sure to correct them when they have been recognized. This book has been written in the earnest hope that some faults may be pointed out and acknowledged ; and in the belief that a better understanding between Jew and Christian, will contribute to a better understanding between the various sects of Christianity itself, by demonstrating the possibility that all may be right who honestly conform to the first principles of Revelation—by shewing that true charity admits of no qualification.

To my Jewish readers I would say—The English Jews partake of all the qualities of Englishmen. Thus, they have become Utilitarian.

While the Jewish character has perhaps benefited by this assimilation, the Jewish religion has, to some extent, suffered. All the treasures of Judaism are buried in books written in Hebrew; and because Hebrew, as a language, has little to recommend it to the Utilitarian, the study of it is neglected. Thus, diamonds which should glitter in the sun, lie obscure in the darkness. The strata which contain the precious gems exist, but no industry has striven to penetrate to their depth.

From the days of Abraham, Tradition has been a marked feature of Judaism. Through its means have been preserved many of the ties which bind Judaism to the past; through its means, also, have been rejected many of the links which might attach Judaism to the present, and fasten it to the future; for Tradition deals with the visible, not with the invisible—that is, it retains ceremonies and neglects truths. It retains ceremonies because they become the habit of life, degenerating as they do so; it neglects truths, because, being only abstract, they require reason as well as memory to assist in their preservation. Reason has so often proved to be rationalism, that orthodoxy excludes it from the pale, preferring blind submission to voluntary obedience. Memory has so often proved treacherous, that Tradition, trusting to it alone, has become unworthy of confidence. Thus, religion has suffered. Simple belief has excluded reason, and has not unfrequently essayed to coerce intellect with the restraint of instinct. Philosophic belief has excluded Tradition, and, beginning by abandoning respect for the past, has ended by denying even Revelation.

Thus the eternal Law of Sinai has become to the multitude little better than a dry history of facts, or a categorical recital of statutes—some existent, some obsolete ; the Appointed Times of the Eternal have grown to have no higher significance than that which is derived from their observances.

My object has been to meet these evils. It is the spirit of the Law, as contained in the Law, which is eternal. I have endeavoured to evoke that spirit from the shroud in which it has lain entranced. The Appointed Times of the Eternal sanctify their forms, and are not sanctified by them. I have endeavoured to make this clear, by associating reason with Tradition, and by elevating the thought which grows of faith above the act which comes of duty.

If I have succeeded, I shall awaken a desire for the study of Judaism, and of the Hebrew language, for I shall have shown that they may be beneficial even to the Utilitarian, by providing a heavenly origin for his morality, a divine warrant for his civilisation.

Failing in this design, I may achieve one scarcely less useful. In the absence of a loved friend we cling to a faithful portrait, finding memory and hope sustained by the contemplation. If I cannot induce communion with the original, I may at least hope to hold the portrait up to view. By the light of reason I have taken a photograph of the religion promised through Abraham, and given through Moses. True, I have used only lenses of my own construction. True, I have coloured my picture with hues drawn only from my own impressions, and I may therefore have distorted some traits ; but I have laboured so earnestly, that I believe my likeness to be honestly produced, and true. I trust that orthodoxy will

not deny the resemblance ; I doubt if latitudinarianism can refuse to recognize its correctness. Thus, if I have not resuscitated the past, I may vivify the future ; for if, through my instrumentality, principles shall be made to transcend practices without superseding them ; if faith and reason shall be found consentaneous ; if progress shall be based on the permanent truths of revelation, instead of on the evanescent caprices of society ; if the actions of God-service shall be assimilated with its preaching, and love indeed be as really universal as it is professedly so in doctrine—I shall be more than rewarded in the knowledge that I have fulfilled my vocation as a Jew, by aiding in the diffusion of a blessing among all the families of the earth.

For the information of non-Jewish readers, it is necessary to state, that the articles composing this book are adapted to the divisions of the Pentateuch, read weekly, on the Sabbath, in the Synagogue.

THE LAW OF SINAI, &c.

בראשית

GENESIS: CHAPTER I.

THE history of our first parents is the history of all their descendants. *They* first entered into the battle of life, and since their days the contest has continued without cessation. Now, it has raged with fierceness, like some struggle between phalanx and legion; now, it has subsided into sullen horror, like some midnight massacre of civilisation by barbarism; but the fight has gone on through thousands of years, and still the combatants are ranged in opposing columns, nor will victory declare itself till one side be utterly exterminated.

The God of battles himself decreed *this* battle when he animated the perishable "dust of the earth" with the spirit of immortality. He thus placed in antagonism the evanescent and the eternal, the impulses of nature and the restraints of conscience, passion and principle, evil and good. Since then, religion, philosophy, rationalism and infidelity have done their best to complicate the difficulties of the struggle; but, effectually no change has occurred, because man cannot supersede Providence.

Why this battle should have been ordered is the question which has most agitated mankind. Wherefore

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humanity should have been so constituted that its elements naturally militate against each other, has been the lasting problem of the world. But this is one result of the struggle itself—blind judgment against prescient wisdom. The pages of revelation solve the proposition.

It has been said, that man is born in sin, and that but for a vicarious atonement the millions of earth had been created to everlasting perdition. It has been said, that the all-perfect Eternal delegated to frail mortals the right to pardon and to anathematize. It has been said, that belief is the privilege of power; hence the sword and the stake have claimed their victims, and in the name of that Being designated the God of mercy, mercy has been all but annihilated. It has been said, that nature is self-existent, that right and wrong have no higher source than man himself, that here is the end of life, for that there is no hereafter; but the words of the Divinity proclaim the worthlessness of these and all other human interpretations, and light us to that knowledge which alone can lead to the victory that shall terminate the battle.

“We will make man in our image,” was the behest which called man into existence. “And he shall have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the fowl of the heaven, and over the beasts, and over all the earth,” was the fiat which declared him the lord of creation, thus pronounced to be for his service.

The image of God is eternity; the spirit of creation is love. Man, then, must have been designed eternal, love must have been the predominant principle not only of his being but of that of all things. Let us harmonise this with the words of Holy Writ.

There is nothing in the organization of man which needs to be terminable. We are so accustomed to see helpless infancy progress to vigorous maturity, degenerate to worn out old age, and then subside in death, that we do not pause to reflect if this be inherent or acquired.

And yet in what does the constitution of man differ from that which renders nature permanent? Grant gravitation, inertia, and a projectile force, and the orbs of heaven roll through countless ages; eternal motion in infinite space. Grant a supply of food as the material for animal combustion, and a supply of oxygen as the medium in which that combustion may be carried on, and animal life becomes as endless as "summer and winter, heat and cold," which cease not.

The spirit of creation is love. What but love, infinite as the wisdom which summoned the harmony of the universe from the confusion of chaos, could have impressed on matter that reproductiveness which perpetuates without the necessity for a new creation. In every thing was "its seed within itself." In every thing was displayed the boundless care of boundless love for the preservation of that seed, so that the embryo might become endowed with the necessary vitality. In vegetables and in the inferior animals, nature and instinct stand for this spirit of love. In vegetables the husk, the bulb, the fleshy fruit, the horny flower cup, are its demonstrations. In animals it is seen in the lair of the carnivora, the nests of birds, the migrations of fish. Man develops it in obedience to the divine command which enjoins marriage, but as he is superior to all other productions, so his development is higher and more conformable to the reason which constitutes his supremacy.

The spirit of creation is love. We trace it in the mutual support which animals and vegetables give to each other; in the adaptation of things to the localities in which they are placed; in the universality of man destined to rule all; in the agencies constantly at work to maintain the equilibrium between the inanimate and the animate, to promote intercommunication, through necessity, between the inhabitants of the most distant climes. But, above all, we trace it in the double nature

given to humanity, whereby mankind may merit what it aspires to earn.

If man had been created perfection, error would have been impossible to him ; virtue would have been entitled to no reward, because it would have been inherent ; there would have been no necessity for any state beyond the one existence, because all that creation demanded would have been fulfilled in its perfection. If man had been made with a preponderant tendency to evil, cruelty, and not love, would have condemned him to an endless and fruitless wrestle with himself, and would have judged him because he had not succeeded where success was impossible. If he had been born in sin, and if to it had been given dominion over him, reason, which should bless by its power to raise, would curse by its subservience to what it abhorred. For the function of reason admits of no cavil. It is that portion of the divine within us which renders man improvable by comparison and combination ; it enables him to discriminate between that which conduces to the general weal and that which promotes the common woe, and thus it permits him to appreciate good and evil. To give man this guide, to teach him that his happiness depended on a course which this guide approved, and which it would willingly pursue, but from which it was debarred by an irresistible influence, might be the characteristic of some Indian Mahadeva, or some Roman Até ; impiety only could apply it to the Eternal, God, long suffering, abundant of kindness and truth.

Man, then, was not called into existence with any bias, except such as love gave. And, truly, there was the sublimity of eternal love in the idea of creating a being endowed with a double nature so nicely balanced, that the portion which was all perishable could never become utterly corrupt, because the portion which was all heavenly could never entirely lose its purity. To give to this

being, volition, to choose its own career, and thus to secure the merit of its actions; conscience, to judge those actions, and thus to be capable of working out its own happiness; was only consistent with that love. There remains only to investigate how this scheme failed.

Causes produce effects. Love in the Divinity was to produce gratitude in man. God was to rule through love; man was to obey through gratitude. Conformable with man's double nature—the immaterial and the material—his gratitude was to have a double development; his religion, which was to be all soul, his actions, which were to be all bodily. The type of his spirituality was the knowledge of God and of his will; the type of his corporeality was obedience to the behest which prohibited the eating of the tree of good and evil. This knowledge of God was to be limited by Divine will; * to be satisfied with this restraint was to be happy, to strive to break it was to be sin. Man, yielding to the ignoble pleadings of appetite, ate of the forbidden fruit, and thus exhibited his desire for a knowledge which had been declared inconsistent with its being—a knowledge of those inherent consequences of good and evil which had been impressed as mysterious laws on creation. But the Eternal had said: "On the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely become mortal," and man, who had braved this penalty, was now to learn the result of his wantonness. The fruit, he found did not confer what he had coveted, but the lightning of reason showed him the crooked way he had chosen, and the thunder of conscience condemned him to fear. He hid himself. Then came to his cowering shame the sentence of his disobedience—not the punishment, but

* No stronger proof of this can be given than the answer made by the Eternal to Moses, when he asked for that knowledge which, by the Divine will, was to be only divine: "No man can see my face and live;" not to mention the assertion—"Your thoughts are not my thoughts."

the inevitable consequences of his allowing mortal corruption to prevail in his being. Woman, the original instigator of the wrong, was to become secondary to man. Having been the means of giving death to the world, she was to provide for the continuation of her race as the mother of future generations, and in her maternity she was to find alike her danger and her dependence. Man, because he had yielded to be led where he should have sought to guide, was thereafter to assume his legitimate position. Lord of created things, by bringing corruption to himself he had brought it to all below him : "The earth is cursed on thy account." Having been the slave to his desires, he was thereafter to find in labour his servitude and his mastery.

But the image of God is eternity, the spirit of creation is love. Man had voluntarily deprived himself of his participation in those Divine principles ; it remained with the All Merciful that they should not, therefore, cease from earth. Then came the great law of compensation, which preserved man to eternity and love to creation. Sin had doomed nature to decay, life to mortality ; existence thus became incomplete. Desire had introduced toil and sorrow ; happiness thus became jeopardised. The body was to pay the penalty of these evils ; the soul was to remain immortal. Through the awe of death the spirit was to pass, but beyond that dread visitation beamed an eternal future. Thus, being was rendered perfect, and eternity was preserved to the world. Woman was to risk her life to perpetuate her race, man was to spend his days in labour ; but woman was to become a mother in obedience to her love, and in her maternity she was to find the solace for the danger she had passed, and the affection which rendered her happy even in trouble ; man was to learn that in labour consisted his best safeguard against future temptations, and that through it alone could he procure the activity necessary to his well-

being. Thus the dependence of woman and the labour of man were hallowed by the spirit of love.

Sin had come into creation. Constant enmity had been pronounced between it and society : "He shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Antagonism had been instituted between the body, which had become corrupt and perishable, and the soul, which was to remain capable of perfection and immortality. The design of creation, human happiness, was compromised by this battle of life, thus voluntarily engaged in by man. Moreover, as man had fallen from good to evil, and as in the struggle between his contending natures (it is so in all struggles) bad passions were to be excited, and therefore further evil was to ensue, it became necessary that Divine wisdom should provide means for regeneration. Again the spirit of love spoke through the mouth of the Eternal. On Adam and Eve was bestowed one compensation, to Cain was imparted another. He had taken away a life ; unconsciously, but still wickedly, because he had yielded to the influence of evil thoughts. When the stern voice of God announced to him the magnitude of his crime, and the consequences which conscience would entail : "A fugitive and a wanderer wilt thou be on the earth ;" he trembled before the terrible future he had evoked, and in the bitterness of his prostration he exclaimed—"My iniquity is greater than I can bear." Then said Mercy : "Atonement lieth at the door ; and to thee is its desire ; and through it thou shalt rule." And when the guilty one, thus told that the road to heaven still lay open before him, was awakened to the new fear that some act of violence similar to his own might prevent his treading that road through the gates of repentance : "But it may come to pass that any one meeting me may slay me ;" God gave him "an assurance" of safety, and so confirmed the fiat that expiation is the antidote for vice.*

* That it proved so in the case of Cain may be inferred from the

Since that time, the dawn of the world, human life has resembled an April day. Now sunshine, now shower ; now the bright light of spring, now the sombre darkness of winter ; but amid all, the glorious daystar remained resplendent, although temporarily obscured, and the coming summer loomed in the future as the realisation of hope. Since that time the battle of life has continued without intermission. Now virtue has prevailed ; now vice has ruled ; now men have yielded to the Divine influence of spirit ; now they have succumbed before the debasing control of matter ; but around all, atonement shone the great mediator, and still before us glittered the prospect of human regeneration and human happiness, as essential to the merciful design of creation.

Since that time, self love, which, in mortal minds, usurps the place of genuine love, has invented a thousand excuses for excesses in the cause of zeal, for short-comings in the path of duty ; but ever the character of man, in the aggregate, has continued the same. Power has abused its privileges, crime has used its opportunities ; philanthropy has ministered, on the one hand, to the satisfaction of conscience, on the other hand, to the gratification of vanity ; religion in its purity, has taught the highest virtue, in its impurity, has inculcated the lowest vice ; it has preached charity and practised atrocities ; it has spoken peace and has acted war. Progress has been made to mean the advancement of the mass, and the advantage of the individual ; merit has either led the van or it has ceded its place to nepotism ; public service has been confided to the worthy or it has been abandoned to favoritism, it has been wielded for the emergencies of the times or it has rusted in the fetters of

zeal with which he, and, through him, his descendants, cultivated the industrial pursuits ordained by Providence as the result of sin, and its preventive ; for to this zeal we owe our first knowledge of cattle, of music, of metals.

routine. Confidence in heavenly mercy has led martyrs to the grave and has consecrated them in it; confidence in mortal resources has conducted criminals to the abysses of sin, and has there deserted them. Good has risen to the very type of the Godhead; evil has descended to the depths of perdition; but, amid all, no man has been found pure, no man has been found so corrupt that atonement has not, at the last, proved his redeemer.

Since that time, man's cunning has devised a thousand means for deceiving himself or others, and in every way men seem to have exerted themselves to render void the decrees of Providence founded on its own inalienable laws. But ever the great principles deducible from the history before us have remained permanent. In appearing to shape their individual courses men have only contributed to one harmonized whole. Right has always prevailed even though wrong may have been supported by prejudice and maintained by power. Volition, while most unrestrained, is most subservient to a superior, though unseen, will; responsibility strives in vain to shake off its yoke because it is obedient to judgment beyond its control. And, above all, no human efforts have been able to banish from earth the compensation (through a future state) given for death, or that given for labour through atonement and regeneration; for the image of God is eternity, the spirit of creation is love.

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GENESIS: CHAPTER VI., VERSE 9.

HOLY WRIT, so faithful in its recitals, conveys to us but too soon the sad truth that the design of creation—human happiness through virtue—had all but failed. In conformity with the principle of volition, the Eternal had not actively interfered to guide mankind. He had permitted Adam to plunge into disobedience and mortality,

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and had completed the existence thus rendered imperfect in this world, by the addition of a future state. He had allowed Cain to descend to the abyss of murder, and had provided repentance as the means to regeneration. But in all else God had been passive. Man's merits and demerits were to be his own. Divine mercy did what was consistent with free will when it lent the weight of its wisdom and its power to man's teaching, and free-will would have found its highest dignity in obedience; but our first parents, in introducing corruption into the earth, had generated a love for self and self-indulgence, which degraded man to be rather the slave to his body than its master. Instead of looking to the spiritual, mankind regarded the corporeal, and in so doing they ignored the invisible instructions of heaven in favour of the tangible instructions of example and experience. Compared to the people of after ages, the immediate descendants of Adam were but infants in all that respects the store of past wisdom for future benefit. History had done nothing for them, misfortune had done nothing. Few in number, inhabiting a tract of land whose vegetation was naturally luxuriant, under a climate which was all genial, they were exposed to no vicissitudes of fortune, they had little to study but enjoyment. Society had not yet entered on to those complications which rendered diplomacy or war politic. People were simply pastoral and agricultural. In the many hours of leisure which the abundance of fresh nature enabled them to take, their minds, unemployed in intellectual pursuits, wandered in search of pleasures befitting their bodily idleness. Only two models for their guidance were before them; the long past revelation of creation, every year becoming more shadowy in the distance; the present avocations of unemployed faculties, every year less disposed to any exertion but that which was self-rewarding through the joy it brought. As generation succeeded generation, the obedience enjoined

on Adam, the repentance which comforted Cain, became faint memories. It is doubtful if they were understood ; it is certain that they were not appreciated. By the gradation which has always since been observed in parallel cases, pleasure unrestrained grew to be licentiousness, and this expanded to be crime. Even the industrial pursuits of Cain and his posterity seem to have been lost in the fusion which took place between the two races, or to have been only the means to produce bloodshed, as selfishness strove to extort from wealth what it had not the skill or desire to earn. In the emphatic words of the Bible : "The earth was full of violence ;" and to such an extent that "God repented that he had made man."

Mercy could do no more ; it could not silently permit its indulgence to be further outraged, still less could it permit the spirit of love to be annihilated from creation. At once to destroy the world was to sweep away the design of Providence ; to allow volition to sink into unfathomable corruption, was equally to vitiate the object of the Creator. A proceeding was necessary, either to arrest men in their career of guilt and restore them to the road to virtue, or to cut them off in their obstinacy if they persisted in sin. This proceeding was rendered of easy accomplishment, by the fact that there existed one family among the children of earth in which the seeds of virtue were not extinct. Where all others had steeped themselves so deeply in crime, the wonder is not that this family was not better, but that it was so nearly good. "Noah, a righteous man, was perfect in his generation." It was thus possible at one blow to reward and to punish. Therefore said God to Noah : "Make thee an ark." But vainly rose the gigantic fabric for the warning of corruption. Men asked not, or, if they asked, they heeded not the object of the stupendous erection. Devoted to their rapine, their cruelty, their voluptuousness, they had not a moment to spare for reflection ;

heaven might have come to earth, and they would not have paused ; nothing could stay them but the arresting hand of death.

And death came in the form of a terrible vengeance. Eight human beings, obedient to the behest of mercy, pairs of inferior animals, obedient to the guidance of their Maker, betook themselves to the ark, and " God shut them in." Then the fertilising rains of heaven poured down in destroying torrents, the life-giving fountains of earth welled up in overwhelming floods. Forty days and forty nights the mighty waters swelled into a boundless field of desolation, and alone in creation floated the solitary few, protected by divine care. Vainly the terrified herd sought for shelter ; vainly some fled to mountain tops, and some to cavern depths ; vainly some yelled imprecations, some shrieked prayers ; on, on, came the foaming billows with resistless fury, till the great globe became one vast sphere of fluid waste, and the orbs of space shone on no living object.

" And God remembered Noah and that which was with him in the ark," and again nature resumed her functions. Earth began to absorb, heat to evaporate ; the sea receded to its basin, the atmosphere imbibed an ocean of moisture. By slow, but sure degrees, the superfluity of waters disappeared from the world, and the olive branch—for vegetation had been miraculously preserved beneath the deluge—told Noah that land was again ready to receive its occupants. Once more existence teemed in its proper home, and gratitude hastened to pour itself out in sacrifices to the God that had rescued it from death. " And the Eternal smelled the sweet savour"—the sincerity of a pious heart ; and although prescience was enabled to foresee that the awful warning of the flood would scarcely conduce to human amelioration, mercy swore never again to inflict a like visitation, or to destroy the earth in any other way. It is the more necessary to

bear this promise in mind, because on its fulfilment depended the future spiritual history of man.

Tradition here steps in to aid revelation. To Adam and the infancy of society obedience and atonement only had been given. These had failed of their effect. Meanwhile, experience had raised society to a state of maturity, capable of receiving and adopting a more extensive legislation. On Noah and his sons, therefore, were bestowed the seven Noachide precepts, which are still regarded as the fundamental principles of all morality and religion. These precepts were in themselves sufficient to lead man to virtue and happiness. Their adoption was due alike to the memory of the terrible catastrophe which had just cut off past wickedness, and to the confidence which divine wisdom and mercy should have inspired. But the battle of life had ceased only while there was no field on which to fight. No sooner were men restored to earth than they returned to pleasure, and the contest between the eternal image in man and his corporeal tendencies was renewed in all its vigour. Through creation the spirit of love breathed, in men the spirit of self-love acted. Noah gave himself to sensuality; Ham became the Cain of the new world. In the bitterness of his anger the father forgot his own shortcomings to remember the crime of his son. He cursed the guilty one through his descendants; for knowing, from his antediluvian career, the fatal power of evil example, he was enabled to foresee how the doomed race would themselves contribute to accomplish the destiny decreed by his wrath. And so the second era in time began, like the first, in wrong.

When God created the earth he designed it for habitation, not in one locality only, but throughout all its extent. He had placed in its various parts different constituents to human happiness—some animal, some vegetable, some mineral; he had given the ocean as the great highway of intercommunication; he had endowed

man with faculties to achieve intellectual and physical perfectibility; and he had therefore ordained that the means to the end he had proposed should not be wasted. In the exercise of free-will, men, at this period, were blindly conspiring to their own injury. Satisfied with the fertile valley in which they lived, they cared not to ask if earth had not tracts equally delightful and even more eligible. They did not foresee the consequences of human increase, either that they must resort to violence to destroy the too abundant population, or that they must spread as one people till the extremities were too weak, because of their distance from the centre of being. They did not know that nature had other resources, that they had a higher destination. They thought that in fulfilling in its literality the behest—"In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread," they were discharging all the functions of life, except those which contributed to enjoyment. They were content to remain simple agriculturists: invention, science, literature, and the thousand other channels into which mind flows, were all unopened. They were even proud of their sensual torpor, and in their arrogance they aspired to decide their own fate by paralyzing the energies which activity only could call into play. They said: "Come, let us build a tower whose head shall reach to heaven, lest we be scattered over the face of the whole earth." But it was alien to divine mercy, in conformity with the promise to Noah, to suffer mankind thus to perpetuate its own misery, to render impossible its regeneration. An expedient was needed, which might not only preserve men, but which should lead them in the exercise of a spontaneous volition to those treasures of nature and of reason of which at present they were ignorant. Their language was confounded. A multiplicity of tongues, each unintelligible to the other, immediately created a diversity of interests. It was impracticable for people to live together who could hold no

verbal communication with each other. Of their own accord they separated. Some turned eastward, and probably by a tedious journey set between themselves and their fellow men the almost impassable desert of central Asia. Some turned southward, and skirting the great mountain ridges, found themselves in the fertile valleys of the Ganges, and the Indus. Some turned northward, and sought a scanty home in the cheerless wilds of the Caucasus and Russia. Some turned westward. These soon took three directions: some stationed themselves on the eastern edge of the Mediterranean, some penetrated into Africa, and the more adventurous, taking to the water, colonised the southern shores of Europe as the pioneers of civilization. A few remained at the seat of the original dispersion.

But travelling or settling brought no improvement to the one defect. The light of revelation had been extinguished in the stream of voluptuous sloth, and although men were contributing, under the direction of Providence, to fulfil their temporal development, their spiritual elevation was as yet uncared for. Nay, more, in the bodily activity rendered necessary by the new state of society, the mental faculties were so neglected that even the traditions, which memory might have preserved, were clouded or changed till they became the myths of heathenism. Later, when men had conquered the difficulties in the way to bodily happiness, and when mind once more was at leisure to cater for its own gratification, the past afforded no recollections sufficiently lofty to raise reason to heaven. In every clime what men called religion assumed a form modified by external circumstances, or by particular interests. In the luxurious regions of Asia and Africa, sensuality was the prevailing characteristic; in the more temperate valleys of Europe, imagination adorned passion with immortality. Assyria and Egypt covered their grossness with a veil of mystery, or hid it

in the gigantic temples by which the vulgar herd was kept in awe. Greece deified the moral and intellectual faculties, and thus elevated them above earth, but it also endowed its gods with the appetites and weaknesses of men, and thus degraded them to the level of their worshippers. Everywhere existed some idea of a superior power; nowhere was the Eternal really known. Thus, virtue, which in its perfection is consistent only with the recognition of God, held a comparative and precarious being, incompatible with the true intention of life—progressive improvement and happiness. Again, therefore, the design of creation was in danger of failure. If criminality was less than it had been before the flood; if the earth was less saturated with violence; men had approached no nearer to the accomplishment of an eternal destiny. But mercy had sworn never again to wreak vengeance on an entire world, and in the fulfilment of that oath it resolved on a third revelation; in this instance, as in the case of Noah, giving to mortal volition and mortal obedience the merit of their singularity.

When the Eternal created light he made it universal. There is no darkness so complete that some principle of light is not within it. In the plain of "Aram between two rivers," the darkness of idolatry prevailed with fearful intensity; in that plain there glimmered one spark of the true illumination. Weak and wavering in uncertainty that spark may have been, but it was there; and as into the dust of the earth the Almighty breathed the spirit of life, and made it the image of God, so the breath of the Omnipotent fanned this faint spark with its vivifying power, and made it the fire of eternal existence.

While other men were bowing beneath the yoke of vile superstition and viler idolatry, Abram, the son of Terah, walked erect with his eyes heavenward. His father and his kindred worshipped images of mortal

fashioning; his fellow-countrymen and his king bent before forms of clay and wood; but their example had no other effect on him than to excite his pity for their weakness, his contempt for their ignorance. His soul yearned for something more sublime; his mind could not stoop to adore things which it felt to be its inferiors. Tradition had given him so little, that it rather opposed than assisted his aspirations; they tended to an upward goal, but whither he knew not. His will was to attain an end worthy the dignity of his being, and it led him in the right direction; he needed but a helping hand more powerful than his own, and more skilled, and all his faculties were ready to obey its impulse. And God, mindful of the love he bore to man, and specially watchful of the integrity of purpose which makes man immortal, lent that helping hand to the anxious wanderer, and guided him to the knowledge for which he thirsted. The ecstasy of the Syracusan when the laws of specific gravity first burst on him in his bath,—the phrenzied delight of the Genoese when to his longing eyes rose the dark outline of a new world,—the sublime joy of Newton when the great volume of nature unrolled itself before his mind, all were as nothing to the luxury of bliss which permeated the soul of Abram in the form of inspiration. He felt himself newly created; new desires, new hopes, grew within him; he panted to prove his devotion to the glorious Being who had vouchsafed him so much mercy; and God, approving the zeal of his chosen one, determined to permit him to exhibit the loftiness of faith to all generations.

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GENESIS: CHAPTER XII.

IN reviewing the life of the first of the patriarchs it must not be forgotten that virtue derives its highest human influence from example. Since the Almighty reads the heart of man, knows the exact strength of its principles, and the just amount of its sacrifices, it might be inferred that he needs no actions to convince him of sincerity of purpose, and, therefore, that mortals make no advance in his favour when they do that which his pre-science detected that they were ready to do. It is the intention which sanctifies the deed, not the deed which ennobles the intention. Doubtless, in so far as concerns the relationship between God and man, nothing is necessary but power on the one side to judge, and volition on the other side to mean. But professions are so easy, and practices so difficult; individuals are so prone to propose to themselves a righteous course till the very moment at which they are called on to act, and then some inconvenience interferes to change their direction; abstract good is sometimes so beautiful in theory, and is only by experience found to be evil; there is, in short, so much difference between the ideal and the real of utility, that nothing but the visible proofs of *sensé* could suffice for those for whose benefit virtue is especially designed. True, God has ordained this virtue, but none the less true that, except in so far as his love grieves over sinfulness because of the fatal consequences which it entails, his majesty and his eternity are not affected thereby. Man alone derives advantages from virtue, because, in obedience to fundamental laws of creation, it leads to combinations which promote his happiness; and, therefore, for man, who can judge only through his senses, are required the means whereby a judgment may be formed. This means is the

example of action, subserving the powerful faculty of imitateness; and mercy, ever so desirous of rendering mortals the instruments of their own amelioration, has required at man's hands visible proofs of devotion, not to satisfy itself, but to convince more fallible beings, more erring perceptions.

The crimes of antediluvian ages are lost beneath the flood which swept them away with their perpetrators and their records. Holy Writ is content to designate the wickedness of that era as "violence"—a bare outline, which imagination only can fill. A new revelation was necessary for the Noachidæ, and it was vouchsafed; but, as has been shown, human pride and human selfishness threw the mantle of worldliness over the beauty of the heavenly gift, and again Divine interposition was needed to interfere between man and his perverse determination to ill. As Noah had been selected because "he was perfect in his generation," so Abram was chosen because of his superiority above his age. It mattered not in what Noah was better than his fellow-creatures, for virtues and vices were alike to perish beneath the avenging waters. Future times were to know nothing but the one prominent fact of the deluge. It might even be assumed that Noah was saved less because of his positive merits than because of his relative morality as compared with that of others; it mattered little to the after progress of good when the materials on which judgment could build a conclusion were to be utterly destroyed. In the case of Abram these considerations did not prevail. God had pronounced in favour of the perpetuity of the earth; already men had begun to accumulate, in engraved figures or hieroglyphics, lasting memorials of the past; the still more permanent characters of language were soon to supervene. Mankind was thus preparing to rear with the materials of history a tower which was really to reach to heaven, and, this time, heaven approved, for it recognised in the

new erection the beacon which was to guide by the good it illuminated, to warn by the bad on which it shed the light of truth. The Eternal, also, through Abram, was lending his hand to consolidate the foundation of this edifice. That future labourers might be zealous in the great work, it was necessary that they believe in the worth of him so specially selected by Providence, otherwise they might repudiate their task because of their dislike of favouritism. For, when God gave man the power of reasoning, he did not except even himself and his actions from its operation. Hence was it that the career of Abram was made to stand in bold relief; that his earnest faith was permitted to develop itself in earnest deeds; that his fitness for the task assigned to him proved itself by the way in which he discharged that task; that the heritage which he achieved as the heirloom of his posterity seemed the result not only of God's blessing, but of his own high deserts. Let us trace his life as the page before us relates its events, pausing to make those reflections which the simple narrative of the Bible always leaves open.

“And the Eternal had said to Abram, get thee out from thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, to the land which I shall show thee. And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing; and I will bless those that bless thee, and him who curseth thee I will curse; and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.”

The land in which Abram dwelt was no fit arena for his operations; its inhabitants were too numerous, and too regular in their modes of life; his family and connections were steeped in idolatry, and were incapable of any higher aspirations, and being, therefore, not disposed to second his aims at the introduction of Godworship, were likely to be his strongest opponents. He would be fet-

tered, and it was necessary at least that the obstacles to his success should be passive rather than active, for his career was new and dangerous, and much might depend on first results. But it was not a light matter in those days to travel from Mesopotamia to Canaan. The Euphrates once crossed, there intervened a trackless waste of mountain and desert, infested by wandering, and often predatory, tribes, and affording no certain means of subsistence. It required high moral courage to face the dangers and difficulties of the journey. Abram found this courage in his confidence in the Being who had just inspired him with the idea of setting out. Before the intensity of his desire to show his faith all other considerations vanished. With his wife, Sarai, his nephew, Lot, and with their respective households, he departed from his native country, and arrived in Canaan. Emphatically the Bible tells us, "The Canaanite was then in the land." There is to be no misunderstanding of the peril which virtue of any sort was sure to incur amidst such people, especially if it assumed the function of the patriarch, and preached a doctrine antagonistic to their superstitions, and condemnatory of their vices. Can we wonder, then, that, in reward for the steadfast trust which had sustained the wanderer amid his troubles, and which nerved him to confront the malice or hatred of the Canaanites, the Eternal should at once say: "Unto thy seed will I give this land." He had richly earned this reward, for, by his zeal in behalf of God, he showed himself most worthy to supersede those who, tradition and Scripture tell us, most resembled the antediluvian despisers of God.

And everywhere the voice of Abram proclaimed the existence of the Eternal; everywhere did he strive to inculcate on others the truths that inspiration had impressed on him. And in his own person did he experience the fulfilment of God's first promise, for he found that, while violence and plunder were the ordinary pursuits of the

Canaanites, as against one another, he and his remained sacred. Even volition, which in the lust for gain dares so much, dared nothing against him. He felt himself as protected of Heaven as though the visible presence of the Deity went before him ; and certainly, in no instance has the interposition of a special providence seemed to interfere more with the operation of free-will ; for, except that such interposition were, how are we to reconcile the forbearance of the Canaanites with their usual licentiousness—how are we to account for the fact, that when Lot separated himself from Abram, the same mysterious shield that had protected him, no longer served as a defence.

Little need is there to dwell on the unselfishness which prompted Abram's behaviour to Lot on the occasion of their parting. It was in the nature of such a man to render self the last consideration, just as it must have been in the nature of Lot to cultivate sensual ease ; otherwise, why did he seek the plain of Sodom because that "it was well watered," when he knew that its people were "evil and sinful before the Eternal exceedingly." As little need is there to expatiate on the readiness with which Abram forgot his nephew's ingratitude when there was the opportunity for doing a good action, or on his bravery in confronting the numerous dangers of war, when he had already faced the scarcely less terrible cupidity of the Canaanites. He who strives to elevate himself towards God, and to form himself after the Divine model, may do things strange to some men, but the few who reflect on this object will see in the beauty of his conduct only the faithfulness of his imitation. The Eternal, who knows that the "imaginings of man's heart are evil from his birth," knows also the strength of purpose necessary to withstand them ; he, therefore, could measure the true worth both of Abram's promptitude to active good, and of his forbearance from even the seeming wrong of accepting his legitimate spoils as a payment for what he had done. And accordingly, "after

these things, the word of the Eternal came to Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram, I am thy shield, thy reward shall be very great." And when the patriarch, with an anxiety only too natural, asked wherein would his reward consist, seeing that he was childless, and that a stranger would be his heir; mercy comforted him with the promise of a posterity numerous as the stars of heaven. "And he believed in the Eternal, and he accounted it to him for righteousness." Even God, who, for human benefit, asks for practical illustrations of faith, was content with this spontaneous belief, for he knew it to be sincere. Man, always so sceptical of that which does not appeal to his senses, accepts it also as an exception, because he finds in Abram's past conduct a warrant for the reliance which now sustained him, and in his future conduct an assurance that even under the ordeal most harrowing to his love, his trust did not fail.

The covenant "between the pieces," which, though Abram knew it not, foreshadowed the birth of Isaac, and the whole subsequent history of his posterity till the days of Joshua, introduces the circumstance that leads to the birth of Ishmael. God has promised the patriarch a numerous progeny; already age is stealing over him, and his wife Sarai, also past the ordinary age of maternity, "bare him no children." Believing in the certain fulfilment of God's word, and yet not prepared for any special miracle on his behalf, he resorts to means still within his control, and in accordance with existing customs;—perhaps Heaven may aid his pious endeavour to assist in accomplishing its design. So Hagar becomes a wife to Abram and, in process of time, the mother of a son; and, though to her the Eternal announces the child's name and destiny, there can be little doubt that in this boy Abram thought he beheld the pledge of that numerous seed promised to him, and that his whole heart was preparing to expend itself in care for its future welfare. Little dreamed he,

who, reposing on the rock of his faith, was content to believe; little dreamed Sarai, who, thinking her hope of children lost, said, "Perhaps I may have children by her," what happiness was still in store. For them the present was enough; they had Ishmael; all else seemed an impossibility; and Hagar naturally kept her own counsel concerning her son's condition, foretold by the angel. And so time rolled on, each succeeding year carrying Abram and Sarai deeper into the vale of years, concentrating their affection on the wayward Ishmael, and confirming in them the idea that thus the word of God had been fulfilled.

But as yet Abram knew not all the power of Heaven. At the age of ninety-nine he was to learn that nothing was impossible to the Eternal, who then declared himself to him as "an Almighty God," before whom to walk was to be "perfect." Then indeed the patriarch was made to reap the rich harvest of his faith, and, while another practical instance of obedience was demanded and readily conceded in the form of the initiatory rite of Judaism—the Abrahamic covenant—the promises of God extended themselves not only to him, but, through his merits, to his posterity for ever. How beautiful is the faith which could thus evoke mercy for unborn millions; how beautiful is the mercy which could thus accept the faith of one man as the test of a certain alliance with his descendants "throughout their generations." Then was the patriarch named Abraham—"the father of a multitude of nations:" then was Sarai to be called Sarah, because she was to be a mother of nations, and kings of people were to be of her. Then did God say,—“I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, throughout their generations, for a covenant for ever, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee and to thy seed after thee, the land of thy sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for a possession for ever, and I will be their

God." Then was rendered eternal the bond between the perfection of the Eternal and the perfectibility of man. Thereafter the truths of revelation were no more to be lost to earth, the hopes of human regeneration were no more to wither before man's volition to evil. Mercy had sworn never again to destroy, now it promised to save. Chosen because of his deserts, Abraham thus accomplished the confirmation of his own high merits, and the destiny of his descendants. He had aspired to God, and God had vouchsafed to meet his aspirations. He had prayed for a child that he might through it transmit his faith and his knowledge, and to his children for ever was granted the privilege of preserving and spreading that faith and that knowledge. He had been told that he should be a blessing, he now knew what this blessing meant. It was not to be personal to himself, and so minister to his selfishness or arrogance; it was not to be the peculiar possession of him and his, and so induce in them the intolerance of exclusiveness in religion, the bigotry of claiming salvation for themselves alone; it was not to be worldly prosperity, and so separate class from class, fostering pride in the rich and envy in the poor; but it was to be the means of carrying out the great law of creation, which declared all men brothers and equals in the eyes of God, by teaching all alike to look up to God as their father and sovereign. It was to be the heirloom of him and his posterity, as stewards for the weal of mankind. As the sun dispenses light to the whole world nor claims any peculiar merit for discharging for others' good the function impressed on it; as the atmosphere, by a constant circulation, promotes animal and vegetable being, nor does more than its destined task, so Abraham and his descendants were to perform their duty, with the additional task of elevating themselves while they raised others. As men bless the sun and the atmosphere, so were they to bless the seed of the patriarch; those were

created to give the heat and vital principles of animal life, these were ordained to give the principles of moral and religious life. And when men shall universally bear in mind that the spirit of creation is love, this truth shall be acknowledged. Then, too, shall the lofty and engrossing faith which deserved this blessing be worthily recognised. Now, after the performance of a thousand miracles of extraordinary occurrence, and myriads of daily occurrence; after the irrefragable proofs of special and general providence afforded by history, after the abundant testimony which revelation, which science, and which conviction have borne to the wisdom and power of the Divinity; now it may not be strange that mortals believe in God and acknowledge what so many concurring circumstances deny to doubt. But in that dark age, when a dim tradition supplied the place of history and mystified rather than enlightened; when the daily habit of idolatrous life debased every sentiment of the mind to the level of an instinct; when ignorance, like a misty atmosphere, distorted all seen through it; when filial affection, and the other associations of duty, chained reason to slavery through the influence of the heart; in that age, for a man, unaided, to break the fetters from his intellect, to tear the trammels from his genius, to rend asunder the ties of custom and relationship, and to rise to the conception of the Godhead, was an effort deserving the Divine approval it received, and worthy of the charge which rendered the patriarch "a blessing" because "he proclaimed the name of the Eternal."

אָרַח.

GENESIS: CHAPTER XVIII.

WHEN God promised Abraham a numerous posterity, the patriarch, regarding only the ordinary operations of nature, supposed Ishmael to be the destined representative of his race, and prayed for his well-doing. And the

Eternal said : " As for Ishmael, I have heard thee.....
But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear unto thee at this appointed time in the next year." And Abraham and Sarah laughed. What! could old age assume the vigour of youth, and bloom like the green shoots of the early spring? Could the suspended functions of life, long since forgotten in the distant past, be resumed in all their strength? They were yet to learn the power of Heaven. " Is any thing too hard for the Eternal? At the time appointed I will return unto thee, as the time that liveth, and Sarah shall have a son." Now, indeed, they had not lived in vain. Old age, which gives so little to joy but memory, was to cheer them with the pleasures of hope. Hitherto their very prosperity had been painful, for no loved being existed to inherit it; their sacrifices had been, as it were, useless, for no successor would perpetuate the knowledge which it had been their fortune to acquire. But every thing indued new colours in the anticipation of the promised child. Love saw its brightest fruition when marriage gave the cares of maternity to the wife, the duties of a father to the husband. Ishmael was " a wild ass among men;" but, ere his birth, Isaac was pronounced to be the legitimate heir to God's covenant. The bliss of parentage was for them without alloy; beforehand, they knew that their training should be productive of good results, that their precepts should be rewarded by wise practice. Providence had not given them a barren blessing, since the future was to be not only rich to them, but everlasting to their descendants. They had planted the tree of religion on earth, and the word that faileth not gave to their progeny the eternal charge of that tree, with the assurance that its leaf should never wither, nor its root be destroyed. Truly they were happy, and not the less so because of their certainty that the fulfilment of their hopes would be the beginning and not the end of hope.

Little need to expatiate on the hospitality of the patriarch, for hospitality is a common virtue, and, although always graceful, it is not unfrequently the exponent of ostentation, or a sacrifice to pride. He who could forget the injuries of an ungrateful relation was not likely to slight the claims of a helpless stranger. The faith which inculcated a universal brotherhood knew nothing less than the practice of that love which its doctrine taught. Little need to dwell on his zealous intercession on behalf of the condemned cities of the plain. His own heart was so full of bliss that the idea of misery to others was painful to him. Through Divine mercy he had himself escaped from the degradation of idolatry and ignorance; by his simple example he had withdrawn many others from a like fate; why might not a few righteous and determined men have the same effect on the people of Sodom? While the wicked lived, there was at least a chance of their repentance; destroyed, they could only fall in their sin. And so he pleaded; vainly, but not less earnestly; the cry that had gone up to offended Heaven from outraged humanity was too grievous for even Divine mercy to ignore. Water had washed away the traces of one unutterable wickedness; fire was to consume the monuments of another. The cup of the Amorite was only to be full after the fourth generation of a promised seed; the cup of the Sodomites was already overflowing, and its reeking miasma poisoned earth and polluted nature. To render possible God's promise to Noah, never again to involve creation in one doom, it was necessary to except the cities of the plain; the plague generated there would have corrupted a universe. And so "the Eternal caused to rain upon Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire, from the Eternal out of heaven;" and Abraham glanced "towards all the face of the land of the district, and, lo! the vapour of the earth went up as the vapour of a furnace."

The episode of Ishmael and his expulsion from the

paternal home may well be lightly passed over. The Eternal had himself removed Abraham from the evil influences of family associations ; it was only consistent that Abraham should take a like precaution on behalf of a son on whom so much depended. The subsequent life of Ishmael proves how little adapted he was to be the companion of the meek, God-fearing Isaac, how little the gentle nature of this latter was fitted to cope with the fiery temperament of the man " whose hand was against every one, and against whom was every one's hand." Abraham, as the father of the wayward boy, was properly unwilling to dismiss him in anger. Sarah, with a mother's blind partiality, might counsel an injustice, but both children were his, and, while he recognised the necessity for separating them, he could not allow jealousy to furnish a pretext. The Eternal, who had foretold the destiny of Isaac and Ishmael, came to the rescue. " Let it not be evil in thy eyes because of the lad, and because of thy maid-servant^g, in all that Sarah hath said unto thee hearken to her voice, for through Isaac shall seed be raised unto thee ; and also of the son of thy maid-servant will I make a nation, because he is thy seed." And Abraham, thus assured that the sending away of Ishmael will not be an act of cruelty, because God will protect his future, dismisses the mother with her child ; and Holy Writ, having thus disposed of all conflicting elements, proceeds with the single harmony of the " only one." Let us trace this golden stream from its source, for on its bosom it bears the fate of a nation, and through that nation, of a world.

" And the Eternal visited Sarah as he had said." Hope grew to be certainty ; certainty grew to be enjoyment, and yet possession did not disappoint, satiety did not pall. And the family picture was complete, just as the family happiness was perfect. The mother, still decked with the charms of youth,* beamed with a beauty all but divine as

* How else could she have attracted the notice of Abimelech ?

her eyes lighted with maternal love. The father, green as the oak with a century o'er its head, drew a step nearer to Heaven when he took his son by the hand to lead him to God. What a domestic hearth! Age laying aside its gravity to lend itself to the buoyant spirits of childhood, and yet putting on a new dignity as it poured out its stores of wisdom into the heart of youth. Childhood, innocent in its untaught simplicity, and yet wearing the robe of a brighter innocence when youth practised the wisdom which childhood had imbibed. Can we wonder that affection hovered like a spirit divine over the nest sustained by faith and warmed by charity. Parental love was hallowed by the religion which it inculcated, filial duty was sanctified by the piety which it aspired to imitate. And so time stole on, and among the changes it brought was the transfer of the paternal vigour of both body and mind from the father to the son. The snows of age would have frozen the brow of the father but for the genial rays that streamed from the eye of the son. And so time stole on, and each succeeding year, bringing the child nearer to the parents' level, more closely cemented, through mutual respect and admiration, the bonds enjoined by nature. He who had been the object of the mother's tenderest care, became the support of her waning strength; the father, who had lent the first hand to teach his son to walk, was in turn glad to accept the son's arm to assist his own faltering steps. And so time stole on; day-dreams became realities, the active life of the wandering preacher had settled into the sedentary existence of the watchful sire; and one might have thought that the faith which had knitted itself so closely to earth was in some degree loosened from heaven. This tendency to depreciate what is absent was not unknown to God, and thus once more the patriarch was called on to show that resignation and trust which had distinguished his earlier years, and which had been the reason of his selection.

“ And it came to pass, after these things, that God did try Abraham ; and he said unto him, Abraham ; and he said, Here I am. And he said, take now thy son, thine only one, whom thou lovest, Isaac, and go into the land of Moriah ; and offer him up there for a burnt offering, upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.”

Direful words to fall on a father's ears, and to sear his heart ; nor less terrible because, coming from the Eternal, they seemed to revoke the promises for the future which had made the faithful one so happy, because, by demanding his son's life, they seemed to mock the joy of his paternity with the agony of a violent and unnatural separation. He might have remonstrated : recollecting his appeal for the condemned cities, one might justify a remonstrance. He might have refused altogether ; knowing that he was acquainted with the ordination which forbade the shedding of human blood, one might understand how a father's love should seize the ready excuse. But his was a perfect faith. While his heart was large enough to hold in its embrace all mankind, his soul recognized but one object of belief. Wherefore, no murmur escaped his lips ; and if, in the hidden recesses of his bosom, some untold pang awoke a mortal sense of weakness, no hesitation was visible in his acts, no emotion left its traces on his face, to betray to the perhaps less ethereal and more womanly affection of Sarah the errand on which he was bent. With ready steps he journeyed to the appointed place ; with prudent foresight “ he took the fire in his hand and the knife ;” with pious prevarication he satisfied the curiosity of Isaac : “ God will provide for himself a lamb for a burnt offering, my son ;” with prompt obedience he “ built an altar and set the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and put him on the altar upon the wood ; and stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slaughter his son.” No yearnings of tenderness staid the claims of duty ; no voice of parental love

drowned the cries of devotion to heaven ; all the father was merged in the servant of the Eternal. But the sacrifice was already complete. The God of mercy, who delights not in the death of the wicked, rejoices in the life of the righteous. He had chosen Abraham to be the depository of the eternal truths of revelation, and he desired that Abraham should himself justify that choice to man. Hence, the whole career of the patriarch had been a trial of his worth and of his steadfast trust in God. From the moment at which, obedient to Divine behest, he had journeyed from the house of his father, till the hour in which he bound Isaac on the altar, he had been exhibiting constant proofs of his devotedness and his devotion. In the offering of his "only son" his faith culminated. In the sublimity of his resignation, all that was human and natural in his being gave place to his spiritual longing for his master. He thus separated himself from the failings incidental to mortality, and, indeed, impressed on it through the law that the spirit of creation is love ; for, while his soul was bound in the soul of his son, he hesitated not to tear the life from his life at the command of Heaven. Wherefore, said God, through his angel : "Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything to him ; for now I know that thou fearest God, since thou hast not kept back thy son, thine only one, from me." Wherefore, also said the angel, "By myself have I sworn, is the declaration of the Eternal, that because thou hast done this thing, and hast not kept back thy son, thine only one, that I will greatly bless thee, and I will exceedingly multiply thy seed, as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore, and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies ; and all the nations of the earth shall bless themselves through thy seed, because thou hast hearkened to my voice."

Who shall describe the rapture which thrilled the

heart of the father when he found that not only had the Eternal accepted his devotion, but that his son was still to be spared to his love. The child of his maturity became the child of his old age, being thus as it were newly born, and in the declaration of the Eternal he learned alike his reward for the past and his hopes for the future. Now, indeed, he had not been chosen in vain, since Heaven had approved his zeal, and earth was to bear witness to his mission. Now, his fidelity and self-abnegation were to receive their recompense in the faculty which they conferred on him and his posterity to bless others. Now, the infinite mercy of God, responsive to the unbounded piety of man, confirmed the promises already given, and added to them the certainty of eternal salvation. Now, religion, which had hitherto been a phantom, mysterious and shadowy, became the tangible possession of mankind, and its purpose was definitively announced to be the means of regeneration and happiness. Now conscience whispered praise, and the angel proclaimed a blessing; paternal love reconciled itself with love for Heaven, and as the patriarch and his lads "rose, and went together to Beer-Sheba," who shall say what harmony dwelt in his heart, what holy content permeated his soul. God could ask no more, since he had not withheld his dearer self, and thereafter, he who had been a sojourner in the land, "abode at Beer-Sheba." Peace spread her balmy wings over the now permanent home of the well-tried servant, and beneath their genial shade the stream of his existence ran noiselessly on; his work was done, his task was accomplished, and calmly and hopefully he waited the final visitation.

Two expressions used by the Eternal to Abraham claim especial notice, as in them are contained the duties of Judaism and its fate. First: "For I have known him, because he will command his children and his household after him, so that they keep the way of the Eternal,

to do righteousness and judgment." Secondly: "And all the nations of the earth shall bless themselves through thy seed;" explained subsequently to Jacob by the addition: "And thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south."

The former of these texts announces the existence of that oral law which it was to be the special duty of the descendants of Abraham to perpetuate through their generations. Just as Abraham himself was selected because of his determination to secure fidelity on the part of those who came after him, so his posterity were to merit their selection by a like endeavour. Just as he deserved a blessing for this particular quality, so they were to claim it only by transmitting as an eternal heritage the lessons which, through the same quality, they were to inculcate. Theirs was not to be the tradition of ordinary men, vague and mythic, becoming fabulous as distance diminished, pride magnified, or words clouded it; but it was to be as certain through steadfast teaching as the written records of history which truth inscribes on the pages of time. And that the Eternal himself sanctioned this duty may be inferred from numerous passages of the Pentateuch, "And thou shalt teach them diligently;" "And it shall come to pass in time to come when thy son shall ask thee;" "And thou shalt tell thy son at that time;" and from the extraordinary fact that from the era of Moses till that of Rabbinu Hakkadosh (above 1500 years), the explanation of the precepts of the law was so faithfully transmitted by word of mouth, that they were observed in the same integrity then that had characterized their institution on Sinai.

The second text announces the fate of Judaism. There seems to be a remarkable contradiction between this passage and that in which Abraham is told that his seed shall hold the land of Canaan as a possession for ever. This contradiction is reconciled when we bear in mind the

principle of creation, which declares physical evil to be the result of moral deflection. To Israelites was to belong as an eternal possession the land of Canaan; but this was to depend on their observance of God's law. By combinations which man cannot understand, people were not to molest them in their country so long as they remained faithful to "their wisdom in the eyes of nations." But Israelites were also to spread abroad in all directions, to take with them to the remotest corners of earth the blessings and truths of revelation. Divine prescience was enabled to foresee that the land of Canaan would cease to be the abiding place of the Jewish commonwealth, and, in impressing on the Israelites for their sins the necessity of wandering to the four corners of the world, it was providing the compensation which mercy always designs as the antidote to its judgments. Who can read or comprehend the ways of Providence? As, in the torrid zone, the whirlwind carries destruction to the fairest and most fertile districts, but at the same time bears on its blast the winged seed to germinate in some otherwise barren spot, so perhaps the storms which laid Israel in ruins bore the truths prostrated in Canaan to bloom and fructify in other lands, and thus contributed to the fulfilment of the promise, "And all the nations of the earth shall bless themselves through thy seed." Had Israel remained obedient and unmolested in Canaan, who can say how far exclusion and jealousy, or religion and idolatry, may have clashed, and may thus have prevented the spread of that knowledge of God which was necessary to man's regeneration? During the 1500 years which elapsed between the death of Moses and the conquest of Titus, that knowledge had certainly not extended, and when just prior to this latter event it first began to assume a form which might be acceptable to others besides the descendants of Abraham, it did so through a Jew, who, in the spirit of enlightenment, adapted that religion which

Jews had begun to contemn and to cause to be despised, and made it the faith which was to contribute to the design of heaven. But whether we call that faith, with its ceremonies and restrictions, Judaism, or without them, Christianity, the principle remains, that, through the spread of that faith, the truths of revelation confided to Abraham and his posterity are being borne "to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south."

חיי-שרה.

GENESIS: CHAPTER XXIII.

GENTLY flows the stream of time, and on it glides the bark of the patriarch to the haven appointed for all mankind. The sea of life and its agitations no longer hurry him. Calm reigns in his heart, fruition crowns his hopes. He has earned the reward of his faith, and mercy permits him peacefully to enjoy it. One more trial, one more duty, and the thread of existence may fall from the distaff, without a sound to tell that it has been snapped, without a convulsion to tell that it has resisted. Mortality is the lot of man, and blessed is he who can penetrate its mystery without shame for the past or terror for the future.

"And Sarah died in Kirjath-Arba, that is, Hebron, in the land of Canaan, and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her." True to his mortality he bowed beneath the weight of grief; true to his faith he did not permit feeling to interfere with duty. True to the love which God had consecrated as the culmination of human felicity, and which, in his case, reason had sanctioned with the approval of experience, he bewailed the broken ties, the desolate hearth; he regretted the companion of his youth, his manhood, and his old age; he gave a sigh to the sad memories that told him he had lost for ever in this world, the partner of his dangers, the

mother of Isaac, the wife of his bosom. True to the hopes which inspiration had given, he put aside despondency, he plunged not into the desolation of woe, for he knew that the broken ties would be re-established, that the cherished companion would be restored, that the lost one in this world would be found in another and a happier state. First of all human beings, he had learned the real meaning of the mystery—death; through its darkness he first saw the eternal light of immortality. Therefore, again the old spirit of activity came over the mourner, for he felt that in that consisted alike the destiny and the regeneration of man. “He arose from before his dead,” and, in conformity with the pious institution that hides from affection the decay of what it once held dear, he took steps for the burial of the departed. And, in that land, these steps are of necessity immediate, for decomposition so soon succeeds death, that men turn with loathing from the once loved object, lest in their abhorrence they desecrate the lost image of God. He purchased the field and the cave of Macpelah, “as a possession of a burying-place for ever,” and thus originated the custom by which his descendants preserve their dead separate from those of other people.

The manner in which this custom has been carried out among Israelites merits notice. Among the members of other creeds around us, a graveyard and a churchyard have been synonymous. Wheresoever the fane has arisen to the honour of the Eternal, there have also grown the perishable tumuli which tell of mortality. The worshipper, bending his steps towards the altar of his God, has trodden his way amid the mouldering remains of his fellow-creatures, and has thus learned solemnity ere he passed the sacred precincts. Israelites have always avoided this juxtaposition. The “house of the living,” as, in allusion to the existence hereafter, the graveyard is called, has never been joined to the synagogue. The feelings proper to de-

votion have been allowed to grow in the natural reverence which a place of worship should excite, without being stimulated by any extraneous aid. The connection between the living and the dead, beneficial to the former by the serious thoughts it awakens, and respectful to the latter by the memories it preserves, has been maintained by periodical visits to the tombs of the departed—visits so hallowed by tradition, that few Israelites do not spend some hours annually amid the graves of their deceased friends. But in this difference of locality lay the great distinction. While members of other creeds increased, their dead increased; streets and graveyards became populated together. Thus, while life teemed in the busy resorts of the quick, death grew from the putrefying remains of the charnel-house. For, although men knew it not, the churchyard was its own best provider, through the poisonous miasma which it breathed among the living, through the invisible pestilence which its vapours bore into the haunts of life. By this intermingling, therefore, of the abodes of those who are and those who are not, God's service became immersed in the horrors of idolatry, for it offered up human sacrifices on the altar of its divinity. Israelites never so compromised the religion of Sinai. Although no wiser than their neighbours in the scientific knowledge which teaches sanitary laws, they were more faithful to the experience which tradition inculcates. Abraham removed his dead from the vicinity of his home; Moses, under the command of God, who knew why he ordained such a regulation, directed a like observance. In Palestine, this separation was strictly carried out; among the fields, whose vegetation decomposing matter is calculated to feed, mortality was made to return to its elementary form; it thus subserved the cause of life instead of being its antagonist. After the dispersion, the custom was no less stringently followed. Even where intolerance confined Jews to close and unhealthy quarters, their

homes were not rendered their graves by the exhalations from their dead. Now that attention has been directed to the origin of disease and its prevention, the value of this ancient practice of Israel is perceived, and one other testimony is thus borne to the wisdom of revelation, and to the principle that all the Divine ordinances are framed for human benefit. Men are gradually removing from the vicinity of their habitations those fostering remains of mortality which are so pregnant with death; they are gradually purifying their towns of "the pestilence that stalketh in darkness; the destruction that wasteth at noon." Thus, science learns to prove the soundness of Biblical teaching, and belief dignifies reason by showing that even where man cannot understand he may trust.

Lonely is the heart of the patriarch, sad is the heart of his son. Wife and mother; companion and friend; the partner of more than sixty years of toil and danger, the trainer of nearly forty years of inexperience and youth; all are lost in the death of Sarah. Anon, and her genial smile awoke gladness; now, even her shadow is denied to sorrow. Mortality has claimed its rights o'er the living, life bows to mortality o'er the dead. The sleep of eternity seals the lids of the departed, the torpor of grief arrests the hopes of the survivors. And so three years pass, till at length the balm of forgetfulness spreads its soothing influence over the cankering wounds of memory, and age and youth alike bow to the fiat that "it is not good for man to be alone." But no one except a wife must replace the mother of the "only one;" and where is the zealous servant of God to find among the daughters of Canaan one worthy to be the ancestress of his promised seed? Anxiously he casts his eyes about, for, knowing the influence of a wife, he dreads lest Isaac may find temptation where he needs support. The thought comes to him that Sarah was of his own kindred, why may not the same source furnish a fitting consort for his

son? He will try. But in this, as in all things, his trust is in Providence: "The Eternal God of Heaven, who took me from my father's house, and from the land of my kindred, and who spake unto me, and sware unto me, saying, Unto thy seed will I give this land, he will send his angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife for my son from thence."

Thus spoke the patriarch to his messenger, and with this assurance did the latter set out on his errand. This servant is a noble type of the power of example. He is the very reflex of his master. Prudent, he adopts the best means within his reach; pious, he commits the result to Heaven. His every proceeding is characterised by the wisdom which has come to him from long association with Abraham; witness his conduct when he reached the city of Nahor, his behaviour in adapting himself to the infirmity of Laban's disposition. Had he gone directly to the home of his master's kindred, to declare his object and to support his request by the assertion of his master's wealth, he would certainly have obtained what he sought, but not perhaps the exact wife that his own sagacity told him was necessary. Had he trusted entirely to his own discretion, he might have suffered himself to be deceived by a fair face and a plausible manner, and thus his very success would have been a failure. He knew something of woman's nature. He knew that goodness of heart atones for a host of feminine infirmities, and decks the feature with more real beauty than all the external charms of which vanity is so proud. He resolved to make that the test of his selection, and, recollecting his master's parting adjuration, he invoked God to bless his plan with that unseen direction which should prove alike the merit of Abraham and the mercy of Heaven.

How beautifully every thing falls out as the honest messenger can desire; for it is not enough for him to do

his errand, he must do it well! How naturally Rebekah, in conformity with the custom of the country and time, comes to draw water! How opportune it is that she is "very fair to look upon, a virgin!" How spontaneously she offers, in the very words of the servant's secret prayer, to draw water for the camels "until they have finished drinking!" Every thing seems so entirely the result of accident, that "the man, wondering at her, was silent." His petition has been so promptly granted that he fears to indulge in too sanguine hopes. What if this maiden, who possesses all his proposed qualifications of heart and face, should not be of his master's kindred? All his care will have been vain. He trembles with anxiety as he asks her: "Whose daughter art thou?" He prostrates himself before the Eternal when her answer, "I am the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Milcah, whom she bare unto Nahor," assures him that God has prospered his journey, and enabled him to select a wife for whose worth he has the testimony of Divine approval, and of his own judgment.

There yet remains one task; he has to secure the parental sanction. How adroitly he places before the mother and brother the advantages of the proposed union! How carefully he omits all mention of the separation thus rendered inevitable, of the infringement of the matrimonial custom usual in those days! How sagaciously he prevents the utterance of objections by throwing the whole burden of his proceedings on the authority of Heaven, whose right to direct he feels they will not question, and, at last, how admirably he concludes his embassy with the promptitude which will not allow success to elude his grasp! "Delay me not," he says, "send me away, that I may go to my lord." There is no refusal for so reasonable a demand; even the damsel herself seems to lay aside the natural bashfulness of her age and sex when, in obedience to the evidently Divine message, she exclaims, "I will go."

And so the patriarch's task of life is accomplished. "And Isaac brought Rebekah into the tent of Sarah his mother, and took her, and she became his wife; and he loved her; and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death." And still the stream of time flows gently on, and for thirty-five years the venerable father is blessed with the sight of his son's happiness. He hails the birth of Esau and Jacob. In the diversity of their natures he sees repeated the difference in his own sons, and he receives it as an assurance that, as he has been represented in Isaac, so shall Isaac be represented in Jacob. His mouth conveys to their young minds the first lessons of religion, his experience strives to infuse into their infant hearts the love of God. And so the stream flows onward to the ocean of eternity, and at last it bears into the unknown future the soul of the patriarch—unknown, but not to him, for doubtless the mercy which had sustained him so long, vouchsafed an assurance of bliss hereafter. And so, "Abraham expired and died in a good old age, old and full of years; and he was gathered to his peoples. And his sons, Isaac and Ishmael, buried him in the cave of Macpelah." By the side of her he had loved in life the patriarch reposed in death, bequeathing to his son the heritage of his blessing, to his posterity the example of his faith. We have seen how his son deserved the blessing—a future time will tell how his posterity have imitated his faith.

תולדות.

GENESIS: CHAPTER XXV., VERSE 19.

WE possess in the Pentateuch a double source of instruction. Its moral code appeals directly to our perceptions of right and wrong. Its history—the lives of individuals like ourselves, swayed by the same passions, urged by the same interests, guided by the same influences

—appeals no less forcibly, because indirectly, to our faculty of combination. The former teaches Divine truths, inalienable and eternal, because Divine ; the latter teaches mundane lessons of fortitude or frailty, self-love or self-denial, changeful because worldly. From the former we learn the theory of religion and virtue ; from the latter, either by imitation or avoidance, we infer their practice. Life and its lessons are the subjects now before us.

But, it may be asserted, the lives of the patriarchs must not be judged by the ordinary standard ; they were prophets, inspired of God ; their actions were not based on the calculations that obtain under less heavenly guidance ; in our prayers we appeal, in commemoration of their merits, for indulgence and pardon, and hence we must not measure their conduct as we would our own. Hollow argument ! To affirm that God directly influences human actions is at once to destroy free-agency, to relieve man from responsibility, and to deprive him of either the merit or demerit of his deeds. Holy Writ abounds with proofs that, while by inspiration men have been recommended to adopt certain lines of conduct, it has always been with them only to decide on obedience or disobedience. The recommendation came as the will of Heaven, but it was not to interfere with man's volition. The obedience of Abraham in his departure from his paternal roof, and in his voluntary offering of Isaac, the disobedient prophet, and Jonah, are instances of this doctrine of free will, and of man's power to obey or to disobey.

Again, why did the inspired lawgiver enter so minutely into the lives of the patriarchs ? Of what interest was it to the fulfilment of his Divine mission that his flock should learn how Abraham and Sarah were parted by an equivocation with the truth, how Isaac and Rebekah suffered from the same cause. The Omniscient Being, under whose guidance Moses wrote, gave to the legislator the power to appreciate the silent yet impressive force of

example. It was necessary that we should know that man, under all circumstances, was but mortal; that when he arose above temptation he asserted his heavenly origin, when he succumbed before sin he displayed his earthly source: that when he acted in accordance with Divine precept he did so because "he chose the life and the good," when he eschewed virtue he took upon himself to determine what *he* deemed proper, and he abided by the consequences. For, before proceeding to the immediate story of the portion, it will be needful to advance one more proposition. The harmony which pervades creation, the certainty with which the vast and complicated operations of nature are carried on, the impossibility of falsifying or suspending any physical development, all prove the impression of certain fixed principles on the works of Providence. Man, as a portion of the great universe, is under the dominion of such principles, and it is as impossible for him with impunity to violate them, as it is to prevent the decay of one season from furnishing elementary matter to organise the productions of the following season. When, therefore, the poet wrote, "Virtue alone is happiness below," he only enunciated one of these principles, which, in other words, may be thus stated. The Almighty power which designed and executed creation established sympathies, affinities, and repulsions which we call laws, because we see them to be inalienable; one of these sympathies is the connexion between mind and matter, between the immortal spirit and the perishable body, between the moral and the physical. This sympathy is so close that the one acts and reacts on the other with illimitable sway, and as the breathing of a vitiated atmosphere will convey bodily corruption, so the inhalation of a moral taint will as surely lead not only to spiritual infirmity but to physical ill. Man, in this world, therefore, is lord of his own course, and therein differs from surrounding objects, which obey laws without the power to rebel.

When, in the exercise of this prerogative, he carries out the behests of right, he acts in accordance with the principles of his creation and produces good. When, equally master of his will, he departs from what is right, he acts in opposition to the principles of his creation and produces evil. It is not needful to prove that by right we universally understand truth, justice, and charity, in their broadest and most extended meaning.

Isaac is married and is comforted after the death of his mother. Years glide on, and Rebekah, conscious of approaching maternity, is warned by Providence of the future that her children will work out for themselves. Her twin sons are to become two distinct peoples, one more powerful than the other, and, to use the words of Holy Writ, "the elder will be inferior to the younger."

The twins are born, and to show how the prediction of heaven was in their youth accomplished by themselves, we are told, in brief but emphatic words, "Esau was a man of the field, Jacob loved to dwell in tents." Esau contracted marriage with idolatrous women, Jacob remained single. This is to say, Esau is addicted to worldly pursuits, to passionate gratification, to those nomadic and irregular habits by which the aborigines of Caanan were distinguished and vitiated:—Jacob enjoys the pleasures of home, and copies the simple habits of his parents and grandparents. There is probably, therefore, but little interchange of affection between brothers so unlike. Esau, fatigued with out-door employment, returns home, faint and weary; the scent of the good things of the table inflames his grosser appetite, and he is willing to barter his birthright, "because he despised it," for a mess of pottage. Here was either a wilful wrong or a voluntary renunciation. Either Esau knew that he could not sell that which was not his—the fact of his earlier birth, for no after contract could remove that—or of his own accord he resigned the only pretension to which his birth entitled

him—the privilege to transmit that blessing (the knowledge of God) for the promulgation of which Abraham had been especially designed when the Almighty said of him, “I have known him because he will charge his children after him that they keep the way of God.” Jacob’s conduct was not free from worldliness, but it was by no means incompatible with the peculiar relations between the brothers. He knew, probably, how little Esau valued his primogeniture, how little attention he paid to the teachings of his parents, how utterly abandoned he was to present enjoyment, and he availed himself of that knowledge to his own advantage—a trait he more than once displayed. But wrong had been done, and there grew from it its inevitable consequence, further evil.

Activity is the salt of life, the great antiseptic preserving it from corruption. Where activity is not, symptoms of degeneracy are but too soon apparent. Isaac grew old, “his eyes were weak, so that he could not see;” he was to lead an inactive life, and to a certain extent he became a sensualist. Already “he loved Esau because he ate of his venison,” certainly no high claim to paternal regard, and now he asks his son to procure him some of his favourite meat, that “his soul may bless him before his death.” This, at least, was without the pale of right. The satisfaction of a bodily appetite should be no reason for a spiritual privilege. The conferring of such privilege on a son whose whole life had proved how little he cared for spirituality, and that, too, in the face of the Divine prophecy that the younger should be superior—as he but too evidently was; this went far to show that Isaac was but a man, yielding to man’s infirmities, and thus, by swerving from inalienable right, leading to ill.

Rebekah hears the charge given to Esau, and the heart of the mother trembles for her favourite Jacob. She remembers but too well the destiny announced for her

children before their birth ; she sees but too clearly its truth in the unfitness of Esau for the mission of religious teaching ; she resolves to prevent the patriarch from doing what she conceives to be an injustice, and thus at once to gratify her partiality and to carry out the will of Heaven. But she elects to do so by means not of right but of wrong, and Jacob not only assists her too readily, but becomes an accomplice in her deception, when he voluntarily affirms even more than her care had forestalled.

Imperishable lesson, that truth only is just ; that man, how good soever, is frail ; that wrong produces its own inherent evil. Jacob secures the blessing, the spirituality of which is so distinctly proved by the words in which it is conveyed, but the means for securing it defeat their own object. Esau, incensed beyond measure at his brother's deceit, and forgetful that he was himself the first deceiver, that having sold his birthright he had no claim to the blessing appertaining to it, for that justice demanded his abandonment of that which he had renounced ; Esau, in the true spirit of the wrong-doer, taking only his own selfish view, swears revenge, and, in the bitterness of hate, gives utterance to words which, more than anything he has hitherto done, prove the depravity of his character : " I will slay my brother when the days of mourning for my father arrive." He will sanctify the grief for the loss of a parent by fratricide ; he will comfort his widowed mother by the murder of her best beloved ; he will wash out his own wrongs in the blood of a greater wrong. Truly did the patriarch, guilty only of the common errors of favouritism and love of enjoyment, truly, when circumstances brought reason to resume her wonted sway, did he say to Esau, " By the sword thou wilt live, and thus thou wilt be inferior to thy brother ; only when thou shalt have conquered (thy natural disposition) thou shalt remove from thy neck his supremacy."

And the suffering mother fears for her darling child ; too well she knows the implacable disposition of her first-born. And the temporarily weak father sees the evil which has resulted from error, and trembles for new horrors. And all must suffer ; the mother must part from the dearly loved son, the father must lose one of the props of his declining years ; Jacob must wander through difficulty and danger to an unknown uncle, whose character Rebekah must have remembered too well to have much confidence in her son's future ; Esau must taste the bitters of disappointed revenge, rendered doubly bitter by the estranged affection of his parents, and by the knowledge that the blessing clandestinely obtained has been voluntarily confirmed. And Jacob departs secretly, and in sore terror for his life ; no preparations mark alike the affection and the regret of his parents ; no guide assists his uncertain footsteps, no camel bears his wearied limbs. Alone, amid the solitary paths of the desert, surrounded by wandering bands of plunderers and by hungry wild beasts, dependent for very existence on the (apparently) chance berries and fountains, he is to atone for the wrong he has committed. And never more, while life remains, shall the mother who has perilled so much for her loved one, see again that dear form ; to her through the long future he is to be as in his grave, and kindly, therefore, the inspired historian leaves her death unchronicled, lest, in the record, he should be compelled to say :—her end, uncheered by her child, was not that of Sarah.

XXVIII.

GENESIS: CHAPTER XXVIII., VERSE 10.

“AND Jacob departed from Beer Sheba and went towards Haran.” Alone on his wandering way ; alone with the uncertainties of day and the terrors of night ; alone with his conscience, awakened doubtless by the harsh realities of his present lot as compared with that of his past life of domestic ease ; alone with his God ; the patriarch was journeying on that bridge which separates the struggling world-life from the indolent home-dream. Idleness was changed into activity, and the mind no less than the body benefited by the change. The security and comfort of the paternal tent, blessings so usual and so expected, and therefore, such are mortals, so little valued, were replaced by the perils and asperities of a desert, and powers of endurance and submission were awakened, which a more prosperous condition had allowed to slumber. Thus is it ever : when the offended Creator impressed on sinning mortals the result of their unhal- lowed desire, when he denounced to our first parents the consequences of their own introduction of corruptibility and death into their composition, he mercifully gave them the means to mitigate their fate. He ordained labour as alike the stay and the purifier of life, and during all ages and in all climes, man has found in it the eternal truth of God’s decree. Nor one condition alone, but every grade ; the monarch in his diadem and the serf in his badge of slavery ; the wealthy in his luxurious palace and the poor in his miserable hut ; the proud in his ex- alted station, and the lowly in his degraded lot ; the legislator aiming at the happiness of millions and the mechanic toiling for the comfort of units ; the rich seeking philanthropy and usefulness, the pauper trudging for his daily bread ; all alike feel the blessings of the Divine

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dispensation and voluntarily adopt it as their best and safest guide.

The sacred writings do not inform us how long Jacob was journeying from Beer Sheba to Padan Aram; we may, however, infer that his transit was not rapid; for the time occupied had sufficed to change his entire character. The indolent man of pleasure had become the active man of business; the quiet student had become the skilful shepherd—no easy transition we shall find; the selfish brother, who had no kindness even for the son of his own parents, had learned that holiest charity which gives every fellow creature in need a claim to sympathy and aid. Shall we say that this change was effected by Divine interposition only, and thus deprive the patriarch of the merit of his self-conquest? Shall we attribute it to the dream that cheered him on his lowly couch, and thus convert him into “a servant serving his master for the sake of a reward?” Shall we wilfully shut our eyes to the mortality and therefore fallibility of all created men, and not see errors because recorded in Holy Writ? Shall we judge his conduct as the visible result of Heavenly influence, and thus detract from its force as an example? No! Reason and faith may well go hand in hand without violence to right. Reason will show us that Jacob was but a man and suffered the weaknesses to which men are subject, and faith will teach us (as we shall hereafter illustrate) how noble was the reward conferred on his victory.

A word on the dream of Luz. Jacob had obtained by deception the blessing of his father; this blessing had been subsequently confirmed by Isaac. On his lonely way the thought of the benediction doubtless consoled the wanderer, and his waking thoughts as doubtless coloured his nightly visions. But, in the earlier days of his journey, the leaven of his character still remained: the struggle for self-conquest may have commenced, but

the victory was not achieved. Would it be irrational then to argue that the danger of the present—the present which is always so impressive—may have shaken his faith in the security of the future; that the misery which was his daily lot may have weakened his confidence in the happiness of his coming fate? Hence we shall appreciate the dream. A merciful God saw the awakened desire for self-control; he beheld the aspirations of the soul for dominion over the body, and he graciously determined to remove the doubts so naturally suggested by asperities and hardships. When, therefore, Jacob's misery was at its depth—when the bare ground formed his couch and a friendly stone his pillow, when the phantoms of sleep might have mocked his slumbering senses only to render his waking horrors more terrible by contrast and disappointment—then did the Almighty himself ratify the paternal blessing, and give an assurance for the future, which confirmed the new determination to good, and strengthened humanity in the contest between what the earthly had given and what the immortal had left.

And Jacob arrives in the land of the children of the east, and is received by his uncle Laban. A month's experience convinces the wily Assyrian how valuable a servant he has obtained, and he eagerly closes with Jacob's proposition to give seven years' service for the beautiful Rachel. And love lightens the chariot wheels of time so that they roll easily over the ruins of the past; and the seven years seem but as a few days for the love he bears her. But the prosperous master, blessed with a faithful and therefore invaluable servant, cannot afford to lose the cause of his prosperity; and the homely Leah, as devotedly attached to Jacob as he is to her more attractive sister, lends herself but too willingly to a deception which gives her as a wife to the man of her choice, and secures for her father new chances of gain. Thus, Jacob marries both sisters; and, in conformity with the custom of the

times, gives their father a dowry—his services for fourteen years.

New ties cling round the hearth of the patriarch. His beautiful wife, happy in her husband's love, is denied for a time the holier affection of maternity, while the little valued Leah, unblessed by a husband's attachment, attains a higher felicity as a mother. And how heart-rending is her cry,* for a reciprocation of the devotion she has for Jacob; how nobly her homely domesticity contrasts with the querulous complaint of her fairer sister: "Give me children or I die." She is rewarded by heaven-born sympathy, and every child that is given to solace her comparatively sad home awakens new thankfulness, because it becomes a new claim on her husband. "Surely the Eternal hath seen my affliction; now therefore my husband will love me." "The Eternal hath heard that I was hated." "This time will my husband become attached to me, because I have borne him three sons." "Now I will praise the Eternal." As though her yearning had at length evoked the feeling for which her womanish heart longed.

Such is life and man; we choose objects on which to fix our affections, often because of their external attractions only. Our eyes are dazzled and our judgment is set aside. We are blinded by a meteor and stray from the right path. We bow down before an idol whose glitter alone merits notice, and neglect God who is hidden from us. And in this perhaps consists the difference between the true and the false aim of existence; the latter may be the beautiful, the former is the useful; this deceives by the gauds which hide innate deformity, that simply does not present exterior blandishments, and the hollow and the vain do not follow, because their weakness is not flattered. Another instance of our

* "Now will my husband be united with me."

mortal frailty : images are imprinted on the retina before impressions are made on the judgment, and we suffer ourselves to be led away by a sense which we know to be deceptive and superficial, because we do not care to appeal to a more certain but more troublesome adviser. Intellect is the advanced force which we bring into the field of life's battle, but experience is the reserve which is to supply casualties and to retrieve reverses ; and many a victory has been lost because the van has not been supported by the rear.

It is in the nature of cunning to outwit itself. A knave seems sometimes to be the stone against which honest men sharpen their wisdom. Laban had experienced the advantage of Jacob's services and was unwilling to part with them. Already fraud had doubled their intended length, duplicity was now still further to extend them. Wages were appointed between master and shepherd, but by subterfuge and evasion the master was constantly attempting to shift his ground and to deprive the shepherd of his legitimate gains. But in Jacob, Laban found an antagonist more than his match ; Laban had only chicanery, Jacob had practical knowledge and honesty of purpose. The former could only strive to diminish the appointed wages by changing the hire ; the latter, satisfied with the stipulated bargain, was driven in self-defence to make the most of the little left to him. Each had his object to attain. Laban had found that the Eternal had blessed him for Jacob's sake, but he knew from Jacob's own lips that he desired to return to Canaan. His own interest led him to render Jacob's service as long as possible, and he sought by every means to effect his purpose. Jacob had a natural anxiety to provide for his own household, and, to this end, would have demanded nothing better than the opportunities which nature and experience afforded. He resorted to other means only to defeat attempts at fraud, and to foil cunning with its own weapons. Nor can we

blame Jacob for the course he adopted. The labourer is worthy his hire, and every man is justified in making as much of his services as legitimate wisdom permits. If Jacob took advantage of his knowledge he at least had the strong motive of self-defence ; it was to the utmost goading that the man he had enriched should seek to rob him ; that, with no cause for complaint, Laban should strive to defraud him ; and it is clear that in the constant shifting of ground to which he was exposed, Jacob had no alternative but to foil his antagonist with his own weapons.

There are limits to endurance ; there are periods at which the desire to have pales before the fear of losing. At such a juncture had Jacob at length arrived ; twenty years of miserable servitude had estranged him from Laban, and the dread came on him that his hardly-earned gains would be forcibly taken away. In vain had the cold consumed him by night and the drought by day ; in vain did his honesty answer for him. He were better in barbarism than without the cover of civilization's first law—protection of property. He longed to be free from the incubus which oppressed him ; he longed still more for his father's home ; but the courage which had enabled him to sustain his weary slavery, was not, unaided, enough to bid him face the dangers of the way for his more delicate wives and tender children. He needed some support above that which the world can give, and in the hour of his despair it came, as Heavenly aid often comes to the patient, the meek, the watcher for Divine grace. And Jacob, and all that he had—even two whole camps—turned their faces towards Gilead ; and although Laban, on no charitable thoughts intent, pursued hotly after him, Heaven protected its own, and the wanderer once more stood on the border of his fatherland.

We pause—not from want of further food for reflection,—for there is no source more prolific, but because giving our own thoughts we desire rather to direct the percep-

tions of others than to form them ; we seize the salient points, to others we give the details ; we sketch the cartoon, we leave to others to fill in the shades.

וישלח.

GENESIS: CHAPTER XXXII. VERSE 3.

“WHEN I see the heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast established : what is man, I ask, that thou rememberest him, and the son of man, that thou art mindful of him ?” Thus spake the inspired writer, and he found his answer in the record of creation : “We will make man in our own image.” When we reflect on the relation in which man stands to the objects which he beholds and investigates, we cannot fail to be convinced that his superiority is derived only from his intellectuality. While, in respect to the great orbs of heaven, the earth and all man’s works sink into utter insignificance ; while strength, sight, instinct, affections, affinities, and repulsions are common to all animated nature ; reason stands prominently forth as the peculiar attribute of man. But such is the law impressed on rational beings, that every abstract principle must have either its visible type or its ideal representative ; without this the mind fails to grasp at what the imagination soars, and visionary speculation takes the place of reason and judgment. This superiority given to reason, and this necessity for type, explain to us what is meant by the question of the psalmist, and by the words of God. Reason is that on which the Creator has impressed his image in man ; it is that God-like attribute which connects mortality with immortality ; which gives to the “dust of the earth” a dignity only less than Divine.

The evidence of design so abundantly presented in every branch of creation ; the adaptability of every atom to its destined end, and the regularity with which every

operation of nature is performed, lead to the question: In what does the Divine representative on earth differ from all other mundane productions? In this, surely, or in nothing, that while all other productions blindly obey principles which subserve their well-being, to reason is given that type of its higher origin, to investigate, to seek for causes, to combine, and to be convinced. But with reason is joined, as eyes to the body, another heavenly gift, faith. As God alone is perfect, so even his greatest boon to man is imperfect, and reason without faith would be like the tempest-tossed vessel whose compass is lost, and which rushes wildly, although still ruled by high intelligence, to some unknown destination. To reason, therefore, is none the less to believe. Where reason fails, her heavenly sister faith steps in and convinces by the assurance, that the Almighty wisdom which has permitted so much to be apparent, is equally inherent in that which is hidden. The doubter who will yield to reason only, and who denies all he cannot prove, is more a sensualist than he will allow, and he even degenerates into idolatry when he sets reason on the throne of heaven, and deifies the representative instead of its Divine author.

Actuated by these principles, an investigation into one event recorded in this portion of the holy law will be alike profitable and pleasurable. It has been before shown, that to be good is to be happy, and there cannot be any cause for doubting that a merciful God has placed every means for our happiness in our own hands. But such is the double nature of man; so evenly balanced, in different individuals, are the earthly and the heavenly, that on more than one occasion the evident design of creation, man's eternal and temporal welfare, has seemed in danger of being lost. When our first parents, following a natural desire, unnaturally indulged in, sought for a knowledge of the inherent consequences of evil, as attached to their own being, their offended Judge per-

mitted them to learn the forbidden secret in the terrible truths which he pronounced as the result of their introducing corruption into earthly forms. When subsequently their son ignorantly rushed into the first crime—the first visible type of the unerring decrees of Heaven—and when thus the first great shock was given to the dominion of intellect over matter, Almighty God deigned to show to the future conscience-driven vagabond and wanderer the path by which sinners might return to the road to heaven; the antidote designed by mercy to neutralise the poison of sin. “If thou wouldst do well, doth not repentance lie at the door; its desire is towards thee, and by means of it thou shalt conquer (thy evil propensities and their consequences).”

If further argument were needful to show the relationship in which repentance stands to sin, to show that through repentance only and its ultimate effect, (the anticipation as it were of itself and of that which evokes it, and thus the prevention of crime)—can man achieve his destiny, reference might be made to the Fast of Kippur and its holy associations as sanctified by Divine mandate; but the faithful observer of every-day life will not require additional proof. He will observe that the one great cause of wrong is self, corrupt, bodily, self; that men dare, only when the selfish desire to have either blinds them to consequences or preponderates over the fear to lose; that good is the abnegation of self and its sensuality; that virtue proceeds either from an innate appreciation of the Divine, or from an awakened desire to return to the Divine; he will observe the natural tendency of humanity to err, because “the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth,” and because present effects only are considered by evil doers, ultimate consequences being ignored, and he will need no additional evidence of the work to be accomplished by repentance. But from the time at which God had pronounced to Cain

that future regeneration was to depend on repentance, up till the period at which Jacob had now arrived, there had been no great instance of repentance. The children of Adam degenerated; "Enoch walked with God and was not;" Noah did not advance in goodness after the flood; the pure faith and the utter self-abandonment of Abraham, and the less active but no less eminent virtue of Isaac (only dimmed by such venial failings as proved each simply imperfect): these had required no repentance; but with Jacob it was different. He had, more than either of the patriarchs, succumbed to self and its allurements; he had obtained the birthright by unbrotherly disaffection; he had secured the paternal blessing by means only too open to censure; he had taken two wives, but had loved only her that was fair to his eye; he had followed the impulse of self-advantage in his struggle for property with Laban; in short, in every position, he had seemed less actuated by thoughts of the future than by the meaner desire for present enjoyment. But a crisis in his life had been reached. He had escaped, without loss or injury, from the rapacious Laban, and that too, as Laban had avowed, by the direct interposition of God. He was returning in peace to his father's house, and his prayer at Bethel was thus granted. The forlorn wanderer, who had crossed the Jordan with only his staff to support his failing footsteps, was recrossing that river the owner of immense wealth, and his supplication for bread to eat had thus been more than answered. Already, his mind, sharpened by the activity of his past career, had learned to ponder on the higher ends of life; now, these higher ends force themselves on him with tenfold vigour, for they employ the powerful levers, gratitude and self-interest. The lessons of his youth, which even then had taken root, but had not flourished through the sterile soil of worldliness and sensuality, burst forth into new life beneath the sun of assured Heavenly countenance and protec-

tion, and Jacob is more than prepared to follow in the path of his father, and to deserve to transmit the blessing of Abraham ; when, as though to dash the cup of happiness from his lip, as though to blast at one blow the accumulated labour of years, as though to falsify all that Providence seemed to have promised ; even on the threshold of his native land, when all other dangers had been overcome, all other obstacles removed, the harrowing intelligence is communicated to him : “ Esau thy brother is coming towards thee, and 400 men with him.” Too well he recollects that brother’s wrongs, that brother’s hate ; too well he recalls that fearful threat which had doomed him to death on the newly-made grave of his father ; too well he remembers that brother’s early habits of self-indulgence and blindness to consequences ; too well he knows the lawless misrule of that desert land and of those nomad leaders. What to him now seemed the promise of God : “ I will be with thee ;” Esau little believed in that God, and would as little allow him to interfere in his revenge. Well might the heart of Jacob fail him, well might he burst out into that prayer : “ Deliver me, I beseech thee, from the hand of Esau.” Nevertheless he does not murmur ; the eminence of the danger may have shaken his faith for a moment, it has not destroyed it ; death stares him in the face ; he prepares to meet it as becomes a man hopeful in Divine mercy, resigned to Divine will.

How beautifully repentance develops itself in his abandonment of self. All his manly care for his wives awakens, all his paternal love for his children is called into action ; of himself he thinks not ; if there must be a victim at least let the innocent escape, let vengeance wreak its fury on him. All his dispositions are made, every precaution that human foresight can suggest is taken, and there remains but one last sad task—utterly but contentedly to make his peace with God and to

resign himself into God's hands. And so, on that harrowing night, he parts from all that his heart holds dear, he separates himself from all his most cherished ties, he takes his final farewell of earth and all its joys, and alone in the darkness and solitude he communes with his maker. His repentance is perfect; his soul, already as it were in idea hovering on the confines of eternity, spreading its wings for flight to its Divine source, is purified from all that earth had permitted to contaminate it. Through the fire of repentance the bright essence emerges pure. And so, to man, repentance and its effects were sanctified. But every abstract idea must have its type; the holiness of repentance and its type must be as manifest to mankind as the holiness of any other God-ordained institute. Even as the Sabbath had been blessed and made holy as a day of rest, and as other observances were also afterwards consecrated, so repentance was to be sanctified as the regenerator of man, as the chain by which earth was to be raised to heaven. Abraham in "the covenant between the pieces" saw a vision which was the type of God's promise; the initiatory covenant of Judaism had its type. This covenant between Divine mercy and human atonement had also its type. "There wrestled a man with Jacob until the dawn;" the strong contest between all that earth had left of heaven in his nature, and all that the immortal soul aspired to be, was represented in this wrestling. But "the man" could not prevail against Jacob—the evil desire could not successfully battle against the good intent. The struggle was thus terminated: "I will not send thee away except thou bless me. And he said unto him: What is thy name? And he said: Jacob. And he said: Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel; for thou hast contended with God and with men, and hast prevailed." Of what was this the type but of the successful end to which repentance had brought the patriarch? His con-

tention with God and with men was his present war in behalf of his God-like attribute, and his past war with men in support of his attribute of dust. In both had he prevailed; but, inasmuch as the victory with God preponderated over the other, so the type of its celebration was only Godlike;—Israel—a prince of God—one worthy of God's favour as having achieved victory in his behalf. But this event took place in solitude and under the cover of night. Men might doubt its authenticity, might regard the patriarch's tale with distrust; and so, even that the ways of God might be sanctified to mankind, that doubt might have no ground for support, sin no anchor of hope, the type of the struggle was presented to mortal eye in the lameness of the successful wrestler. And, ever after, the patriarch halted in his gait, and, ever after, his descendants ate not the sinew which shrank. And even as the "thread of blue" formed a memorial recalling to mind spiritual behest, so the forbidden sinew was the type of the conquest achieved by one man's repentance and the incentive to the repentance of other men. And ever after the name of Jacob was lost in the more glorious epithet Israel; and we, the descendants of the patriarch, are not the sons of Jacob but the children of Israel. In that title we inherited the promised land; in that title, when it shall please Heaven, shall we re-possess it. And even as Israel could journey to meet his offended brother with unflinching confidence, for come what would, Heaven was appeased, so shall the children of Israel, when again repentance is perfect, travel to their destination with unshaken faith, for the peace of the Lord shall be theirs,

וַיֵּשֶׁב.

GENESIS: CHAPTER XXXVII.

IF there be one merit in the historical portions of the sacred writings, which distinguishes them from similar parts of profane composition, it is the kaleidoscopic figures which they present to us. Which way so ever we regard these figures they are models of beauty and harmony; even in their defects they are symmetrical. While the characters that play conspicuously on the broad theatre of the world but too often rather shock us by the intensity of their crimes than they dazzle us by the splendour of their virtues, the men and women who distinguish themselves in the pages of holy writ, betray only just enough weakness to teach that they are human (and so to point a lesson), and we lose all regret for their failings in the admiration excited by their nobler qualities. We remember the conquests of Alexander, and we admire the stoic self-control which kept him away from the wife of Darius; but we remember also the wanton destruction of Persepolis, the sanguinary revenge at Tyre, the brutal murders of disgraced or honest servants, and we lose all the glory of his life in the darkness that shrouded his last few months. We recollect the conquests of David, and admire the noble forbearance which spared the life of his sleeping enemy; we deplore, it is true, the cause which led to Nathan's stern reproof, but we forget the error—a lapse where human nature slips most often—in the humility of the repentance; and the microscopic frailties of his career are hidden by the halo which encircles his dying hour, when his paternal love for his people shines with glory so resplendent.

The epic has ever been regarded as the highest species of composition. So exalted has it seemed, that the genius of a whole nation has scarcely achieved one worthy its

reputation. Greece gave only the Iliad, Rome the Aeneis ; England can point to the Paradise Lost ; and there, if exception be taken to the works of Voltaire and Tasso, the list of recognized epics is complete. But, if the impersonation of the loftiest feelings, the noblest aspirations, that ever dignified humanity, be the attribute for a hero of epos ; if the recital of events, in which these feelings and these aspirations stand forth in bold relief, be the true subject of epos, then the history of Joseph as far excels any of the epics above named, as his character excels those of Achilles or Aeneas, as his real greatness excels the ideal grandeur of the fallen cherub.

“And Jacob dwelled in the land in which his father had been only a sojourner.” But unalloyed happiness is not of this world ; his mother’s long-remembered smile did not welcome him back to the paternal tent ; the music of his dearly-loved Rachel’s voice did not awaken melodious echoes in his heart when he settled in his much needed home. And the soul of the patriarch retired as it were within itself, as the sap lies back before the frosts of winter ; nor did it expand again till, like that sap, the sun of a new spring shone upon it. Ah ! talk on ye moralists, of paternal justice, of paternal impartiality. You reason well, but human nature loves, and love hears not reason. Where is the father’s heart that has not beaten more lovingly at the sight of some cherished smile mirrored in one child’s eye more clearly than in another’s ? Where is the father’s heart that has not responded more fervently to the caress which most reminds it of a wife’s affection, that has not echoed most devoutly “God bless thee” when uttered in tones most resembling her’s ? The patriarch’s hearth was desolate ; the light of his young manhood’s dream had been buried in his Rachel’s grave ; and while his pious resignation to the will of Heaven taught him to bear his bereavement with fortitude and without a murmur, his affection for

her memory kept alive his love for her through love for her son. It was a natural weakness fostered by the holiest of earthly associations, amiable even in its unrectitude; but it *was* a deviation from the straight line of right, and it produced the inevitable result, evil.

Joseph was at this time seventeen; the age which hovers midway between the visions of boyhood and the realities of manhood; the age at which passion speaks to the heart in its most seductive accents; the age at which the spirit, if it have any expansive powers, begins to soar towards the half-defined hopes of after life. His brethren older, and, as the sequel proves, more experienced, more worldly and more commonplace, were of merely ordinary capability; they were quietly settled down to their vocation as shepherds. Their father's evident partiality for Joseph was gall to them. They did not seek to awaken his love for themselves by greater devotion or nobler conduct, but they justified his preference by the meanness which induced them to resent and revenge it. They smarted under what they conceived to be their father's injustice, and they determined to erect themselves into a monument of self-reproach, to become a vindication of his justice. Concurrent circumstances added fuel to the flames of their indignation. The favourite was adorned with external marks of the paternal regard; he had already, in the affectionate confidence which existed between him and his parent, revealed certain of their "evil reports." If this bespoke his taking advantage of his favouritism, it also told that their conduct was not blameless; for there is nothing in Joseph's other acts to justify the assumption that the sad tales of their misdeeds were not as true as they were sad. Fraternal affection might have prompted concealment, but this would have been a tacit participation in their guilt, and there was certainly more inducement for revelation than silence.

But this was not all. As is usually the case with the

weak-minded, Joseph's brethren were greater slaves to undefined fears for the future than to any present and actual wrong. Joseph's mind was of a superior order; young as he was, dim visions of future glory—day-dreams of genius intuitively aspiring heavenwards—floated before him. His soul yearned for that far-off goal towards which its heaven-born instincts already taught it to struggle. Deprived by jealousy of daily companionship, having no friends of his own age to whom he could confide his aspirations, he brooded in secret. Can we wonder that the images of night received their colouring from the pictures of day? He dreamed two dreams; they were remarkable for the individuality of their circumstances. He related them to his brethren—a weakness of childish vanity perhaps—and the relation sealed his fate. Hating him as having supplanted them in their father's love, they came to loathe him that in the world's esteem also he had dreamed his superiority. Sure sign of a vulgar soul that contents itself with envying spirits above it, nor ever strives to rise to their level. Accident favoured their baseness. The patriarch sent his beloved Joseph to bring him tidings of his absent children. He was in their hands; the guardian care of his father was loosened; they thought to imbrue their hands in his blood, as the readiest means of falsifying the promise of his greatness and their abasement; they would plunge into the depths of the criminal abyss to avoid a guiltless inferiority. His life is spared, but he is condemned by a refinement of cruelty to a worse fate; he is sold to slavery, and they cover (as they think) all traces of their crime with the blood-stained coat which they carry to their father. Thus is it ever that villainy defeats itself; death might have served their purpose, but even the life to which a worse hate had consigned him, was to produce blossoms of hues brighter than any that ambitious hope could have dreamed.

Poor boy ! what a lot for one so young, so cherished,—slavery, that living death that makes vitality a mockery and a shame. He was to pass through untold years a slave ; never more for him could bloom the sweet flowers which youth plants on the road of life ; never more could grow the luscious fruits which gladden the heart of successful manhood. For him, farewell the holy ties which reason dignifies and religion renders sacred. No more shall the beloved child be folded to his father's heart, no more shall that father hope to be supported by the younger strength of his darling son. Never shall a dearer love be wakened in that crushed bosom, which henceforward must think and feel and hope only as a master shall order. No wife shall bless his manhood, no children flourish round his maturity. Alone, the thing of another's caprice : with every power that should dignify but only degrades ; with genius that must grovel, intellect that must crawl ; without the pale of social life, and with no other fellowship with his kind but the privilege to suffer, and to know that he suffers unpitied and inevitably : such was to be the future of Joseph. A less noble spirit would have sunk under the trial : a less pure mind, with its guiding lights so extinguished, would have lost itself in the darkness of unbelief or in the oblivion of madness. Joseph only rose under his afflictions. If any superfluous leaven had vitiated his home career, none deteriorated his foreign life. He passed into the hands of a master who could appreciate good qualities even in a slave, and of a mistress who assumed her licence as a warrant for licentiousness. The former trusted all to his honour, the latter hoped all from his weakness. His honour rewarded his master's confidence by increased prosperity ; his weakness was proof against temptation in its most seductive form. His master, as prone to believe unsupported accusation as he was backward to investigate it, sacrificed to clamour the claims of past services ; but what of that ?

Joseph was a slave. His mistress had no resource but to screen her own culpability behind a simulated aversion for a crime she had vainly attempted to provoke; but what of that? Joseph was a slave. It was just that a slave should suffer; bought as a household piece of inert matter, he ceased to be valued when he ceased to serve his purpose, or when he failed to minister to a whim. And the persecuted youth, strong in nothing but his rectitude and virtue, had to learn that even in the depths of slavery there was a lower depth. He became an imprisoned slave; on the horrors of his lot were accumulated the tenfold horrors of a dungeon. Though a slave, he had at least breathed the air of heaven like a free man; even that scant right was to be taken away. The companion of malefactors and traitors, his very atmosphere became corruption. As a slave he could at least see virtuous men, and if his degradation might not permit him to imitate, he could still admire them—for even tyranny cannot snatch all that is human from a slave. As a prisoner even this was denied him; he must henceforth recoil from all fellowship with those about him, just as others had driven him from all communion with them. And this without hope of change. Without question consigned by a powerful master to a dungeon, all release seemed impossible. How could mercy pause to dwell on a despised slave? How could an incensed master incline to mercy in the teeth of the reputed insult committed against his honour? And still no murmur. It is the will of God that he shall suffer. It is his duty as a man to do so without repining.

But the humblest condition has in it something of innate pleasure if sin be not there. Even in the imprisoned slave, one was found capable of approving obedience and cheerfulness. It was a shade in the intensity of his darkness that he became a leader if only of prisoners. He thus acquired some power over his own

privacy, some influence over those beneath him. He might improve his inferiors by his authoritative teaching where he could not have hoped to improve them by his example as an equal. For, such is human nature, that the value of an opinion or of a lesson varies as the position of the promulgator. And time dragged heavily on beneath the chains of captivity; and the bright years of youth yield no brightness to him; and manhood in all the sternness of his harsh fate sits heavily upon him; and still no light penetrates his dungeon, the past and the future are enveloped in the same funereal pall.

Despotism is guided by no law but its own variable will. We, who live under a constitutional government, can scarcely understand what is meant by autocracy. We realize so little of slavery that it is hard to conceive a society in which all are slaves. We know that such a state of things exists now, we know that under such a condition Egypt existed in the time of Joseph. Pharaoh, as the king was called, consigned two of his principal officers to prison; their crime does not appear, it was enough that Pharaoh was wroth. Like other tenants of that sad abode they fell under Joseph's charge. Revolving their probable future from a knowledge of how they had incurred their king's displeasure, they were both troubled by a significant dream. A belief in dreams was a superstition of the time; interpreters of dreams were therefore in great request. Joseph, instructed by the only true interpreter—God, revealed to them the foreshadowings of their dreams. They received his explanation as they would have received one from a "magician" or a "wise man" of their own people—individuals, then as now, plentiful to trade on the credulity or ignorance of the mass. Being prisoners they had no immediate means wherewith to reward the (to them) professional interpreter; doubtless the fortunate butler was profuse in promises, for it is in the nature of some men always to intend well till

the time for action comes. The honeyed words of Pharaoh's officer, soon to be reinstated in favour, fell like dew on the withering heart of the friendless Joseph; its tendrils again shot forth. Who could tell but that the same supporting Deity that had given *him* the knowledge to interpret the dreams, would give to the chief butler the will to prove the sincerity of *his* professions. Well can we understand, therefore, the yearning cry of the weary captive: "remember me when it shall be well with thee;" and while we sympathize with the anguish from whose depths this was an echo, we can easily reconcile ourselves to the result—he will be forgotten. For was it likely that the restored favourite would care to remember either his fall or any thing connected with it? Holding his dignity by the weak tenure of a tyrant's caprice, it was his cue to keep that tyrant in good-humour by pandering to the whim of the moment. To recall past disgrace, by alluding to a companion, might be a dangerous venture. Pharaoh might recollect that one of the two degraded servants had been executed; he might have a fancy for a similar fate for the other. No! no! let well alone, thought the liberated butler; things were very fair as they were, and so "he did not remember Joseph because he desired to forget him."

קקא.

GENESIS, CHAPTER XLI.

How inscrutable are the ways of Providence! how admirably do the prescience of the Divinity and the free will of man combine! How naturally, without effort or strain, does human agency effect what the perfect wisdom of Heaven is enabled to foresee. Even as, in the physical world, our wants and pleasures induce us voluntarily to labour for the perpetuation of certain great laws, so, in the moral world, we as steadfastly strive towards the final

goal of our creation—perfectibility. Throughout the universe, so far at least as human knowledge extends, immutable principles are unerringly carried out, nor less in the spiritual than in the material. Everywhere the most finished system, the most harmonious arrangement; even a divergence from the straight line is nothing but a pleasing variety. Occasionally some shock seems to disturb the general harmony; some eruption or earthquake shakes the physical world; some insane outburst overthrows the moral world; some revolutionary mania destroys the social fabric; but these are partial in their effects and transient in their influence, nor do they appear destined for other end than to restore the universal equilibrium, just as a thunderstorm convulses, to be succeeded by more perfect calm.

For two more weary years the lonely prisoner looked longingly through the bars of his dungeon. He had already suffered thirteen years of slavery and confinement; and if occasionally the breath of hope had fanned the wings of liberty, the result had been disappointment, the wings had collapsed. He was the sport of cruel, uncharitable self. His brethren had sold him to gratify their hate, and to prevent their anticipated abasement. His mistress had made him a victim because he would not become a tool. The chief butler had ceased to remember what it was simply a folly to recollect. In his own conduct, Joseph was the very antithesis of self. He had been a faithful servant to his master; he was a faithful minister to his gaoler. We are now to see, in another instance, how right and truth prevail over wrong; how self is to find its best security in serving others. Pharaoh dreamed two remarkable dreams in one night, and in the morning "his spirit was troubled." In vain the pretended wise men—wise only in the folly of their dupes, charlatans trading on the credulity and fears of the simple—essayed their wisdom. The source of these dreams was in that

heaven which was above them, and the king still remained unanswered. A tyrant is at all times an uncertain master; a tyrant, angry, because ungratified, is a brute, with whom it is dangerous to come into contact. Self-preservation, the first law of nature, renders it imperative to mollify such a lord, if possible. It suited the butler, therefore, to remember Joseph who had interpreted his dream. To introduce a candidate for royal favour was to pave the way for his own advancement, and perhaps to place near the throne a creature of his own. He suddenly became as anxious to recollect as he had before been anxious to forget: "Pharaoh was angry with his servant:" and the forsaken prisoner is brought to the notice of the king.

Despotism permits anomalies, only because caprice is law. Joseph, condemned without a hearing, is pardoned without any excuse but that he may be able to minister to the wants of the moment. But prosperity does not dazzle whom adversity has chastened. "Interpretations belong to God," is the declaration of his own limited powers, and of the omniscience of Heaven only. This avowed dependence on Supreme wisdom meets the reward it merited. He not only interprets the dreams, but he interprets them in a manner that gains conviction even from an idolatrous despot. He accompanies his interpretation with advice, a dangerous thing to offer to a tyrant till his own views are ascertained; and so salutary is his counsel that he is at once appointed to execute its design. What a transition, from a dungeon to a throne; from the lowest depths of degradation and misery to the giddiest height of irresponsible power! "By thy mouth shall all my people be ruled!" this was the fiat of the day, and the slaves who heard, knew but the law of blind and servile obedience. And the new favourite, strengthened by sad experience, proves equal to his arduous duties. He who had been the leader of his brother slaves, the superior of his fellow prisoners, had learned, by the

necessities of his position, the duties of a ruler of men. He had acquired, in the sternest school, the self-command, the honesty of purpose, the charitableness for others, which are of all things necessary for any sovereign, but most imperative in a despotic monarch, and he was thus able to discharge his functions to the satisfaction, not only of Pharaoh, but, as the sequel proves, of a party still more difficult to please—the favourites whom he supplanted.

A famine in Egypt was not of common occurrence. Fertilized by the annual overflowing of the Nile, there seemed little reason to apprehend any serious inconvenience. Thickly peopled by resident inhabitants, there was no danger of the failure of labour. The sacred records tell us (Genesis, ch. xii.), that when other lands hungered there was still corn in Egypt. But with Canaan the case was different. Through its valleys no fertilizing Nile poured the luxury of its watery bosom; from its mountains rushed no equivalent substitute; its inhabitants were in part nomadic; they preferred seeking the innate abundance of nature to stimulating it by artificial cultivation. In Canaan dearth was not uncommon, and we cannot be surprised, therefore, that when Egypt hungered, neighbouring countries were famished. Such a state of things was now going on. With a prescience only Divine, God had foreseen the coming evil; with a mercy only Divine, he had deigned to warn; with a predilection only Divine, he had instructed Joseph, for wise after purposes, to expound that warning. "There shall be seven years of plenty, such as even Egypt never knew, and they shall be immediately succeeded by seven years of famine." This was the type of the royal dreams; for the emergency thus to supervene Joseph was instructed to prepare. How well he fulfilled his duty, the narrative records in terms as graphic as they are faithful.

Surrounding nations were stricken with the fear of a

lingering death. Uncivilized, they knew not the great social law which teaches men to live rather on the accumulation of the past than on the chances of the present. Famine stared at them with its gaunt and lurid eyes. But even in their misery the Divine mercy shown to Joseph was indirectly showered on them. They learned that there was plenty in Egypt; thither turned the faces of thousands of the hungry; thither, among the rest, turned the family of Jacob—the brothers of him who was “lord over Egypt.” Little dreamed the anxious train that journeyed from the patriarch to seek corn, how momentous was the fate that hung on their footsteps. They went to procure food; what were they to obtain? They who had rushed into a desperate crime to avoid only an anticipated ill, were now voluntarily hurrying to the very destiny they had dreaded. And yet they were consistent in both cases, for they were in both impelled by love for self,—that tyrant lord which ever justifies the means by the end, which ever overlooks consequences when present gratification is to be secured. They came among the crowd to buy corn—but their father, warned by the evil which came to his beloved Joseph when unprotected by his presence, sent not Benjamin with them. They came; they prostrated themselves before the great man who held their very lives in his hand. Why rose not some secret terror to warn them what little claim they had on that man’s sympathy? They had robbed him of all that life had of dear and precious; what if he should retaliate? But no; the holy book tells us that he recognised them, while they knew not him, only to impress on us the nobleness of that revenge which blesses while it chastens, which, by its utter oblivion of wrongs, converts jealousy into love, envy into admiration. Where is the epic that depicts so beautiful a character,—where is the fabled hero whose victories can compare with the victory achieved by virtue and faith over all that passion

has of unholy, over all that a selfish world has learned to justify?

Little could the crouching brothers, bowed to the earth, little could they be expected to recognise, in the manly face of the noble ruler before them, the youthful features they had so hated to behold. The boy of seventeen was nearly forty, and time and care had written on his brow characters which had obliterated the traces of earlier days. But *they* were not so changed. They were men when they sold him; and countenances do not alter after maturity till decay comes. They probably spoke to each other in their home language, Hebrew, and the long unheard but still unforgotten accents (he had called his sons Ephraim and Manasseh) enabled his ear to assist his eye. He knew that the famine was sore in Canaan; he judged that his father and family still lived there; he felt that it was more than probable that the same necessity that had driven Abraham and Isaac into Egypt might send Jacob thither also. He expected to see the once loved faces—perhaps this hope it was which induced him personally to superintend the sale of corn. He did see those faces, but he missed some; where was his father? where Benjamin? Had grief for the loss of a favourite son killed the patriarch? Had Benjamin shared the hatred of which himself had been the victim? These questions naturally arose in Joseph's mind. He knew that he had to deal with unscrupulous men; to ask them directly what he desired to know, was either to frighten them away, or to induce further deceit to cover his living testimony to their existing guilt. He must ensure personal communication with his father or his brother, if either live; for this end he must have a hold on his brothers through the only medium by which guilt can be attacked—its fears. We can understand his conduct viewed in this light. He spoke to them roughly; he raised against them a feigned accusation to test their characters; he

desired to know what changes twenty years had introduced into their hearts. He sold them corn after they had told him what he longed to know—that Jacob and Benjamin lived ; but could he believe them ? Would they come again ? There was but one way to satisfy himself ; he must have security. One of them was to be left as a pledge with him, while the others returned to Canaan to fetch their youngest brother. On him Joseph knew he could depend ; his presence would remove all doubt ; and so Simeon “is bound before their eyes”—that guilty brother whom tradition points at as the instigator of Joseph’s death ; and Reuben, conscience-stricken, as all criminals are when retribution overtakes them, in the agony of a new sorrow, betrays to the listening ears of Joseph that remorse never sleeps, that the recollection of their great treachery against fraternal love and paternal obedience still haunts their hearts, and fills their bosoms with dread. Well may Joseph turn away and weep ; it is philanthropy weeping for human weakness ; virtue mourning for sinful aberration. It is one of the Divine lessons which the Bible gives by implication. Honesty is thus commanded to expose guilt without revenge, to punish it so as to reform the guilty, and to weep for the necessity which impels to punish. Crime is thus taught that no cunning can effectually conceal it, no lapse of time remove all trace of it ; on the broad principles of right impressed by mercy on creation it has inflicted a wrong, and the result, inevitable because ordained of God, must be washed away by atonement.

They returned to Canaan, these trembling culprits ; they could not conceal or pervert the truth. Simeon’s absence, the presence of their corn money, must be accounted for. They tell their still grieving father their sad tale. The dark past rises before him.

“Joseph is not,” is his first cry ; “my son shall not go down with you, for his brother is dead and he remains

alone ; if mischief befall him by the way in which ye go, then shall ye bring down my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave."

Deprived by death of one son because he went on their way, and of a second who had been detained from him, Jacob will not part with a third. As the withering leaf clings to the stem while one drop of life remains, so the seared heart fastens on existence. But the stock of corn begins to fail ; again starvation's horrors threaten to invade their homesteads. And the fear of utter loss triumphs over the chance dread of partial loss. And Benjamin, the test of his brothers' sincerity, stands before Joseph. He receives also other proof of their honesty, and his heart yearns for the children of his father. One other lingering doubt removed ; are they no longer jealous or revengeful—and he will be satisfied. He selects a terrible ordeal, and triumphantly they pass it ; he is content, there remains but the task to discover himself.

ויג

GENESIS: CHAPTER XLIV., VERSE 18.

As there are few good characters without their defects, so there are few bad characters without their redeeming qualities. Jealousy and an innate conviction of inferiority had influenced Joseph's brethren in embittering his lot, and in rendering his father's days "evil." But remorse, the ever-pursuing avenger that treads on the heels of crime, had evidently not failed in its mission with them. Through long years they had been the guilty witnesses of Jacob's unspoken, unexpressed sorrow. They had seen his anguish, which even religious humility pardons, in the deepening lines on his brow, in the melancholy of his general demeanour. They had learned to respect the heart-broken sorrow they had caused, and to bear with its sole comfort—engrossing love for Benjamin. He,

unlike the more nobly-gifted Joseph, had not actively contributed to stir their envy. He was formed in their own ordinary mould, and they had been content that he should reign undisputed favourite, alike as the dying pledge of his mother's affection, who had laid down her life on the altar of her conjugal love, and as the representative of his lost brother, who had fallen a victim to their unbrotherly hate. More recently, they had seen the struggle between the desire to live and the wish not to part with Benjamin, in the bosom of the patriarch. They had seen the strong wrestling between the horrors of famine and the dread of accident to the loved one, and they knew that really Jacob's soul was bound up in Benjamin's. Can we wonder then that the test by which Joseph sought to prove both their filial and their fraternal duty was just the one most difficult to bear, the one most efficacious for discovering their real sentiments.

The address of Judah to Joseph is remarkable for its simple truth, and for the abnegation of self which it exhibits. Without any attempt at circumlocution, the zealous pleader goes directly to the question at issue, and speaks to it earnestly and honestly. He does not know how needless is his advocacy, he cannot imagine how warmly he is pleading his own cause while pleading that of his brother; but his exertions are none the less praiseworthy because they are so little requisite. And thus it ever is; blinded by partizanship, by a false standard of philanthropy, by passion, or by injustice, men launch their efforts into causes which are unworthy the efforts wasted on them. Attracted by the glitter of personal advantage, or allured by the hollowness of public applause, men cease to rely on the honesty of their purpose, and become dependent on the flattery or cajolery of representations. These men succeed perhaps, for it is with the mass they prevail, and the mass are ever ensnared by the showy and the clamorous; but their success is as evanescent

as it is unworthy, and the reaction that follows is the more galling because of its contrast with previous victory. The genuine advocate achieves a nobler conquest; himself impressed with the truth of the cause he pleads, his conviction lends dignity to his language, and force to his arguments. What he says comes from his heart, and goes to the heart of his hearers. Doing the duty of neither a hireling nor a partizan, he personifies his own views, and, if these be really honourable, he cannot fail.

Who shall describe the feelings of his brothers when, in their own language, those harrowing words rang in their ears: "I am Joseph?" Who shall depict the conflict of emotions that raged in their bosoms? Betrayed by their own acts into the fulfilment of the doom they had dreaded; convicted by their own admission of acknowledging the justice of that doom; their shame was so apparent and their humiliation so perfect, that even an enemy would have pitied their abasement. How then should a generous friend, a brother, hasten to relieve them from their embarrassment; for it is a trait of generosity rather to confess itself at fault than to wring such confession from another. Hence we can understand Joseph's next words:—

• "I am Joseph, your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt; now, therefore, be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither; for God did send me before you for the preservation of life."

Not a reproach embitters the reconciliation; not a blush shames the newly-recognised ties of brotherhood. The noble-minded Joseph avoids even that legitimate retaliation which seeks an avowal of error; so perfect is his generosity that he even converts an atrocious crime into an anticipatory benefit, and, as though to confirm his view, he affects to believe that in their conduct towards himself they had been less free agents than instruments

in the hands of Heaven. Where is the epic which paints the God-like attribute, mercy, more God-like? Shall we turn to the mysterious and vicarious atonement of the "Paradise Lost?" Shall we dwell on the magnanimity of the pious Æneas; the heroism of the fiery Achilles? No imaginary picture can equal this consummation. In all the beauty of its perfection, it stands almost alone amongst the noblest examples that history presents for our instruction; its value is not diminished by any extraneous circumstance; its lustre is not dimmed by any adventitious colouring; its glory is not tarnished by any extrinsic auxiliary. Alone, in utter simplicity, it appeals to our hearts; like a naked babe exposed on some desolate strand, its very isolation is its attraction; its very want of help is its strongest plea for help.

But there remained one expiation which did not depend on Joseph: the avowal of so much of the past to their father as was necessary to his being informed of Joseph's existence. There still vibrated in his ears, and in his heart still reverberated the echo, "Some evil beast has devoured him." It was necessary to drown these sad sounds by melody, than which holier never gladdened a parent's ears, never softened a parent's heart. Such, however, is human nature, that the outlaw who dares to defy all laws finds a difficulty in confessing even a venial fault; the avowal of a trivial error brings more shame than the commission of the gravest offence. Still this task of setting Jacob's inquiries at rest was before them, and we cannot forbear our admiration at the pains Joseph took to render that task easy. Jacob would have been satisfied with the bare intelligence that his son lived; all other facts would have been absorbed in that fact. He might have demanded some particulars, he might have gone into some details, but in the end he would have been content. Previous events had to some extent prepared him to expect further news of the austere Egyptian who

had detained one of his sons as security for the appearance of another. He anticipated some information respecting the "money returned in the sacks' mouths;" and his anxiety was not diminished by the uncertainty which shrouded the fate of Simeon and Benjamin. Many a longing look turned he southward, as day after day passed and still came no signs of the absent ones; and when at length they did break on the prospect, how could he recognise the small caravan formed by his sons and their asses in the magnificent equipage sent as the type of Joseph's grandeur!

Well might he be lost in stupor at the astounding intelligence; the dead had returned to life; the cruel gaoler of his son was a dearer son; not only was his darling Benjamin restored, but he came as the harbinger of a happier restoration. What though "his heart had fainted" at the first recital of the extraordinary news, which destroyed convictions of more than twenty years' duration; he could not long resist the assurances of his children, seconded as they were by the pleadings of his own heart.

"It is enough; my son Joseph is yet alive; I will go down and see him before I die."

What to the father's yearning was dignity, honour, or power? What heeded affection that its object was high or low? His son lived, all other combinations were hidden in that entirety; his son lived. All other considerations vanished before his desire once more to behold that son. The home of his fathers, the grave of his wife, the hearth of his manhood; all were left for the child of his love. And thus was accomplished the word that never fails; the word that was given to Abraham; and Israel, with all that he had, journeyed into the country which, amid difficulties and dangers, was to be the cradle of his people's nationality.

Apart from any religious opinions which may be

formed in connection with the Divine purpose of the descent into Egypt, there are worldly opinions of sufficient importance to warrant investigation. We know that Israel was destined to become the father of a nation, but it is clear, from the peculiar condition of Canaan, that such a consummation could not have supervened there without a miraculous interference. Canaan was a semi-barbarous land ; it was, therefore, but indifferently cultivated, and was consequently but ill conditioned to supply the wants of an increasing people. It is a law of nature that men multiply in proportion as the means for their support multiply. Savages who live from hand to mouth are always few in number ; the half drained and badly farmed Britain did not maintain one fiftieth part of the millions that now inhabit England. But besides this, Canaan was a country of tribes ; it was constantly the scene of warfare and rapine ; the wild bands from the hills rushed on to the hordes of the plains, and these revenged themselves on their immediate neighbours. Nomadic bands of plunderers also scoured the country, and contributed their share to the general insecurity. Even in the time of Abraham and Isaac, when the land was much more thinly populated, the fear of God and a well-trained household had not at all times exercised sufficient influence to prevent encroachments. Abraham and Isaac had suffered from these encroachments ; they had been frequently compelled to change their dwelling places. Jacob had become a settler ; his observations after the affair of Shechem proved that he was not without his dread of retaliation. The fear of God was rapidly diminishing (the cup of the Amorites was growing full ;) the tribes were on the increase ; and the prevalence of plundering habits may be inferred from the security sought within "walled cities." All these circumstances were antagonistic to the natural development of a people. A careful cultivation ; the safety engendered by a power-

ful executive government; sedentary habits and the consequent improvements in art and science induced by experience; these are wanting to such development. In no country did they exist so abundantly as in Egypt, and Egypt, therefore, was the place best adapted for the increase which was to convert seventy souls into a people "mighty and many." The influence of Joseph; the benefits he had conferred on the throne; the continued want of his services; were all powerful claims in behalf of his family, and hence we can understand the ease with which Pharaoh assigned to them the very elements they required; a land in which to live, a home which they might the more safely call their own, because Egypt and the Red Sea defended it from external inroads, and religious prejudice from internal invasion by the Egyptians; "for shepherds are an abomination to Egypt." And thus by human agency, by the unfettered operation of free-will, are the unerring ends of Providence effected. Vainly do men struggle against general principles; the little wisdom, which does not see the morrow, is lost in the infallible wisdom which measures all time, even as the drop of water vanishes in the mighty ocean.

 וידי

GENESIS, CHAPTER XLVII. VERSE 28.

THE Israelites were definitively settled in the land of Goshen, and Jacob lived seventeen years to behold their domiciliation in their new homes. He lived to see the grandchildren of Joseph, and to witness the rapid and general increase of his descendants, nor can there be any doubt that these last years of his career were the happiest he ever knew. Honoured by his family, honoured through his beloved son, supported by an active and unshaken faith in God, and in the coming fulfilment of His promise made to Abraham and confirmed to Isaac, he could well invoke

a blessing on Ephraim and Manasseh in terms expressive alike of his gratitude and his hopes:—"The angel who has redeemed me from all evil will bless the youths, and will permit them to be called by my name, and by the name of my ancestors, Abraham and Isaac." For the sometime slave, now the head of his family, was to receive a recompence in atonement of his sufferings; he was to be twice represented in the land of Canaan, he was to have a double voice in the congregation of Israel; and even as his father had achieved the proud distinction of giving a name to the descendants of Abraham, so had his sufferings also their reward. "In thee shall Israel be blessed." Even therefore as we are now the children of Israel, so are we also to bless as he blessed; and even as the Sabbath or a solemn day sanctifies our souls and approximates them to their eternal source, even, as thus drawn nearer to Heaven, we feel that we may without trembling invoke Divine protection on those we love, so we reiterate the words of the patriarch and say, "May God make thee like Ephraim and Manasseh." And this perhaps is one distinct feature of Judaism, that it is not only a religion of public worship or of empty forms. Really and piously observed, our holy faith is the reflex of its Divine origin. It is interwoven with every relation of our lives, even as our Heavenly spirit is intermingled with every fibre of our bodies. Take away the spirit, and the body remains an inert mass of earth; take away from our religion its spirit, and it becomes a thing only too material and too earthly. But, as future portions will show us, Judaism cannot well be deprived of its spirit; ignorance may stupefy by its blindness, bigotry may excite by its intoxicating influence, intolerance may falsify by its wilful perversions, but so long as the statutes of the Law remain, so long will reason be able to prove their intimate and vivifying association with every combination of our existence.

And the last of the patriarchs is about to suffer the lot of all flesh, and the sacred history is about to give up the task of individual biography for that of describing a nation's life. And over the transition the patriarch's spirit hovers as though still attracted to its worldly loves, and the pen of the historian lingers as though unwilling to part from its grateful task. Around the bed of their dying father the heads of the future tribes of Israel are summoned to listen to that which shall befall them in latter days. The divinely-inspired parent desires to warn his children by a foreshadowing of the future. But one of the blessings of our earthly lot is, "the blindness to the future kindly given." Whenever God has permitted man to prophesy, it has been rather as a monitor than as an expounder of inevitable fate. Thou wilt, and not thou shalt, is the true rendering of the word; for, if not, man is at once deprived of all power over his actions, and ceases to be a responsible agent. But this is not consistent with his being; everywhere is he his own master, in no way is he controlled in his choice of path; "good and evil, life and death," are set before him, and he is recommended which to choose. Infallible wisdom advises him in his selection by pointing out the folly of evil, and by referring to one of the first principles of creation; ineffable mercy confers a thousand benefits to induce gratitude, and thereby make love and duty lead in the same way; unerring prescience foresees the inevitable consequences to which disobedience will rush, and kindly lays those consequences before disobedience that it may "turn and live;" but here all interference ceases. Heaven does not coerce man; he is lord of his own career and is just what he himself determines; neither more nor less. Such being the case, it would have been inconsistent that Jacob should have been permitted to pronounce the doom of his sons; for, irrespective of being a departure from Divine law, the pronouncement might, as in idolatrous countries it often

did, lead to its own fulfilment. And yet it would have been equally inconsistent that the patriarch, whose whole after life had been so specially dignified, should on his deathbed be degraded by announcing an intention he was unable to accomplish. Hence we can understand the terms of the "blessing of Jacob." Partly prophetic and partly retrospective, it is entirely so allegorical that it is difficult to determine where the real ends and where the figurative begins. To give a few examples. The address to Reuben is evidently of the past :—"Thou art my first-born ; unstable as water, thou wilt not excel." Here allusion is made to a known trait in the character of Reuben, and an inference, not necessarily prophetic, is therefrom deduced. Of all the obstacles opposed to success in life, there is none so obstructive as personal unsteadiness of purpose. No man ever achieves greatness or even respectability without determination. It is the curse of the commonplace that they are weakminded. To ensure success, an object or goal must be firmly fixed before the eyes as the point of sight, and every deviation from the straight line must be carefully avoided. Reuben's infirmity of purpose therefore was a legitimate source for objection, and the impressiveness of a dying charge the best guarantee for attention to its removal.

The allusions to Simeon and Levi were of a double character. Every word was in reference to their past career till the last sentence, and that seemed to foretell a future punishment. Yet how call a punishment that which gave to Levi as an equivalent for his heritage the proud privilege of furnishing special ministry to God ? The same remark applies to Judah with the addition of a mysterious figure never satisfactorily explained. "Thy brethren shall praise thee," probably refers to what was uppermost in Jacob's mind, his love for Joseph ; and Judah's intercession in the case of Benjamin was doubtless the reason assigned by the patriarch for parental regard.

The passage alluding to the lawgiver and Shiloh, and which has given rise to so many controversial translations, to so much polemical speculation, has even now no recognised version; nor has any one been able to convince the world that his rendering and the meaning to be deduced from it, are the rendering and the meaning of Jacob. May it not be regarded as a compromise between the real and the ideal? A sybilline oracle, which left so much open to the future it pretended to read, was generally defensible by its propounders; for, no matter which event supervened, ambiguity always contrived an excuse in some way satisfactory. To the word Shiloh, undoubtedly here placed curiously, a meaning has been given which certainly the patriarch never contemplated; and yet strong ground is taken on this meaning, and a whole host of theories built with as much foundation probably as the mystery of the word sanctions and no more.

The affectionate address of Joseph, characterised perhaps as the fertile bough, because he gave *two* tribes to Israel instead of one, clearly points to the still undiminished love of the patriarch, and to his vivid remembrance of the cruelty perpetrated against his favourite by his other children. The words referring to Zebulun certainly were prophetic, but as their literal fulfilment involved no knowledge of the future that could at all influence the conduct or lessen the responsibility of the descendants of Zebulun, there could be no deviation from Divine law in their promulgation. Attempts have been made, satisfactory to none so much as to the originators, to render the observations made to other sons of Jacob also prophetic, but to avoid the useless field of discussion and the barren field of speculation, it were as wise to accept the interpretation here given as to plunge into a labyrinth of mystery on which as much is to be said on any one side as on any other that a particular view may assume. For this interpretation has at least one merit. It leaves to

the patriarch all the dignity of his high character as holding communion with Heaven, and it in no way disturbs the beneficial laws by which Providence withholds a knowledge of the future.

Jacob dies, his body reposes by the side of his father's, and his children return from his funeral to the land of their adoption. His presence removed from amongst them, the old leaven breaks out. The brothers, who had so grievously sinned against Joseph, but half-trusted to their reconciliation, for it is the fate of crime to suspect. They regarded their father as the tie which had bound them into one harmonious whole; that tie removed, they feared the revenge they had done so much to deserve. But as the sequel proves, they little knew the great soul whom they had first wronged by deeds and now insulted by suspicions. Joseph, irrespective of any regard for fraternal affection, could afford to forgive them. In social position, as in moral rectitude, they were alike beneath him. To take revenge would be to debase himself below their level, and to adopt a course unworthy himself and his lofty influence. But higher principles prevailed with him. What would only be unworthy his greatness, would be a disgrace to his brotherhood, a shame to his faith in God. Hence his answer to their servile entreaties: "Am I instead of God?" He knew that how much soever he might overlook their culpability, there was still an offended Deity, and their present fear proved how little reliance they had in Him, and how little therefore they had done to obtain that reliance. Generosity never remembers that it has pardoned till future misconduct recalls the need for past forgiveness. But this the vile and the mean cannot understand. They think they have pardoned when they stifle the unholy desire for revenge; they know not the nobler sentiment which buries in the abyss of time all bitter recollections and retains only those bright images which may awaken

pleasurable emotions. Such men are either positive enemies or negative friends ; they either actively hate or only passively abstain from hating. Positive friendship and its seeing in every loved object a second self, is a blessing unknown to them. Of this stamp seem to have been the brothers of Joseph, and the sacred historian, having held up to our examination their abjectness and the nobility of their brother, dismisses them from the scene without further notice, as lost among the people of whom they were the fathers. Joseph deserves and receives a special recognition ; his death and the contemporary engagement that his bones shall be placed in the land of the covenant are faithfully recorded, and thus the first book of the Law appropriately closes.

שְׁמוֹת

EXODUS: CHAPTER I.

THE stream of individual existence has poured its bright waters into the troubled sea of a people's life. Lashed by the angry breath of tyrant taskmasters that sea knows no rest; its heaving bosom reflects only the black darkness which glooms from the clouds of slavery. On, on, it rushes, impelled by a power that it cannot control, to a destination that it never seems to approach. The breath of its rulers is capricious, and drives it to no definite goal; motion, ceaseless, aimless, is the lot to which it is condemned. Sullenly it surges beneath the lordly rule, and loudly the wails rise from its heaving bosom. But its moan is impotent before the blast that will not cease to roar, and it appears reduced for ever to its troubled fate. No light breaks on its horizon; there is no effectual resistance from within, no hope of change from without, and bitter is the cry wrung from its agitated breast and borne on the unseen wings of mercy to the throne of God.

The stern realities of slavery are too harsh for even imagination to soften or fancy to colour. When man, blindly selfish, inflicted slavery on his fellows, he invented the sure means for his own injury; looking only to present advantage he ignored future consequences. For, if the regeneration of the human race is to be achieved, as we believe it is, by human agencies; if mortals, by slow but certain steps, are to tread, through Divine grace, the road to eternal salvation, then slavery is the greatest enemy that man has to combat; it is the serpent bred in his own bosom to destroy him who fostered it. Of all heroes he is the greatest whom slavery does not degrade below his species. Created a responsible being, man must remain so, or a great law of nature is set aside. Art and

the relations of social life are only consistent with human progress when they work out the principles impressed by Providence. Slavery, by depriving man of his temporal free-agency, is therefore antagonistic to nature, and is hence a wrong from which, by inherent law, only wrong can emanate. It is alike futile and impious to talk of distinctions of colour, or of proprietary rights; no reasoning can make that a right which is radically wrong. Sophistry may deceive, the strong arm of might may coerce, but slavery is none the less an attempt to subvert the decrees of Heaven, and is hence a crime. It is only another kind of idolatry, by which man assumes to surround himself by blind worshippers.

Years sped on, and the children of Israel thrived in their new homes. Attached by inclination and habit to the arts of peace, they prospered, and they increased through their prosperity. Defended by the locality of their settlement from warlike molestation, they needed not the discipline which makes soldiers, and in the luxury of sloth they lost that spirit of resistance which prompts men to resent, rather than to receive, an indignity. How else could we understand that two millions of people submitted without a struggle to the yoke which cruelty imposed on them under the name of policy. But slavery seemed in this instance to have lost one of its effects; for the more heavily its burden weighed on the children of Israel the more they multiplied. The Egyptians were sorely perplexed at this result, so opposed to their experience. It became necessary to devise some new means to prevent further increase; and when did human hatred fail to attain its end? Excision of the males was the method determined on. The worshipped river of Egypt was to receive every new-born male child, while the females were to be preserved—to furnish thereafter a stock of wives, always valuable in an Eastern country. This was indeed a master-stroke of policy; for while

inflicting a most deadly vengeance on a dreaded enemy, it was to contribute no less efficiently to the national welfare. Destruction of the slave was to be new life to the master. There was but one defect in this policy—a slight one in the eyes of a tyrant or an evil doer, but a serious one when the result was to be considered. It was wrong; and hence, as a moral deflection, wrong to its author was to be the inevitable result.

Who does not know how Moses was rescued from the fangs of death? How, in the halls of his people's oppressor, he received not only protection, but the qualifications which were afterwards to fit him for his high vocation? We desire not, therefore, to dwell on the oft read tale; we propose rather to investigate the circumstances involved in his selection as the future lawgiver of Israel, and to show how human free-agency operated to subserve the design of Providence. This investigation should be the more necessary and interesting when we call to mind the words so frequently recorded in the Pentateuch: "What will the nations say, &c.;" "Why should the nations say, &c.;" and the evident desire thereby implied that in all the direct interpositions of Heaven there might be no excuse on which man could build an exceptional hypothesis. Even the Almighty condescended to listen to such an appeal, and, while dispensing his universal power, vouchsafed "to justify the ways of God to man." Nor can we wonder at this when we consider how forcible is example; how ready man is to lay hold of any precedent for his own shortcomings; how many sophistries have been deduced from what common-sense proves to have but one legitimate interpretation; how many precautions the All-Wise adopted in the statutes given to Israel to guard against any infringement on the principles of moral right—even where such infringement might be regarded as comparatively innocuous; *e. g.*: "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live."

Besides, the leader of a community should be able to command the respect of his followers; he should guide them less by the power of his position than by the superiority of his moral, intellectual, and social qualities; let us see then in how far Moses was qualified for the post to which Divine choice advanced him.

There can be no doubt that Egypt was the centre of all the civilization that the world then knew, and it is no less certain that the court of Egypt was the cynosure of all that was superior in that country. The school, therefore, in which Moses passed the first period (40 years) of his life was the one best adapted to the development of his mental powers. The study of chemistry, astronomy, and the abstract sciences generally, must have contributed to expand his intellect, and many passages might be quoted to show his acquaintance with these subjects. While the thousands of Israel were plunged in the miseries of slavery, and were, as a consequence, steeped in such ignorance that even the knowledge of God was fading from among them ("And they would not hearken to Moses, &c."), one individual of that people was receiving the best and the most enlightened training that the world then afforded. His very toleration in the anomalous position that he held, may be adduced as an indirect proof of his general character. He kept up a constant intercourse with his afflicted brethren, and, although trouble makes men selfish, such was their regard for him that no one seems to have given intimation to Pharaoh of his connection with the race which that monarch so dreaded. Pharaoh's daughter too, and doubtless many of the court, knew of Moses' descent, and yet he must have conciliated their good opinion, or we can scarcely imagine that his secret would have been so well kept. And thus, in the possession of an ease unknown to his people, he was unenvied by them; usurping rights to which his birth gave him no claim, he was still

permitted freely to enjoy them. But the habits of a student and the luxury of indolence, although they may have contributed to enlarge the intellect and foster the genius of Moses, were little calculated to give him those habits of business which were so needed for a legislator. For the acquirement of these it was necessary that he should come into rough contact with his fellow men, that he should be called upon to exercise rather the bodily than the mental powers, that he should be capable of meeting an emergency, that he should be prepared to act as well as to think; in short, that he should be as practical as his previous education had made him theoretical. How was this to be effected without trenching upon the privileges of his free will, which was little likely to lead him to prefer the sterner realities of existence to the intellectual refinement of a luxurious court? How was he to prove in adversity the soundness of those principles which prosperity had never tried? How was he to afford to mankind the sublime example of a mortal's being selected for his own inherent merits as the special servant of Heaven? Bearing in mind that Moses was mortal, and therefore not infallible, that man's actions are entirely his own, that his moral or immoral principles are entirely of his own forming, and that repentance is the grand antidote for the counteraction of the innate effects of sin, we shall understand the sequel.

Moses kept up a constant intercourse with his brethren, and his heart doubtless bled for their wrongs. It required an almost superhuman patriotism to induce him to prefer a share in those wrongs to the voluptuous ease which he enjoyed in the palace of the wronger, and yet one could understand the sacrifice and appreciate it. That he did not make such election only proves the weakness of humanity rather than its culpability. But he could not bear unmoved to witness suffering which he could not alleviate, and once, carried away by his sympathy, he smote an

oppressor of his brethren and killed him. Let us look at this act deliberately. It is the highest crime known to man, that of murder, and yet it is deprived of all its heinousness by its want of premeditation and by the accumulated provocation which induced its commission. It involves a social wrong for which Heaven itself leaves but one atonement, and yet the circumstances connected with it at once strip it of all atrocity, by showing the utter absence of either malice or intention. It was strictly but the result of a simple act of retaliation, but it was also undoubtedly a proof of violence of temper, and of the influence of passion, which carried to excess led to guilty consequences, and certainly unfitted a man for the discharge of legislative functions. These require calmness, deliberation, and impassiveness; they demand freedom from impulse as likely to prevent the exercise of judgment, and uniformity of temper as calculated to secure the absence of personality. Moses therefore, by his deed of homicide, proved that how qualified soever he may have been by education, he was still destitute of those practical qualities which were equally needed. But he did more also. When subsequently he found that, spite of his precaution, his secret was known, and that malice was likely to betray it, he became a fugitive from justice. It is true that there was little probability of his obtaining justice; not only would his killing of an Egyptian become known, but his birth would be discovered to the tyrant. Pharaoh would thus have a double motive for revenge. The life of a subject, and that subject a tool of his oppression, would demand an atonement: the imposition, of which he would feel himself to have been the victim, would stimulate his personal desire to obtain that atonement, no matter at what sacrifice. Justice under a tyrant is always precarious, in this case it would have been a mockery. Moses felt that while his violence, his want of temper, his angry impulse, had led him into a culpable excess, they

had not made him a murderer. No law, either Divine or human, could demand his life, and yet he knew that his life would be taken. He fled. As he had once preferred ease to patriotism, so he now preferred entire withdrawal from consequences to martyrdom. Living, he might atone to Heaven for the moral wrong he had committed; dying, he would more than compensate the social injury he had inflicted. His life might by its thereafter efface in repentance its one blot; his death could lead to no beneficial result, and would at once cut off the future. He was justified therefore in fleeing, but it is his mortality which pleads for him with our mortality; one could understand and appreciate the almost superhuman self-abnegation which would lay down even life as the sacrifice for a deviation from the path of rectitude.

Circumstances and his own free will had thus rendered a courtier's career of ease impossible to Moses. He was to become an active labourer for the very means of existence, and this was to be the fire through which he was to purify the dross from his past, and to prepare the sterling metal for his future. In the eyes of his fellow-men he was to justify his selection from all men for the highest position ever assigned to mortal. He was to become worthy to speak to God "face to face," to have the power of invoking the presence and support of Heaven with a certainty of their being accorded; he was to stand as it were above the level of humanity, with the implied confidence of the Eternal that he would not presume on his privileges, that he would not, by any act of his power, detract from the merit which had rendered that power his prerogative. And all this he was to do without in any way losing his position as a responsible free agent to be judged according to his actions. With a mind cultivated as his had been, and with principles of right growing from extensive knowledge, this task was not too difficult, especially if we recollect that his past

life had in all but one instance been the exponent of high training. And the lot he chose was certainly that of all others best calculated to leave ample time for the reflection necessary to correct his infirmity of temper, and yet to awaken that activity to which his studential habits had never given birth. He became a shepherd in a desert land. How hard a shepherd's life was, may be inferred from the terms in which, at Gilead, Jacob described it to Laban. Exposed to the heat of day and the cold of night, the body became inured to fatigue and capable of sustaining it. Obnoxious to the attacks of robbers, or to the inroads of savage beasts, the shepherd learned vigilance to avoid danger or courage to resist it. A witness to the infirmities of his flock, he became accustomed to treat weakness tenderly, and he thus acquired a habit of consideration likely to tell in his intercourse with his fellow-men. These were the very qualities desirable for a legislator, they were the precise qualifications which the character of Moses required for its completion. Meanwhile, his mind had plenty of scope. Cut off from all communication with civilised men, deprived of extraneous aid for reading or study, not blessed with a congenial domestic companion to whom he could confide his hopes and his fears, his mind naturally took refuge in itself. Its vast innate powers were brought to bear on himself. There was a struggle between the spirit and body, and when did the former not prevail when it was only honest? In the utter solitude to which many of his hours were condemned, he had time to consider the consequences of his hasty blow. His everyday life contrasted too vividly with his past career not to suggest food for many and bitter self-upbraidings. And as in Jacob we have endeavoured to show how the Almighty condescended to accept repentance and to hallow it, so in Moses we find another, and a parallel instance. That Moses did repent his single transgression

is best proved by the fact that he never again sinned through the same cause ; indeed, Holy Writ specially dwells on his peculiar meekness of character, as a tribute alike to his equanimity and to the sincerity with which he had conquered his defect. When therefore we see that by the position in which he was placed during two periods of his life, Moses acquired the mental and physical qualities necessary to his future leadership of Israel ; when we see that the single infirmity of his character, which led him into error, was nobly conquered and never again prevailed, we can at once account for the selection of Heaven and bow to the wisdom of it. Opportunities innumerable will be presented in future chapters to show how Moses' after conduct justified the trust reposed in him ; enough has now been said to assign a reason for the appearance of the burning bush, and for the extreme diffidence evinced by Moses, in his capacity as a free agent, in obeying the direct command of God.

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EXODUS: CHAPTER VI. VERSE 2.

THE plagues of Egypt ! Who has not dwelt on these visitations, who has not pondered on their awful character ! As beacons on the watery expanse shine far into the surrounding darkness, so these monuments of Divine vengeance glitter in the long vista of the past. Individual punishment may have been signal ; once, the judgment inflicted on the powerful army of a great king * was signal ; but nowhere on the pages of time has history impressed calamities so universal and of duration so lengthened. And these instruments of wrath deserve and awaken the more reflection, because they are distinct emanations from Heaven. While some series of events may or may not be regarded as instances of

* Sennacherib.

special Providence, these certainly stand alone as instances of special interposition. Suspensions of the laws of nature, or deviations from them, not only were they announced before their occurrence, but they seem to have been produced as means for warfare between man and the Eternal. On the one hand, the words of Holy Writ appear to tell us that all responsibility is taken from Pharaoh, because God has hardened his heart; and on the other hand, this responsibility is assumed as existing and Pharaoh is punished for his obduracy. On the one hand, man appears to be impelled to rebellion by a power that he cannot control; on the other hand, he is chastised for his revolt by the very power that he has been forced to outrage. Let us endeavour to reconcile these apparent contradictions, and then let us turn to consider the plagues themselves.

The object of punishment is complex; it is designed as an atonement due from the transgressor to the laws he has violated; it is intended as a means to prevent him from further sin; it is held up as a warning to others. But in order that punishment may be exacted without assuming the character of revenge, the law and the penalty for its infringement must first be laid down. That punishment deters from further sin depends rather on the impressibility of the sinner than on the severity or lenity of the infliction. That punishment may be a warning to others, it must be appropriate to the crime which it is to correct, it must be without cruelty, and it must be administered with due regard to justice. If we examine the portion before us, we shall find that these three necessities were all complied with. Pharaoh and his predecessors had flagrantly violated some of the first laws of humanity. They had by main force compelled to slavery a people whom they were bound to respect as invited guests, as the near connections of a man to whom they were so much in

debted. They had not only degraded these people to slavery, and thereby assumed conquerors' rights, but they had rendered that slavery too bitter for endurance, and had even conspired against the very existence of the race they had so oppressed. Such cruelty places its perpetrators without the pale of humanity. The horrors of modern slave trade present no such wholesale miseries. But so just is Providence, that, even against the most inveterate sinners, no direct and visible interference is entered on without warning. Moses is sent to Pharaoh to remind him of the wrong he has committed, and to tell him that the people he presumes to call his slaves are the servants of a Being who is his superior. In order that the embassy of Moses may not be set down as an imposture, he is furnished with a proof of Divine power. Aaron's rod is converted into a serpent before the tyrant. But the wise men of Egypt had their legerdemain. One of their devices was the dexterous substitution of a serpent for a rod, and perhaps it was to show the nothingness of their pretensions that such a sign was chosen. When therefore Moses performed his miracle before Pharaoh, he was met by a rejoinder of like character from the wise men, and an authority was thus arrogated by the oppressor of Israel antagonistic to, and of equal calibre with, that of Israel's deliverer. It was in vain that "Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods." Pharaoh held his slaves by the might of his own right hand, and he determined not to yield them without resistance. He thus provoked a contest with the Almighty by denying his power and defying his claims. Now, such is the influence of the Eternal, that he can by his sole command so rule the heart of man that it act entirely as he desires. To exercise this influence, however, would be to destroy human free-will and human responsibility, thus perverting one of the great ends of creation. Such is not the design of Heaven.

When therefore we meet the words, "I have permitted Pharaoh's heart to be hardened,"* we must understand them as a positive announcement on the part of God that he forbears to exercise his Divine influence, that he declines to interfere with the privilege of volition which is of his according, that while he can prevent Pharaoh from persisting in his obstinacy, he, for wise purposes, does not so prevent but permits its continuance.

The position of the contending parties is thus clearly defined. Pharaoh, having committed a grievous wrong and refusing to acknowledge it, is in open rebellion against Heaven. Heaven, quite able to seize its own, prefers to vindicate its rights, in order that man may learn how far his little authority avails when opposed to the eternal principles of justice. But, it may be asked, why did not God at once inflict such summary vengeance on Pharaoh as would have induced his submission? The answer is simple. Divine mercy abhors control or compulsion; while Divine prescience foresaw that Pharaoh would yield only when to resist longer was to lose more than the value of his slaves, Divine mercy desired to show its forbearance as a lesson to mankind, and to leave to the sinner every opening for voluntary submission. We thus see that not only was it proper that punishment was exacted from Pharaoh for his violation of law, but that its nature was made to depend by his continued obduracy on the impressibility of his character. A reference to the text also will show us, that every plague was distinctly announced before its occurrence, and that with the announcement was coupled the reiterated demand for a discontinuance of the wrong. It only remains now to show the necessity for Divine interposition, and the appropriate adaptation of the means to the end.

There existed in ancient times nothing analogous to

* Nowhere does the Hebrew text warrant the rendering, "I have hardened Pharaoh's heart."

what we now call the balance of power or international policy. Country made war against country for the mere purpose of conquest, and war only ceased when either one party had nothing more to gain or both parties had nothing to lose. Kings also being despotic, and having no political connection with other potentates, ruled their dominions according to their own caprice, without being at all amenable to foreign remonstrance. Hence, Pharaoh's dominion over Israel being once established, nothing human but a successful rebellion could overthrow it. But all chances in favour of such a revolt were wanting. For two hundred years Israel had abandoned all warlike pursuits, depending for protection upon Egypt. The hardships of slavery had been imposed on them to crush out the few remaining sparks of manhood ; and, as though the yoke were not sufficiently galling, as though the continuity of their labour might yet leave moments for conspiracy, they were scattered over the whole land in search of materials for their work, and the bonds of union were thus sundered. By human means then there was no hope of release. But through the seed of Abraham, Divine mercy had promised that the blessings of revelation should be disseminated through the earth. There remained, therefore, for the realisation of that promise, only Divine instrumentality, and we thus see revelation sanctified by the direct and visible interposition of Heaven, as the champion of the wronged and the avenger of wrong.

The source of Pharaoh's resistance lay in pride, and in confidence in his own resources, natural and artificial. These resources were strengthened in the eyes of the ignorant multitude by the adventitious aid of the cunning of his wise men. We are to see how, one by one, his resources were attacked and overcome ; how, one by one, the bulwarks of his pride were destroyed, till the stronghold of his resistance crumbled before the Almighty power he had defied, and left to him nothing but sub-

mission. The first plague was "blood." The river-god, upon whose beneficence the idolatrous Egyptians believed their very lives to depend, was made abominable in their eyes, and they were thus taught the littleness of their deity, while by the death of all within its bosom they learned how small was its vivifying influence. Unsubdued by this lesson, because after seven days the river resumed its usual vitality, that vitality was made destructive to them by the production of frogs. But the forced appearance of blood and of frogs was a trick of the wise men; one of those mysterious deceptions by which they imposed on their ignorant dupes. When, therefore, they seemed to do what Aaron had done, the tyrant would recognise no distinction between their art and Aaron's power, and he remained firm in his opposition. The fertile land was next attacked; that land which yielded such abundance to their industry, and upon whose productiveness they relied with such confidence. It successively brought forth vermin, swarms of insects, disease among their cattle, and personal boils, and as herein the cunning of the magicians failed them, and as they thus recognised a power superior to their own, they and their master were terrified into yielding. But it is in the nature of tyranny to be as despairing in adversity as it is haughty in prosperity. While, therefore, Pharaoh, thus personally the victim of annoyance, was willing to promise any thing to rid himself of his trouble, no sooner was that object effected than he resumed his wonted pride, and violated his word with as little compunction as he had had honesty in pledging it.

Earth and water, two of their elemental divinities and sources of pride, having thus been unsuccessfully turned against them; their cattle having been destroyed and their persons rendered disgusting; the powers of air and fire, their other elements, were called to their destruction, and hail and lightning carried ruin and desolation on their vegetable wealth. But before resorting to this

extreme means, again was Moses desired to caution Pharaoh, to hold out to him, in still more emphatic terms, the awful consequences of continued rebellion, and the extent of the vengeance he was invoking. Mercy, however, was thrown away on stubbornness so innate, and although the miraculous immunity of Goshen, where dwelled the children of Israel, ought to have carried conviction to the soul of the tyrant, so confident was he in the strength that had yet been spared, that he braved still further evil. And so, the vegetation which had escaped the ravages of the hail became a prey to locusts; and, throughout the whole land of Egypt, there remained not even a single blade of grass nor a single leaf of a tree.

Still no token of submission, although Egypt stood naked before the world, denuded of her animals and her vegetables, and although, the means of subsistence thus cut off, she had nothing but death before her. And death, that most fearful of all pains, fearful because of its uncertainty and mystery, death came thundering on. And still Divine mercy interposed between the all-devouring tomb and its victims, and sent one more premonitory plague to typify the coming horror. And darkness, thick as the grave, such as living mortal never knew, shrouded Egypt as with a pall; and when its veil was raised and again showed unrelenting man to the light of life, then passed the dread reality into the world, and the destroyer claimed his own. "Night to be observed," night of unutterable terrors, when without a wail, without a sign, the avenging angel swept over the face of that once fair land, and left desolation behind. The torrent rushing from its mountain height and carrying devastation on its turgid bosom, the lightning darting from overcharged clouds and riving through the heart the forest monarch, leaves at least some ruin that love can cling to, some wreck upon which to found a hope; but there remained none such on the passage of death. They who in life had loved, turned

in disgust from the mouldering contamination which death had left, for they knew not how soon it might be their lot to succumb. They were not conscious of the end, they saw but the beginning. There, before them, in the homes they had cherished, on the hearths they had gladdened, lay the fetid corpses of their best beloved. Death had commenced his ravages, where would he end? And so, another miracle; there was a great cry throughout the length and breadth of Egypt, and the tyrant, subdued at last by the nameless fear that stalked from the dead before him, was now as anxious to release as he had before been anxious to detain the prisoners. For, while life remained intact, he could in his pride defy fate; but death had terrors for his guilty soul from which he shrank appalled. He, therefore, was the first to hasten the departure of his slaves. The first in useless oppression, he was the first in abject humiliation, for in such characters extremes ever meet. And thus the chains of bondage fell before the word of the Eternal; the cry of despair which had risen to Heaven from the heart-broken Israelites, had awakened an echo on earth, and its voice was freedom. And two millions of human beings passed from the dark womb of slavery into the light of a living liberty. And Heaven smiled upon this birth of nationality, and appointed its anniversary for an eternal observance.

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EXODUS, CHAPTER X.

THE contest between the tyranny of man and the power of Heaven, exercised in behalf of the oppressed, was to terminate as such a contest might be expected to end. For the first time since the deluge, mankind at large were to be witnesses of Divine interference in mortal concerns; for the first time since the creation, men were to be placed under direct obligation for expressly performed mercies.

At the deluge, mercy was secondary to punishment, nor was the covenant for future immunity ratified till desolation sat upon the face of what had been water. At the calling of Abraham, kindness had been the result of obedience, and not the motive for it. Jacob had deserved Divine confidence before he obtained it. But in the case of the liberated Israelites all this was reversed. To them mercy was extended for no merits of their own. They were the objects of mercy first, that they might become subject to gratitude afterwards. Indeed, so strongly did God design to impress on his people his claim on their reverence and thankfulness, that he was constantly bringing before them that claim. Everywhere, on the occasion of any important ordinance, occur the words: "I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt." As, in describing the cosmogony of the universe, the inspired writer was content to relate only such portions of creation as had special reference to the favours conferred on man by Providence; so, in appealing to Israel for obedience, he was satisfied to invoke their duty by reference to the special interposition of the Exodus. And was Moses not right? For, as by natural process, the confusion of chaos could never have become harmonised into the beauty of creation, so, by human agency, could Israel never have been raised from the depths of slavery to the height of nationality. As, by the Divine word, material light first burst on the darkness that brooded over the murmuring deep, so, by Divine grace, the light of liberty dawned on the degradation of servitude. If, therefore, mankind were to be called to obedience because of the obligation imposed by creation, Israel was no less to be called to obedience because of the redemption from Egypt.

But, as Divine mercy chose thus to single out its own claim to gratitude, and to signalize its election of a people from amongst people by signs, by miracles, and by wonders; so Divine wisdom assumed to point out the way

in which that gratitude was to be shown, and to distinguish the people it had so elected. Now, as we have before observed, every ordination is the result of supreme wisdom, and while we are called on by faith to obey, we are only prompted by reason to confirm faith. Hence, in investigating the observances of the Passover, we desire rather to confirm belief by the support of reason than to awaken uncertainty from want of knowledge. For it would seem beyond contradiction, that they who blindly obey behests, which to them have no significance beyond that which is derived from their Divine origin, are far less likely to dignify themselves by their obedience, than they who give to such behests a significance derived from reason and common sense. It has been long, too long perhaps, the dictum in Judaic investigation that, where the Eternal has not assigned a cause for ceremony or observance, man shall not seek to find one. But surely no doctrine could be so little in accordance with the spirit of the Mosaic dispensation. Throughout the whole of that dispensation, the Lord condescends to treat with man not as so much his inferior but as almost his equal. We find constant opportunities for proving this even in the manner in which Pharaoh was dealt with, and still more convincing proofs in the covenants made at different times between man and Heaven. Everywhere, the independence of man is admitted in such words as these: if thou wilt hearken; if thou wilt obey; and while his free will is thus left unfettered, he is invited to exercise his judgment in deciding on the alternatives attached respectively to obedience and rebellion. In short, while the Pentateuch contains 613 precepts, it is doubtful if it contain one real command. There are many apparent commands, but they are in fact only admonitions, addressed to man in his deliberative capacity, and as violable in deed as they are inviolable in their eternal truth and in their inherent truthfulness to the object to be attained—man's

salvation. We presume then to investigate the institution of the Passover, and we shall endeavour to assign a reason for its distinctive ceremony, which will at least give it a high significance, and the existence of which is traceable also in other sacred institutions.

Already on the tenth day of the month, Moses, instructed by God, announced to the children of Israel the certainty of their departure on the night of the fourteenth. At the same time he told them to make the necessary preparations. Sacrifice, so common among the nations of those days, and practised also by the patriarchs, was now sanctioned by special command of Heaven, and ratified as man's legitimate expression of thankfulness for benefits conferred. In other respects, the Passover was to be the celebration of the national birthday. It was to be inaugurated by a physical indulgence, the supper from the pascal lamb, as it was to commemorate a physical deliverance. Worldly considerations were thus as it were introduced with the special concurrence of God; and when we reflect how these considerations at all times prevail with men, how, in the process of ages, ideas and the exponents of ideas become modified or altogether changed, we shall scarcely be surprised that means were adopted to prevent this, the first ceremonial institution of Mosaism, from degenerating into mere worldliness. We know too, from the pages of Holy Writ, that birthdays were celebrated as periods of rejoicing, and we can imagine that debauchery, or something akin to it, was the prevailing feature in the regal banquets of those barbaric days. But surely if any birthday was to be a recognised period for indulgence, that birthday of all others was to be so recognised which introduced, not an individual, but a nation, into the community of men. The Almighty himself deigned to sanction this view, when he said in reference to the Passover: "And ye shall rejoice on your festival." Assuredly, also, if debauchery sullied the enjoyment of an

individual, carousing in the bosom of his family and in the midst of his friends, it was still more likely to desecrate the pleasures of a whole nation, when no sober neighbour could stand by to remonstrate or check, and when collective licence was thus open to become universal licentiousness. Still, this mere animal indulgence could scarcely be permitted as exhibitory of man's feelings towards Heaven; religion could scarcely be the excuse for sanctioning a departure from those laws of temperance and propriety which are so essential to social welfare. Hence, some precaution was necessary; but it was to be of a character alike to serve its end, without seeming to interfere with the joy so legitimate on the occasion, and to be impressed on the festival without any deviation from the principles of free-will. And how admirably the wisdom of Heaven operated in connection with the independence of man. Although the Israelites knew the very moment of their departure days before it arrived, although they asked and obtained from their Egyptian neighbours tardy payment for their long and unrequited years of servitude, although they slew the pascal lamb and prepared therefrom the meal of rejoicing, although they had "their loins girded, their staves in their hands and their sandals on their feet," although they were aware that they were to journey in the dead of night towards a barren wilderness, (for so Moses had told Pharaoh,) and although it seemed therefore imperative upon them to think of the coming morrow, and of the food needful thereon, still, by one of those oversights which we see in the best devised schemes of man, and which when guilt becomes thereby developed, we call providential, by an oversight the more remarkable that there seemed no reason for it, the Israelites in preparing their bread, the very prop of life, *neglected to leaven it*. And, therefore, throughout all coming ages were the events of this "night to be observed," to be celebrated exactly as they occurred, and ever in the cele-

bration was this oversight to be remembered, and all leaven was to be banished because unleavened bread had been eaten when they departed from Egypt.

But, in conformity with the principles enunciated in these pages, and in the proving of which an attempt has been made to show a significance for every divine institution, it becomes necessary to attach a type to this ceremonial observance; even as to "the sinew which shrank" a type was also connected. And this is the more needful if we consider for a moment the true connexion between ceremony and religion. Religion is the tie which connects the spirit of man with the Eternal. It is that sacred gift which raises man above himself, which prepares his immortal soul for participation in a future state by hallowing his existence in this world. But man is composed of body and soul so intimately associated that it is impossible to define where the powers of either cease. So influenced too is the soul by the senses, that the majority are rather ruled by the real than swayed by the ideal. Hence, in connection with religion, which in its purity is entirely spiritual, has always been established a visible representative by which grosser man may be governed through the feelings most prominent in his nature. This representative is of a twofold character; it addresses itself to the ears and to the eyes; to the former it is prayer, to the latter it is ceremony. And as prayer may be said to be the translation of feelings into language, the echo of the heart's gratitude or the spirit's supplication, the joyful outpourings of thankfulness for the past and the trembling entreaty of hope for the future; so ceremony may be regarded as the pictorial representation of the feelings, as the expression by which the body associates itself in the spirit's devotion, as the medium through which the corporeal passes before it presumes to prostrate itself to Heaven. Take away this character from ceremony and it remains an empty form, alike de-

void of chastening influence or instructive lesson. And shall we say that our holy religion, which is so calculated to promote its end, has ceremonial representatives that have no stronger hold on our affections than that given by their divine origin? Shall we say that we have free-will obeying mechanically, and reason shrinking from its legitimate privilege of investigation? No, rather let us obey because our volition shews us the wisdom of obedience, let us convince reason, and thus call in its co-operation to guide volition.

Leaven was forbidden on the Passover, specially in bread and in liquids—in other foods it is comparatively wanting. But what is leaven? It is that oxygenating principle which deprives dough of its insipidity, and which gives to the innocent saccharine matter of fluids an exciting alcoholic character. To restrain men therefore from leaven, was to leave them nothing that could render the pleasures of the body at all corruptive. Solid food was so little palatable as to pall before it satisfied, and liquids were harmless because deprived of their power of intoxicating. With such a prohibition, one not forced upon them but growing naturally from their own proceedings, and therefore not repugnant to their free-will, the Israelites might safely rejoice on their national birthday, without degenerating into mere animals. In that eastern land where nature seems to require stimulants, these stimulants were all but removed. Unable to pamper their appetites, their passions were likely to lie dormant, and thus no propensity calculated to interfere with rational enjoyment was awakened. The prohibition of leaven therefore was not either the result of accident, or a decree impressed on Judaism, which it was bound blindly to obey, without giving to obedience the merit of being voluntary and consonant with reason. No, this prohibition had a far higher significance. In it was involved the implied knowledge

of Heaven that "the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth," and, therefore, that it were wiser to remove temptation than to excite forbearance. In it was contained the recognised sanction of Heaven for those animal pleasures which stoics affect to despise and ascetics to consider sinful; but with this sanction was joined the precaution which compelled indulgence within the limits of moderation, and which deprived appetite of its power to injure, by removing from it all tainted objects. The serpent whose virus might poison to the death was rendered innocuous by the withdrawal of its fangs. And thus, as in all other divine institutions, the means is consistent with the end—human happiness. And thus, reason investigating in the true spirit of faithfulness, learns to admire the Heavenly wisdom which makes obedience conformable to free-will by showing its value to the obedient. Thus, too, love for the eternal Author of our revelation is engendered by the conviction, so constantly proved, of his care for our salvation. And ever therefore as the Israelite removes from his abode the forbidden leaven, should he reflect that the mere removal is of secondary importance as compared with the desire thereby expressed, to be freed from the temptation to sin through enjoyment. He should reflect that the changing of culinary and other domestic vessels, the careful searching for any concealed leaven, the removal of all doubtful articles of food, are only so many types of his wish to be freed from the intoxication of pleasure, and thus he will learn the true meaning of the words, "remove the leaven from thy heart," and thus really shall Judaism rejoice on its festival.

בשלה

EXODUS, CHAPTER XIII. VERSE 17.

How abject is crime! To what aberrations does it lead! How little real repentance does it engender! As the man running down some steep declivity tries in vain to arrest his headlong progress, so he who precipitates himself into the abyss of crime cannot stay till he reaches its lowest depths. Momentum in matter is force multiplied by velocity; in evil it is power multiplied by inclination; and as, in matter, accelerated velocity augments force, so in evil, unrestrained power increases inclination. Virtue, on the other hand, pursues a level course; if it is never hurried by the descent, it is never impeded by the ascent. It is always consistent with itself, violence is not needful to it; its motion, uniform as that of the pendulum, may be more monotonous, but it is also more beneficial than that of crime. In evil, inclination, like the suction of a vortex, hurries its victims more rapidly in proportion as they approach its centre: in virtue, inclination, like the fly-wheel of a steam-engine, regulates and harmonizes, and produces results never attainable but by precision.

Already, as we have said, Egypt lay fallen; her glory had passed away, and save the millions of her inhabitants, nothing of her pride remained. Cattle, vegetation, household valuables of all sorts, had been taken from them, and in the hour of their dread they had yielded a forced but reluctant consent to the departure of their slaves. And those slaves, guided by the visible presence of their Almighty deliverer, marched to freedom, to enlightenment. Too glad to see the gates of their prison-house unbarred, they stayed not to inquire whether they went perforce or by their own free-will. Liberty was in the pillar of fire that glided before them, and its illumining

beams dispelled all surrounding darkness. But here again Heaven condescended to acknowledge the independence of man by recording that the way of the Philistines was avoided, lest the Israelites, terrified by the horrors of war, might desire to return to Egypt.

Memory is a blessing ; forgetfulness is no less a blessing, especially when it carries from before us the love for the dead. How else should we bear the sad void which death makes in our affections and in our homes ? The cherished pass from our midst, and grief sanctifies the tears which recollection gives to their memory ; time flies, the image of the departed becomes more and more faint on the tablets of the mind, and at last oblivion throws the veil of forgetfulness over the fading impression. It continues to exist, but the outline is softened, and we can regard it with that melancholy satisfaction, which bows to the fiat —“ whatever is, is right.” But these feelings prevail not with the wicked. Thinking not of God or of Heaven, or they would not sin, death comes to them like the avalanche to the mountain pine, riving asunder at once all ties. Aroused by the sudden catastrophe, which awakens fear and not reflection, they rather strive to flee from what may prove personal danger, than to avoid the conduct which may have provoked the blow. Remorse awakens no contrition of soul, and the memory of the dead is removed with the fear which passes away with them into their unhallowed grave. If this were not so, how could Pharaoh still have been obdurate of heart ? Had not horror on horror but just scared every thing but thoughts of self-preservation from his mind ? And yet, scarcely had Israel departed, scarcely had the livid corpses of his firstborn been borne from his sight, before he was again thirsty for gain, again determined at all hazards to retake the prey just wrested from his iron grasp. Nor were those about him less anxious ; worthy servants of their tyrant master, they seem to have

been the willing ministers of his caprice, and to have fostered his evil intentions with evil designs of their own. And so, all that remained of the pride of Egypt was aroused to defend what it called its right. And one of those mighty armaments in which eastern pride seemed to delight, "even all the chariots and horsemen of Pharaoh," rolled over the track of the apparently defenceless Israelites. Brave soldiers! who saw an easy conquest in an unresisting foe. Skilful leader! who perceived no hope of his enemy's escape, entangled as that enemy was, between the wilderness, the sea, and his own host. And already Israel's murmurs echo from the coral rocks that border the Red Sea; already gratitude for the late redemption is absorbed in fears for impending danger. What, though the elements, obedient to the word of their divine Creator, had spoken in thunder the dread vengeance of the Eternal, could the sea depart from its nature? But straight as an arrow in its flight, unerring as the needle to the pole, proceeds the miraculous, guiding pillar over the waters that barred the Israelites' progress. The hand of Moses points his wand in the same direction, and, wonder on wonders, the surging waves, ever restless, ever tossing, lose their incoherence, and stand up like walls in the midst of the surrounding depths. God said, and it was; and into the congealed billows went the hundreds of thousands of Israel, and after them, undeterred by this culminating miracle, and still blinded by their selfish thirst for vengeance, rolled the dread tide of Egyptian power. But there was a power aroused against the Egyptian, that he might dare to brave, but which he could not hope to subdue. "Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them, they sank like lead in the mighty waters!" And thus, although *two* mighty hosts had passed between the divided waters, but *one* host departed out of them; over the other, again recalled to their fluidity, roared the resistless waves of the mighty ocean.

Well might the Israelites, a second time delivered, burst forth into that magnificent song of praise which told alike their gratitude, and the might of the Eternal: "Thy right hand, O Lord, is glorious in power; thy right hand, O Lord, hath crushed the enemy." But although the billows of the sea washed away the pride and panoply of Egypt, the still more destructive flow of time can never wash away the memory of that terrible act of retribution. Among the records of human frailty and human punishment, the passage of the Red Sea holds still a solitary place. Alone in its death-dealing grandeur, it declares to all time the inevitable fate of the tyrant and oppressor. It pronounces as the decree of Heaven, that even though nature seems to oppose liberty, its opposition is antagonistic to the laws of Providence, and that in the promotion of the sacred claims of men to be free, when all other means fail, even God may deign to interfere. And ever, as the year revolves, and the anniversary of this great day of the Lord returns, do we, the descendants of those redeemed Israelites, tell our children and our children's children, for our everlasting memorial: "Thus did the Eternal to me when I went out of Egypt."

The army of the Lord journeyed on, and the two-peaked Sinai loomed in the distance across the treeless prairie of Northern Arabia. Delivered to be the source of mental and spiritual regeneration to the rest of mankind, already the goal whence their mission was to spring rose on their vision. But temporal wants seem ever to press most heavily on weak humanity. The Israelites seeing no signs of cultivation, and fearing, despite the visible presence of their Omnipotent Deliverer, the approach of famine, broke forth into murmurs at their apparently helpless condition, and even uttered bitter regrets that they had abandoned the servitude of Egypt—where at least there had been plenty. But this want of faith was kindly borne by God. He knew how

strongly flesh pleads with the erring body, and he silenced the murmuring host by satisfying their hunger, and by appealing again to the trustfulness which past redemption seemed not yet fully to have awakened. On the dew-covered earth, day after day, was Israel thenceforward to find its daily bread, as the direct gift of Heaven. Not that industry was to be abandoned through this supply of unearned food ; for every man was to go, day by day, to provide for the wants of himself and family. Greediness was reprov'd by the decomposition of all that remained beyond the day's supply, and faith was strengthened by the fact that the sanctity of the Sabbath arrested the decay which resulted from saving on any other day. And thus practically did the Almighty prove the truth of that blessing which he had pronounced on the Sabbath at the period of the creation :—"Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, having made it holy." And thus did Israel learn, that though labour is the lesson of life, vain is toil if not countenanced by the approval of God ; that though man is destined to eat his bread by the sweat of his brow, he has still another vocation, for the fulfilment of which he must allow that sweat to remain buried within him, and trust for his bread to the blessing of the Eternal ; that though industry is the antiseptic to preserve the moral and physical conformation, it must not be exercised only on behalf of the body, because corporeal wants press most sensibly, but it must also be evoked for the spirit as the means of connecting the soul more closely with heaven, even though the need of the spirit seem less because it is invisible.

Again is the patience of the Eternal tried by murmurings for water, again does Divine mercy bear with dissatisfied ingratitude, and the crystal flood is poured from the bosom of the flinty rock. How the reflective heart saddens at the continued recital of these new proofs of human weakness and of Eternal goodness ! One might

wish, as the highest state of happiness that this world ever afforded, to have formed one of that Heaven-led host ; to have been guided day and night by the visible presence of the Invisible, to have been fed by the undeniable gift of the Omnipotent, to have slaked one's thirst at the fount which flowed only at the word of the Omniscient ; to have known that the redemption of the body, signal as it had been, was but anticipatory to a deliverance still more glorious—the deliverance of the mind from ignorance, of the soul from darkness, of the spirit from intolerance and superstition. One might wish, as the most cherished boon that God could confer, to be the living witness of existence so miraculous, to be possessed of powers to appreciate the favours conferred, and of free-will that one might voluntarily pour out one's soul in gratitude and praise. But alas ! such has been and such is the tendency of man to forget the past in the present, that we lose the magnitude of the sin in the frequency of its occurrence.

“And Amalek came and fought against Israel at Rephidim.” This simple record seems, at first sight, scarcely to warrant the announcement coupled with it, that the Eternal vowed to have perpetual war with the Amalekites and to blot out their name from the book of nations. But a little reflection will show that Divine justice is as consistent with mercy here as in all other visible heavenly interpositions. Israel, encumbered with baggage and oaded with gifts of the Egyptians, surrounded by helpless women and tender children, inexperienced in the arts of war, and probably, for the most part, unarmed—Israel, in this helpless condition, seemed to afford a fair mark for that love of plunder so common in the nomad tribes of those days. One might expect that some distant band of marauders, whom the report of what had happened in Egypt had not reached, and who had no personal connection with the Israelites, might, perhaps, avail themselves of the opportunity for robbery so fortunately presented.

But that a tribe on the very borders of the Red Sea, who were doubtless acquainted with the miraculous deliverance and with the preceding wonders, a tribe descended from the same source as the Israelites (Amalek was the grandson of Esau), and therefore, of necessity, aware of the vocation for which Israel was now destined, a tribe by consanguinity bound rather to defend than to molest Israel—that this tribe should violate every principle of fraternal affection, and should, by its act, set itself in direct opposition to the declared will of Heaven, was, as it were, not only to hurl defiance at God, as Pharaoh had done, but to add the gratuitous crime of fratricide to rebellion. If therefore Egypt, a nation of strangers, bound to Israel by no ties but gratitude and hospitality, if Egypt suffered all but annihilation, surely utter extinction was not too great a punishment for Amalek, who intensified the deeds of Egypt by the unnatural addition of brotherly hatred. One would not have been surprised if the Eternal, in vindication of his majesty, had destroyed them even as he had exterminated the host of Pharaoh. If he reserved for them another vengeance it was perhaps that their humiliation might be perfect. When we contemplate the fate of Pharaoh, we pity his misguided nature, his obdurate heart, and we shudder as we learn his final prostration; but at least we do not despise. How widely different is the feeling we entertain for the fate of Amalek! While we recognise the Divine mercy that aided the Israelites to defeat their foe, we recognise also that this mercy was displayed not directly as at the Red Sea, but through human agency. Amalek therefore presents the sad spectacle of villainy caught in its own trap, of violence suffering from its own lawlessness, of armed ruffianism overcome by unarmed helplessness; and while we pity the effusion of human blood and the necessity which gave cause for Divine judgment, we despise the cowards who had not the courage to carry out what

they had dared to plan, and we contemn the boasted skill which suffered ignominy so signal at the hands of inexperienced recruits.

יתרו

EXODUS, CHAPTER XVIII.

TRUE liberty consists best in doing what every one else likes. The licence of acting according to the will of the agent, is only another name for caprice or tyranny. In those states, therefore, which are recognised as most free, there generally exists some standard by which men learn to estimate the will of their fellow-men, and to which, when they are honest, they lend a ready and willing obedience. This standard is called law. It is the majesty which presides over the mass; and whether a nation be monarchical or republican, it has in reality but one supreme ruler, and that is law. Such however are men, that it is as necessary to coerce some within prescribed limits, as it is needless to attempt arresting others from overstepping those limits. Hence law becomes enlarged; it not only defines how far the individual may go without doing violence to the multitude, but it assigns the penalty attached to infringement. But this penalty is not the necessary consequence of bad deeds; it is rather the atonement which society demands as a balm for the wound inflicted by the evil-doer. As society varies, this atonement varies; hence all codes of law which deal with social wrongs and their prevention are as mutable as the circumstances out of which they grow. The enactment of one age becomes the ridicule or shame of the next. Who would now dream of pricking for witches?

It is different with that code of laws which deals, not with the social effects of wrong, but with its inherent moral effects. We have before attempted to prove these

inherent effects to be as eternal as the other more recognised principles impressed on creation. As season succeeds season with unerring regularity, as element attracts element with undeviating elective affinity, as matter is developed, progresses towards maturity, proceeds to decay and returns through decomposition to constitute new organisations, according to fixed laws, so, we assert, do moral wrongs lead to definite and systematic moral combinations, as inalienable as physical combinations, only not so evident, because not always visible. Hence the great moral code, the Decalogue, remains eternal. Designed to deal with permanent effects, it is permanent in its characteristics; and while time washes away in its current the traces of those transient legislations destined to meet transitory circumstances, it passes harmless over the laws of Sinai as above and beyond its destructive influence.

And these considerations become more convincing when we remember the important end of law above alluded to, viz., the punishment of crime with a view to its prevention. So long as this punishment depends for its execution on men, so long it does not interfere with our volition. Man proposes but he cannot always act. Guilt may screen itself by chicanery, or it may withdraw from the penalty it has deserved by flight; vengeance, purely human, may defeat its own object by the heat of its attack, or it may yield to the softer pleadings of mercy. Numerous, therefore, are the violations of law which the law never reaches; and even when it does overtake them, while it exercises coercive functions over personal liberty of action, it leaves thought and all the spiritual part of the criminal entirely free. How different would be the case with the laws of God if they too exacted punishment! Here volition would at once cease. If the Omniscient designed actively to chastise an infringement on his code, the evil-doer would be immediately deprived of his free-

will. Controlled by a power which he could not resist, detected by a wisdom which he could not deceive, pursued by a vengeance from which the supreme dignity of justice would take away all rancour, escape from consequences would be impossible, and responsibility under those consequences would be utterly lost. While under human punishment, the great remedy for evil, repentance, is always within the hands of the guilty; under Divine punishment, similarly exercised, repentance would lose all its value, because it would be deprived of its voluntary sincerity. But this would be contrary to the express design of man's creation, and would at once degrade his reason below instinct. Hence, while the Sinaitic laws are eternal, because they refer to eternal principles, they differ from human laws in being altogether free from the characteristic of vengeance.

Our ancestors, frequently as they murmured, often as they tempted Providence, were at least worthy of imitation in their manner of receiving these commandments. Satisfied with the infallible wisdom from which the laws were to emanate, conscious of the all-seeing eye which not only beheld the very thoughts of living men, but reviewed the imaginations of all coming ages, reliant on the mercy which through creation had done so much for mankind and through redemption so much for them, the Israelites were content beforehand to give their implicit faith to the Divine mandates. "We will do; we will understand," was their expression to Moses; it was approved by God, and it was a lesson too salutary not to be followed. Because, as we have before observed, blind obedience is generally the result of early teaching or of ignorant imitateness; it may arise from faith, but it is faith of so undignified a character that it scarcely rises above superstition. On the other hand, the faith which is based on reason, acquires all the majesty of self-sacrifice and all the beauty of devotion; it is unshakable because it is not

capricious, it is unerring because it is founded on principle. True, faith, as our ancestors taught us, must precede reason, but true also that reason must follow faith. Faith without reason is like those golden fruits which are tempting to the eye but are rotten at the core. Reason without faith would resemble that motion into eternal space which depended on projection without attraction ; it would be aimless and endless. Reason and faith conjoined form that lovely combination which resembles the pure mind in the pure body ; the inner life is as unsullied as the outward frame is consistent with harmony.

Regarded from the point of view here determined, the Ten Commandments naturally divide themselves under the following heads : The first is simply a declaration. The second, third, and fourth, are admonitory, and regard the peculiarities which were thenceforward to distinguish God-worship from idolatry. The fifth is purely domestic, hallowing home ties by associating them with Heaven. The remaining five are social, sanctifying temporal relations by referring them to spiritual ends.

The prominence given to the first or declaratory commandment, is the definition given by a benevolent Divinity of the terms on which he proposes to rule mankind. Power is of two kinds ; it arises either from voluntary or from forced submission. In the former case it is the rule of love, in the latter of fear. The rule of love is based on admiration or reverence for the qualities of the ruler, and on gratitude for personal favours on the part of the ruled. There needs no proof to show that while fear may inspire a forced and temporary respect, love alone can command a sincere and permanent regard. Can we wonder then that a beneficent Providence should decide to secure the affection of his people. Already, he had evoked their respect by the condescension with which he had vouchsafed to treat with them ; already, he had excited their admiration by his miraculous works, and their reve-

rence by his tremendous power ; he now appeals to their gratitude for the signal service he has done on their behalf. The first command therefore, while assuming the form of a declaration only, becomes doubly obligatory, because it leaves our obedience voluntary, and thereby depends on the nobler part of our nature. The homage which love lays on the altar of its divinity is that "sweet savour," so delightful to the Eternal. The tribute with which fear crouches before the king of its terrors, is the forced sacrifice of a Cain, and is not accepted. The dependence of Israel on the Rock of their Salvation is to be pleasurable to the dependants because of its consonance with their gratitude, their love, and their reverence ; it is to be pleasant to their Eternal Ruler, because it is the free aspiration of the mortal spirit to deserve the approval of the All-wise. Fear degrades cowards into slaves ; love raises worshippers to imitate the object of their adoration. Israel therefore preserves the religion of love, and Heaven, having expressed its desire for such a religion in the first command, ratifies it in a subsequent behest: "Ye shall be holy, for I, the Eternal, thy God, am holy."

In considering the second group of the commandments, we must not forget that what was called religion already existed in the world : nor can we overlook the fact that the Israelites, to a certain extent, must have imbibed the notions, and become habituated to the circumstances, of surrounding people. It is true that what was called religion was a prostitution of that sacred word, but it is nevertheless equally true that the Eternal availed himself of much of that religion in the formation of Judaism. For he knew that nature abhors convulsions, and he preferred to sanctify what already was, to originating something altogether new. The practice therefore was often permitted to remain,* the principle only was elevated and hallowed. Worship prevailed, but it was idolatry ; worship was

* E. g., sacrifices, tithes, &c.

allowed to remain, but it was to be devoted only to God. Men were in the habit of setting up images of their own creation ; tangible, material evidences alike of the degradation of the worshippers and the nothingness of the worshipped. This was to be prevented. The true end of religion is to elevate and purify, not to debase and corrupt ; hence, the second command is directed especially to destroy all that could tend to depreciate God in the eyes of man, or man in the sight of God. And this is evidenced most strongly in the generally misunderstood words, "visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children ;" and from which it would at first seem that an important principle of justice was to be violated. For, what could be more unjust than that an innocent and perhaps even worthy child should suffer for guilt not its own, which it had no influence to prevent, and in which it never participated ? When we recollect, however, that Providence has deigned to exclude vengeance from these commands, and when we bear in mind the particular injunction with which these words are connected, we shall at once see their true bearing to be the one above laid down. Of all crimes, idolatry is that which degrades men most ; for, what can be more inconsistent with the dignity of reason or the pride of intellect than to see the lord of creation, formed in the image of the Eternal, prostrating his high powers before an inert mass of senseless matter ? For any human being to be so debased implies an amount of ignorance so great as to be scarcely conceivable. Idolatry may be defined then, as the perversion of the first principles of man's creation. That men should be steeped in such slough, who have never been taught better knowledge, is a cause for pity ; that men who have learned to appreciate the true God should turn to such vitiating courses, can only give rise to contempt and scorn. But such is the depravity of idolatrous worship, so fatal are its effects on all that is noble in nature, so pernicious is its

baneful embrace, that it even deprives its votaries of the last remnant of virtuous recollection—shame. What therefore is more in conformity with the other acts of Heaven towards Israel, than that it should point out, in connection with idolatry, the effects which man will entail on himself and his descendants by plunging into an abyss so yawning that it will engulf not only him but them? Shame being absent, the idolator would neither be conscious of his degradation, nor willing that his children should, by different conduct, be a tacit reproach to him. He will thus entail on them, by improper example and still worse cultivation, the guilt in which he is wallowing; and in the case of Israel, destined by the teachings of parents to children to enlighten the world, this would indeed be a direct perversion of the will of Heaven. Hence, the design of the words above quoted is evidently to point out the necessary result of a vicious course, not through any direct interference of God, but as an inevitable consequence of human perversity.

The sanctity of God's holy name, and the holiness of the Sabbath, the former not to be sullied by association with mere worldly concerns, the latter to be consecrated for the soul as distinguished from the body, also grow naturally from the antecedents by which Israel had been surrounded. Idolatry being so purely sensual and material, the idol, a tangible or visible object, becomes a part of every-day life, and is connected with it by constant presence. There were few houses without their household gods. The idol, too, being no check on the grosser, and therefore meaner, appetites of its votaries, these, having it always before them, saw no reason for withdrawing its worship from the worldly concerns of which it formed a part. The constant naming of the idol, its implied presidency over domestic and public business, its admitted patronage over health, births, deaths, and even appetites, and the continued care for worldly matters, were therefore

common to idolatry. In God-worship these evils were to be avoided. The Invisible was not to lose respect through familiarity. High in the mystery of his spirituality, "abiding in the secret place of the Most High," his very name was to have no portion of earthly contact. It was not to become in Israel's mouth a household word. Nay, more, so sacred was it to be considered, that even its very sound was altogether prohibited, (save to the high priest on Kippur,) and another term was substituted.

The institution of the Sabbath was something entirely new. It was associated with the works of creation, and thereby became in its observance a type of man's gratitude for the mercy then evinced on man's behalf. It was associated with the deliverance from Egypt, and thereby was made a special type of Israel's gratitude. But its chief importance was derived from the implied permission of Heaven, that man might devote his energies to the prosperity of his worldly matters, and that he was called on to give only a small portion of leisure to the source whence his blessings flowed. And in this is it that the Sabbath appeals to our voluntary obedience. The reflective mind is well aware of the necessity for salient points for observation. The vast expanse of space, nought but sea and air, grand as is its immensity, falls like a blank on the retina because of its entire sameness. The long career of time would present a like void but for some recognised epochs that stand out in bold relief on its passage. What some flying albatross or scudding ship is on the ocean, what some dark or bright spot is on the page of time, the blessed Sabbath is to the religious mind—its resting-place. Without the Sabbath, our whole existence would be one headlong race after the meaner things of life; with it, we give to the soul constant opportunities for soaring to the heights of Heaven, and we purify the body by the flight. What the threshold is to the temple the Sabbath is to Judaism, the step leading

to the inner sanctuary ; and hence it is that in all ages, and under all circumstances, the Jewish religionist has called for the observance of the Sabbath as the first pledge for the observance of other institutions.

The fifth commandment which sanctifies, by divine association, the earthly love that blesses home, is of additional importance as connected with Israel's peculiar vocation. "And thou shalt teach diligently to thy children," is the behest by which the Jew holds his life interest in Judaism. What he received from his ancestors he is bound to transmit to his posterity, and the best security for the faithful discharge of this duty is that it should be based on love. To honour a parent is to receive his instructions with favour and to obey them with a free heart, and therefore is it that, in caring for the future spiritual welfare of his people, the Almighty adopted this natural means for effecting a desired end.

It is not needful to expatiate on the remaining five commandments. Their importance has been testified by their universal adoption among civilized nations. It may be observed, however, that while human laws of necessity content themselves with keeping men honest, because men can deal only with acts, the Divine legislation insists also that men be *honourable*, because God can deal with their thoughts. Hence is it that the last two commands are peculiar to the Mosaic revelation ; their observance is purely of the mind, and no human legislator could presume to tread on that sacred ground, except by the right of might which tyranny assumes under the name of consistency, but which men condemn as intolerance, bigotry, or persecution.

משפטים

EXODUS: CHAPTER XXI.

As man is composed of two essentially different parts, soul and body, so his duties are divided to correspond with these parts. His duties to Heaven belong to his soul; his duties to man relate to his body. Nor is the connection between the immortal and the mortal more close than the union of these two sets of duties; it is scarcely possible, in all cases, to define where the limits of either extend. But there is also as much difference between man's duty to Heaven and that to man, as there is between his perishable body and his imperishable soul. The body is material; it is determinable by the senses; it is amenable to control, coercion, or confinement; it may be debased by external contact, or vitiated by internal influences; it is lord of nothing but its strength, and in this it does not excel meaner animals. The soul is immaterial; it is known to the senses only by its effects; it is not amenable to control, nor is it susceptible of confinement; like its Divine origin it fills all space, and is lord of creation only because it is His image. The duties of the soul have no real existence in deed; we understand them only through their effects, or the types by which they are represented. Love for God is a duty of the soul; charity, justice, and pious resignation are some of its types. The duties of the body are visible and tangible; they belong to matter, and are, like it, subject to certain definite laws. In the Ten Commandments may be found the origin of all the duties of the soul; in the "judgments" of this portion may be traced the principal of the duties of the body. The former belong to Heaven, and, as we have shown, no penalty is attached to infringement of them; the latter belong to earth, and are, therefore, penal as well as restrictive.

In considering the nature of the judgments, or social statutes, of Israel, we are again struck by the adaptation of surrounding customs to Divine institutions. The circumstances by which the nations of those days were influenced, and among which Israel had grown to be a people, are clearly traceable. But it was not the design of God in separating Israel from other nations to isolate it in any respect but one; its religion. In all other respects, Israel was to remain a member of the great human family; subject to the same natural principles. This is clearly proved by two enactments promulgated by Moses; the one having reference to polygamy, the other to slavery. Polygamy still exists in the East; it is the legitimate means for ministering to a great natural want, under circumstances which it is better to tolerate by law than to render intolerable by prohibition. In the East, woman fades at an early period of life: developed at eleven or twelve years old, she is aged at twenty-five. Men are not so; they flourish and are vigorous as long as Europeans. To condemn a man, therefore, to the society of one wife, who should cease to attract many years before her husband ceased to want attraction, in whose physique love should exist only as a memory, while passion still glowed with unabated fervour in the bosom of her husband, would be to tempt rather than to chasten. Nature has implanted in the human heart feelings which must exist, because they are natural. To control these feelings within legitimate limits, is virtue: to repress them altogether, is called asceticism, but is utterly hypocritical, because impossible: to allow them unlicensed sway is a vice or a barbarism. The laws of Moses dealt with nature with a view to virtue; hence polygamy was permitted, because it was more consonant with morality than either of the other extremes above mentioned. For the same reason, polygamy has ceased to be a custom of modern Judaism; because, in Europe,

where distinction of sex produces no diversity of temperament, the freshness of youth is of as long duration in woman as in man; she does not cease to attract till age has also sobered the partner of her early beauty. Here, therefore, polygamy would be unnecessary, because not in accordance with natural law; and here, therefore, an apparent infringement on the Sinaitic code is permitted, only because in social requirements Israelites are in nowise to be distinguished from the nations among which they dwell. And it is the more necessary that this fact should be noticed because it has often been asserted that Jews have nothing in common with their neighbours of other creeds. In reality, however, Jews have nothing in contradistinction to their neighbours, except their spiritual belief and its types, which, belonging exclusively to the duties of the soul, are all heavenly, and have, therefore, no connection whatever with earth or its combinations, social, moral, or political.

Slavery was another custom of the times of Moses. It was primarily of political origin, and was destined to supply males to the labour market, and the necessary superfluity of females to the matrimonial state. But as we have before shown, slavery, how politic soever in theory, is antagonistic to natural law in fact, and hence is opposed to civilisation and to morality. Slavery, therefore, is modified in the Mosaic code, and becomes only servitude. Six years was to be the ordinary extent of a man's service; in extraordinary cases—that is, when lengthened at the express desire of the servant—it might extend to forty-nine years; but beyond this it was altogether impossible. Hereditary bondage, that chain which fetters the future in eternal degradation, was utterly prohibited; and so desirable was it deemed that man should aspire to be his own master rather than the servant of another, so strongly was the love of liberty sought to be impressed, that the bondman who elected to wear the

chains of an easy servitude rather than seek the precarious chance of free industry, was publicly degraded by the voluntary act of his submission, and, with ear bored, became a marked man. But if caution was exercised to guard against male slavery, it was still more needful to guard against female slavery. To sell a female into servitude was only for one purpose ; she was to minister, by illegitimate means, to the lawless passions of a master whose wealth enabled him to indulge. But this would have been, among Hebrews, opposed to the principles on which polygamy was founded, and would have been to sanction vice rather than to promote virtue. The Hebrew maiden, therefore, was to escape this degradation. She might be sold, but there was to be no evasion of the purpose of the sale, no subterfuge as to the intention of the bargain. She was to be the wife of the man whose property she became, and was to be treated in every respect as such. She lost not caste, she was not debased in her own eyes ; custom sanctioned the peculiarity under which her matrimonial engagement was contracted, and if she gave place to some more attractive novelty in the eyes of her sensual husband, she was at least not to be thrown aside as useless or abandoned, but was still the wife and not the slave.

Of the other "judgments" few deserve especial comment. Their value has been recognised by their universal adoption among civilized nations. They inculcate honesty, charity, honour of purpose, consideration for the failings of others, and forbearance. They teach the sinfulness of hatred and the beauty of philanthropy. They not only recognise affection for a brother Hebrew, but they command respect to strangers. They claim active pity for the widow and the orphan, and they forbid oppression to the unfortunate and the debtor. They inspire veneration for God, and they ordain respect for earthly princes. They impress the necessity for even-handed justice ; jus-

tice which does "not follow the many for evil" (the weakness of the head), and which does "not countenance the indigent in his quarrel" (the weakness of the heart); justice which is beyond the reach of the rich, and which no bribe can blind. They caution against envy, which is ever dissatisfied with what it has; and against covetousness, which ever grasps at what it has not. In short, a careful and conscientious observance of the handful of precepts here laid down would supersede the necessity for those voluminous legislations which complicate matters without always applying a remedy.

"Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live," is a peculiar command, and implies so strongly the independence permitted by Heaven to man's volition that it claims a short notice. At first sight, this command appears superfluous, and even contradictory; superfluous, because believers in God could never tolerate witchcraft; contradictory, because it seems as though God recognised that there really could be witches. But a little consideration will show that this conclusion is erroneous. Witchcraft is the mystery by which knavery practises on weakness. It is a species of idolatrous rite, attractive because of its pretended power over the unknown future. It was a common thing among the nations from which Israel had come; the wise men of Egypt were only performers of witchcraft; the wizards of Canaan were no better. Although men may to a certain extent believe in Providence, they will still scarcely deny that a knowledge of futurity may exist, and a few fortunate coincidences may strengthen their conviction. But if there is one blessing greater than another attached to mortality, it is that blindness to the future which leaves us masters of our careers, and which gives us every incentive to active perseverance by holding out hope as our eternal beacon. If any possession could render man unhappy, it would be the knowledge of his coming destiny. Say this were to be good, he would lose all chance of

deserving it by at once desisting from exertions which could produce no end better than that ordained. Say it were to be bad, he would cease to struggle against the inevitable, and would suffer himself to be drawn unresistingly down the vortex of misery. Thus, all that honourable rivalry which distinguishes man from man, all that aspiring spirit which prompts to high daring for high renown, all that greatness of heart which leads to philanthropy, all that grandeur of intellect which achieves the investigation of the occult laws of science, all, in short, that renders life what it is, would be lost from the world. As the oracles and pretended predictions of old led to their own fulfilment through the ignorance and credulity of the mass, so prescience in man would at once paralyze his system, and reduce him to an inane mass of matter. This it was which induced the Divine Legislator to pronounce death against a witch. Not because a witch deserved death for daring, in his volition, to pretend to that which God had denied to man; not that death was to be the penalty for his imposition as a simple social deceit practised upon the unwary, but because the act of witchcraft produced in its believers that moral death which terminates all the functions of moral free agency, and was thus as fatal in its effects as a physical act of violence which deprived society of a member.

Now that knowledge has reduced agriculture to a science, man is enabled to reap the fulness of the earth without cessation. The system of assoilments, or the alternation of crops, the restoration by chemical means of the elements of which vegetation has deprived the land, improved cultivation and drainage, are adjuncts which modern discoveries have given to man to render him more capable of supplying by increasing harvests the increasing millions which cover the globe. Commerce, too, so much more profitable than agriculture, manufactures, so necessary to commerce, and therefore so exten-

sively carried on, subtract thousands both of acres and of hands from farming, and thus render it the more imperative that the few cultivators should be able to raise enough to maintain not only themselves but those engaged in commerce and manufactures. But in Canaan, the case was altogether different. There, the people were entirely agricultural; each family lived on the produce of its own land, and as within certain limits this land was inalienable, there was less need of augmentation of soil being commensurate with family enlargement. There, too, civilisation was only in its dawn, knowledge had not investigated the fields of science, and the earth, being in no way renovated, was impoverished by its own fertility. It was necessary, therefore, to guard against this latter contingency, and to prevent men from destroying their resources through ignorance. This was effected in a way consonant with free will and with morality. Every seventh day had been set apart for devotion, to withdraw man from too incessant association with worldly matters, and to give his soul a resting-place from which to wing its flight to heaven. Every seventh year was now set apart for the renovation of the soil, and in order that avarice might have no excuse for violating a command so apparently antagonistic, and yet so really necessary to its enjoyment, charity, the sublimest of virtues, was made the vehicle for ensuring obedience. The Israelites were not to be instructed in secular knowledge by the Divine code; spiritual and moral knowledge was the end of the Mosaic dispensation; for, while the cultivation of the mind may be effected by human agency only, thus leaving to man all the merit of the achievement, the cultivation of the soul, depending as it does on truths which could never be known but through revelation, can be effected only by Divine interposition. Hence, in ordaining the cessation of the seventh year, it was not within

the scope of the Mosaic dispensation to assign scientific reasons for its observance. Religious reasons were enough, and what inducement more strong than the doubly blessed virtue "which blesses him who gives and him who receives;" what proof more convincing of sincerity of belief than the faith, which voluntarily submitted to the loss of a year's labour, and relied on Providence to make the produce of the sixth year last till the ninth. We shall be able to adduce additional reasons in favour of this view when we discuss the institution of the Jewish festivals; meanwhile it is sufficient thus to show the completion of the chain by which man is bound to Heaven. Sanctified by ordinations that attached his soul to immortality (the Ten Commandments); sanctified by judgments that rendered his body not the independent agent of its own pleasures, but the chord that was to harmonise its requirements with the pleasures of others; man became alike the faithful interpreter to God of his desire for salvation, and the exponent before man of his connection with the great human family. Thus, true religion engendered veneration without superstition, worship without bigotry, fervour without intolerance; and thus, by direct command, and by indirect implication, it taught that man's reward from Heaven was to depend on his own personal merits and on his estimation by his neighbours. It taught the value of faith not as a merely abstract idea but as a practical illustration of life; a faith which acts and is judged by its acts, and not an abstruse mystery which justifies means by the end; a faith, which is so simple in its morality and so pure in its reasoning, that it never assumes to call wrong right because done in what may be an honest cause, but which knows good only as good, and evil only as evil; a faith, which while it raises man's eyes towards Heaven, does still not so withdraw them from earth as to prevent their beholding

with kindness and sympathy the struggles, the wants, the troubles of his fellow creatures ; a faith, which, while it purports to be eternal and of Divine origin, still arrogates to itself no peculiar claims to exclusive salvation, but is content that every human being shall worship God after his own fashion ; a faith, which, while it cheers by its comforting influence here, its blessed hopes for hereafter, still allows others to enjoy in their own way the privileges of this world, nor presumptuously denies them a share in an eternal future.

תְּרוּמָה

EXODUS: CHAPTER XXV.

THE theory of religion having been established in its two-fold relation to God and to man, it became necessary that the practice should be defined. For, as we have before said, so enslaved is man by the material, that it is questionable whether any principles could obtain among the multitude, except through the medium of external objects, cognizant to the senses. Hence, we must not be surprised that, in this portion, we find the Divine Legislator proceeding directly, from the precepts that were to bind the Israelite to his Maker and his fellow-creature, to the erection of the sanctuary wherein those precepts were to find exponents. To leave the practice of religion to individual caprice was scarcely consistent with the wisdom which was so apparent in the Sinaitic revelation. Besides, as it was intended that the prescriptions of Moses were to be handed down from parent to child, not only as a part of education, but as a religious duty, it was but reasonable that the types by which the future was to be instructed, should have the same uniformity that was apparent in what they typified. Thus, we have the first establishment of public worship.

Of all the institutions by which society is held together,

there is not one that exercises a more healthful influence than public worship. Although it is true that the heart is the real temple of God, and the spontaneous effusions of the contrite spirit His best offering, it is no less true that men cannot penetrate into that temple—the world is not benefitted by that offering. In the headlong rush after the realities of life, so infinite a diversity of interest arises, that there scarcely exist two individuals (not of one family) who find many common bonds of union. For the advancement of civilization it is better that this is so. While the physical world presents so many phenomena for science to investigate, while the social world demands so many requirements which must be satisfied, while the great world of circumstances produces so many emergencies which must be met, it is advantageous that the energies of men should be devoted to the fulfilment of the numerous duties thus imposed. But the great moral and religious world is permanent and unchangeable. The truths of Sinai are the truths of to-day. The obligations of the liberated Israelites are as incumbent on us as on them; to permit the indiscriminate employment of human industry on these eternal spiritualities, would be to endanger their existence by reducing them to the level of temporal wants which change with every generation. Besides, there is much in a type; its very beauty often depends on its significance. Surely, therefore, if it be conceded that from revelation are derived the fundamental principles of morality and religion, it will not be denied that from the same source should we expect the best exponents of those principles. Hence, when we find that the Divine Legislator has condescended to enter into the details of the service which He will consider most acceptable, we cannot refrain from giving to those details all the importance of the object which they are designed to illustrate.

But, as we have before observed, although true devotion

does not consist in form or in external show, still man is so constituted as to be most impressible through his senses. In all ages, it has been found advisable that religious worship should be expounded by certain recognised ceremonies. These become valuable not only as the means for expressing man's obligations to Heaven, but as the symbols by which he was to set an example to his fellow-men. They became respected in the process of time for their universality and for the seal which growing antiquity was setting on them. True, in this as in other worldly affairs, some confusion arose as to the precise limits of the earthly and the heavenly. In the lapse of years, too, the darkness of one generation, the necessities of another, the bigotry of a third, impressed certain minute changes, in themselves scarcely observable, but in the aggregate, of sufficient magnitude to become important. These changes gradually intermingled with the original forms, till, at last, it was all but impossible to determine either when and where the junction had been effected, or indeed, if it had been effected at all. But while these complications only proved the impossibility of drawing a line of demarcation between the real and the ideal, they also proved that mankind acknowledged the necessity for some recognised form of service, which we designate public worship. And this acknowledgment was of the same benefit in a spiritual sense that the diversity of views in human affairs was in social progress. While mundane things constantly present new aspects, the soul is always tending to one goal ; while there are thousands of paths which genius, intellect, or enterprise, may tread for the general good, the road to heaven ever terminates in one direction. While, therefore, change is compatible with worldly progress and indeed essential to it, permanence and uniformity are the characteristics most necessary to public worship as conducing to spiritual progress. The Almighty deigned to sanction this view when

He said: "And it shall come to pass in time to come when thy son shall ask thee, What is this service to you? that you shall say to him, It is because of that which the Eternal did to me when I went out of Egypt." Now as this answer concerning the departure from Egypt could only directly refer to the generation that actually crossed the Red Sea, it follows that its indirect reference to the successors of that generation not only presupposed the Exodus to be as much a mercy to all future Israelites as to those who immediately benefitted by it, but that it ordained the permanence of the "service" by which the miraculous deliverance was to be celebrated. The same may be said of other ceremonial ordinances, and hence it may be inferred that public worship is a desideratum, the import of which depends mainly on the permanence of its ordinations.

But, in order that public worship may be duly performed, there are needed, a place in which to perform it, and ministers by whom it should be performed. The place should be appropriate to its object. It should be distinguished from buildings devoted to secular purposes, and it should be calculated to inspire respect by its peculiar adaptation to its end. The Almighty, we have shown, permitted many customs of surrounding nations to be engrafted on Judaism, taking care only to sanctify them by elevating them to his service. The Israelites had seen the stupendous temples of Egypt; they had beheld those vast and magnificent edifices of which even the ruins are almost of fabulous grandeur and extent. They had doubtless become impressed by the magnitude of these erections, for the human mind receives a strong bias from any thing beyond ordinary range. The grandeur of these places of idol worship, so attractive to the eye of the unlearned mass, had also contributed to intensify the respect in which they were held. In designing the sanctuary for his service, God adopted these attributes of

places of worship within such limits as time and place permitted.

The Israelites were wandering in a wild and uncultivated desert, and their house accommodation was limited to their narrow and easily moveable tents. They had no means for any of that high architectural development which was displayed in Egypt, and it was necessary, therefore, that while their tabernacle should be both large and grand, it should also, like their houses, be easily moveable. In this light we shall at once understand the description in this portion. The precious things which had come to them from the anxious Egyptians were to testify alike their willingness to give their valuables to God, and their desire to have for his worship a place in which his glory might, without impropriety, dwell. Gold, silver, copper, fine linen, purple and scarlet, scarce woods and choice furs, were the materials used, and, from the description given, we cannot fail to perceive that if the tabernacle of the congregation did not realise the grandeur of an Egyptian temple, it certainly exceeded in splendour all that the Israelites had ever seen of their own.

There was one peculiarity also which deserves particular notice, as showing how admirably Divine wisdom knew how to deal with human weakness, and to raise it above itself. Man is ever impressed by the mysterious; what is beyond and above him inspires a kind of awe which often takes the place and form of veneration. No one recognised this failing better than the priests of old, and no one ever made use of it more successfully. The penetralia, the shrines, the oracles of the idolatrous world, were only so many secret recesses of their temples, open to a privileged and initiated few, but carefully screened and jealously guarded from public inspection. These concealed the nothingness of their secrets, and therefore mysterious recesses were the great reserve on which priest-craft fell back in difficulty or danger; by them the

priestly authority was supported and strengthened, and many instances are recorded of the good service so rendered. God adopted this idea, but he hallowed and rationalised it. The Holy of Holies took the place of the idolatrous shrine; its mystery was to be in the sanctity it derived from the visible presence of the Divine glory, and not from any unexplained and inexplicable imaginative form. The fictitious and ambiguous jargon which assumed the name of an oracle, and which destroyed volition by the influence of superstition, was replaced by the genuine and simple language in which God warned and admonished free will by pointing out the inevitable results of sin and evil. But it was necessary to prevent the priesthood from making the design of heaven subservient to its own policy; for such is opportunity that it frequently converts the best intentions into the worst executions. Hence, even priests were forbidden to render themselves (as did idolatrous priests) an integral portion of the mystery of the Divine sanctuary. They could not, at will, retire within the otherwise impenetrable precincts, either thus to clothe themselves with a panoply of superior communion that awed the multitude, or to delude their blind followers by behests pretended to be derived from sources open only to them. The Holy of Holies was sacred even from the priests; as the ineffable name of the Eternal was never to cross mortal lips except on the one day of Kippur, so the innermost sanctuary of the Most Holy was never, except on the same occasion, to be passed by human footstep. On that day, without secrecy, without mystery, but for a purpose known to all the nation, and the result of which became visible through the change in the scarlet thread, the high priest was allowed to go into the dread presence that hovered within the veil; and although the people stood awe-stricken, the priest himself was no less filled with terror at the thought of the trial before him. In this

distant age, surrounded by circumstances so widely different, and accustomed to address the Eternal in the simple language of our liturgy, we can scarcely realise the scene of that holy and terrible day ; but we can well imagine the feelings of both priest and people when we read that his exit from the sanctuary without hurt was considered a cause for so much congratulation that he was conveyed home with every demonstration of happiness, and that the people gave vent to the exuberance of their joy in songs of praise and thanksgiving. Beautiful contrast ! the meaningless mummery of ignorant idolcraft and the impressive ceremonies of enlightened God-worship ; that degrading its votaries through their mental blindness, this elevating its followers by communion with the All-wise. When in the depths of the Red Sea the miraculous guiding pillar of cloud passed between the host of Israel and the armament of Egypt, it showed fire to the former and darkness to the latter. Was this not a true type of the condition of the two peoples, the one receiving light from Heaven, the other "dragging heavily" through the shadows of death ? And such was the difference between the fabrics erected to man's images and the temple raised to the Eternal ; those awed by a mystery which was terrible because reason and intellect were left without means for judging, while fancy conjured its own distorted images ; this awed by the knowledge that man was permitted to stand and live in the immediate presence of that Omnipotent Being whose glory filleth the whole universe.

תצורה

EXODUS: CHAPTER XXVII. VERSE 20.

THE external and internal structure of the tabernacle being described, the Divine legislator directs attention to the service and the ministry. We shall have abundant

opportunity for speaking of the service when we investigate the Levitical laws ; meanwhile it will suffice to make a few observations on one peculiarity specially ordained in the portion before us :—

“Over against the altar, which is by the testimony, Aaron and his sons shall arrange the light, that it may be perpetual.”

When we reflect that the commands of Heaven are, even in their minutest detail, designed to appeal to our reason for the promotion of our happiness, and that they are not behests capriciously ordained without an object, we must conclude that the perpetual light had some significance beyond the mere ceremonial observance performed in its maintenance. Let us endeavour to show this significance to be twofold, real and typical.

The nations of those days, among which the lot of Israel was cast, were steeped in the grossest idolatry. The mass were ignorant and degraded, and were the blind slaves of a tyrannic hierarchy. It was in the interest of this ruling power to maintain its authority at any cost. Hence, every means that cunning could devise for rivetting the fetters of an illiterate people was at different times adopted. Nor was it difficult to multiply these means, owing to the utter mental prostration which then universally prevailed ; for it is the peculiarity of ignorance, when once under control, to yield itself willingly to the yoke imposed on it, and rather to glory in its servitude than to seek to throw it off. But the religion of Moses was to open a new career to man. It was to spread the knowledge of God, not among Jews only, but through the whole world. It was to disseminate the principles of the immortality of the soul, of man's responsibility, of his creation in the Divine image, and, therefore, of his capability of approximating himself to the perfection of that image. It was to appeal to the higher faculties of humanity, and to rule them through their superiority over

the other attributes of life. It was not only to be distinguished from idolatry, by elevating man above himself through the medium of the Eternal, instead of debasing him by dependence on things of his own fashioning, but it was also to be distinguished by awakening the soul to a consciousness of its own powers, and by teaching it to soar into the realms of everlasting light, instead of plunging into the darkness of endless perdition. While, therefore, mystery was a characteristic of idolatry, openness was to be a feature of God-worship. Mystery might be a convenient tool in the hands of a knave to hide his villainy, or to screen his chicanery from the eyes of his dupes, but it was of no avail to the honest minister of Heaven, who was to be the friend and adviser of his flock, the exponent and expounder of the principles he professed, and the mental educator as well as the spiritual teacher of the people. Openness might be antagonistic to the mummeries by which idolatry sought to mystify the grovelling, but it was only an ally to the ceremonies by which religion assumed to typify the duties of the soul. Hence, while the Almighty in so far adopted the custom of the temples of those times that he established a Holy of Holies, or innermost tabernacle, he entirely changed the character of it. The idolatrous shrine, the penetralia, was secret, dark, and mysterious, only because light would have exposed its nothingness; the deepest recesses of the tabernacle were to contain a perpetual light, that there might be no mistake in the nature of their sanctity. Adopting this view, we have a clue to the real significance of an otherwise meaningless ceremony; we shall now show its typical significance, and, connected with it, the vocation and functions of the priesthood.

Israel had seen much of other priests. Already, so early as the days of Abraham, Melchizedek, "priest of the most high God," occupied a position of influence. In Egypt, the highest honour that Pharaoh could confer on

Joseph was to permit him to marry into the priestly caste. The greatest privilege that Joseph granted to famishing Egypt was the exemption of the sacerdotal office from royal tribute. There seems little doubt also that the wise men and magicians of Egypt were priests. Israel, therefore, had been accustomed to behold a priesthood, separated by social distinctions from the mass of the people, and isolating themselves still more by the mysterious privileges which they arrogated in virtue of their office. These priests assumed authority, in all cases, over the worldly circumstances of their flocks, and, in many cases, over their eternal welfare. They communicated their knowledge to none but members of their own body, and thus, while experience and constant intercommunication tended to increase their own capabilities, the world was not only not benefitted, but was even purposely continued in a state of mental and intellectual darkness. They commanded the best things of earth by pretending to hold the keys of heaven, and thus even the fruits of personal industry were not secure from their grasping influence. With the priesthood of Moses all this was to cease, except in so far that the Almighty sanctioned the wisdom which assigned to priestly duties a definite amount of preparation and study, and did not leave them open to ad captandum adoption. Like the hierophants of Egypt, the priests of Israel were to form a distinct class; they might intermarry with the females of other tribes, but the males of the family of Aaron could not alienate themselves from the tasks imposed by their birth. Thus, even from childhood, the future ministers of religion were aware of their distinction, and were doubtless, therefore, trained with a view to its fulfilment. But, as we have said, this distinction was not to be one of isolation, of personal worldly advantage, or of mysterious assumption. The priest was to be the educator of the people in that moral and religious knowledge that was to be found

in the written law, and which was to be the basis on which man was to establish his temporal welfare and his eternal salvation. He was to be the depository of those traditionary precepts (the Oral Law), the correct retention and practice of which, and their intact delivery to his posterity, were so necessary to a uniform and proper observance of the ceremonial statutes. He was to be the interlocutor of the congregation to God, not receiving their votive offerings and returning an empty harvest of ambiguous oracle, but communicating their thanks or repentance to the throne of grace, and admonishing them to sincerity and righteousness. He was to be the arbitrator in civil disputes, and the interpreter of those social laws, which bind man to man, and distinguish the harmony of civilized justice from the confusion of barbaric tyranny. He was not to enrich himself at the expense of his neighbours, amassing in the deep recesses of his shrine untold treasures, to buy immunity from foreign invasion, or to silence domestic clamour. His share of the general capital was defined and limited, nor did his vocation afford him any means of exacting further supplies by pretended miracles or vicarious atonement. In short, the priest, bound to no particular home, from having no portion of the Holy Land, was to permeate the whole community as the blood circulates through the human body. Like that blood, he was to carry vitality whithersoever he went; he was to nourish and to prevent decay, he was to bear the life-giving stream fresh from the heart (the tabernacle of the congregation) to the remotest parts of the body. On his purity, was to depend the very existence of the entire mass; if he became corrupt, he vitiated and killed, if he remained intact, he preserved and immortalised. Thus, through the priests, the great truths of the "tablets of the covenant" were to be taught to the people. These truths were not to lie buried in the darkness of the enclosing ark, but were to be published

and explained throughout the entire congregation. On their publication and appreciation were to depend spiritual welfare and knowledge of God, and it is to this function of the priest that the text refers when the Almighty designs to promise :—" In every place in which I permit my name to be remembered, I will come unto thee and bless thee."

Having shown that the priest was to be the enlightener of the people, we need only bear in mind the weakness of humanity to understand the typical significance of the perpetual light. Man is accustomed to degenerate. Length of service while giving him increased experience, also not unfrequently produces carelessness of practice. There is a pride in intellectual superiority which sometimes disdains meaner capacities. Immunity from certain restrictions and enjoyment of peculiar privileges lead to monopoly on the one hand, and resistance on the other. The isolation of class from class, or of individual from individual, while it may tend to pamper the pride, or swell the arrogance of the few, is only destructive to the interests of the many. As, in the atmosphere, there must be a constant and universal interchange of currents and strata to preserve the equilibrium ; as the tropical heats and the polar snows mutually subserve the general circulation ; as animals and vegetables reciprocally absorb and evolve the elements necessary to each other ; so, in society, every class must commingle with every other class, if the entire mass is to derive benefit. This it was which was to distinguish Jewish from idolatrous society ; in the latter, the isolation of the priesthood produced selfishness and assumption on their part and debasement in the people ; in the former, the community were to be elevated by priestly association and mutuality of interests. But so frail is man that it is necessary constantly to remind him of his duties. This necessity is conceded

by the Almighty in the establishment of the various ceremonies of daily observance, and which are to serve as memorials: "When you see, you shall remember." As therefore we find various types impressed for this wise end on Judaism, so we may regard the maintenance of the perpetual light as the type to the priesthood of their peculiar vocation. As they were constantly to preserve this light within the tabernacle, as they were to trim the lamps, to keep up a proper supply of oil, to watch night and day lest some accident might extinguish their charge, so were they reminded that they were to preserve the light of knowledge, the light of religion, within the entire nation; so they were to fashion the hearts of the people, and to supply them with that spiritual aliment which would ensure the burning of their lamp of salvation, so they were to be vigilant night and day lest untoward circumstances or sinister influence might interfere to militate against the success of their ministrations, and thus extinguish the flame which it was their vocation to nourish and render perpetual.

 כִּי תִשָּׂא

EXODUS: CHAPTER XXX., VERSE 11.

THERE is to the weak-minded something so attractive in vice, that they seem spell-bound by its fascination. The Israelites had been rescued from Egypt by the miraculous interposition of the Eternal; they had seen (for the second time since creation) the visible hand of Providence coercing and guiding human affairs, and they knew themselves to be the cause of this interference; they had been assembled face to face with the Divine Protector, and had heard his tremendous voice proclaim those eternal statutes which, through their agency, were to secure the salvation of mankind; they had witnessed the glorious similitude through which God had deigned to

communicate with the elders, and they had beheld the ascent of Moses into those dread precincts of which the thunders alone had appalled their very souls. All this and more had they learned, and yet scarcely were they left to themselves than they displayed the inherent bias of their minds and fell to idolatry. To what are we to attribute this disrespect to Heaven, this deviation in man? Surely to nothing but the power of example. The Israelites had been born in Egypt; there they had imbibed the earliest notions, there they had received their first and most lasting impressions; thence they had brought a store of recollections which might slumber for awhile, but which no after years could entirely obliterate. Hence, when they first entered the wilderness and found no water, their memory reverted with regret to the fertility they had left, and their regrets for their present privation were based on the loss of past enjoyments. Hence, also, no sooner has their leader left them alone, than the more recent teachings of Providence are forgotten, and they return to the idolatry among which their earliest years had been passed.

Sad effects of example. Ah, ye who have the care of youth; to whose guidance is intrusted the formation of character; should ye not be careful to surround your charge with such influences only as may leave a good impression? Say, ye teach him to despise all doctrines but those you profess, that you bid him see salvation only through their medium, that you denominate virtue, fortitude, resignation, piety, the peculiar attributes of your creed, shall he not grow to be bigotted and intolerant in thought, and, if opportunity serve, a persecutor in act? Say, ye set before him words of truth but deeds of falsehood or shame, that ye instruct him from goodly books in the precepts to which yourselves do not conform; that ye praise to him honour and high mindedness while ye are barely honest from fear, and always selfishly ungene-

rous, shall he not grow to be mean, grovelling, and depraved? Say, ye legislate to him against crime which you have never sought to prevent by proper teaching, should you not find yourselves guilty of the consequences of your own neglect? Say, ye pander to unholy desires, truckle to pride or bend to station, the while you command him to restrain his passions, to walk independently and to respect not rank, shall he not grow the hypocrite which he knows you to be, and shall he not perpetuate the evil you place before him? Educate, yes; but let your ethics be those of universal philanthropy, your morals those of all true God worship; let your politics see right where right is, and not in the bias of party; let your honour be the reflex of your aspirations after a divine model, your honesty that which scorns even an equivocation, and then ye shall set an example which shall produce a race of which you may be proud of being the ancestors, and which may be thankful for being your descendants: then you shall faithfully have discharged your duty to time by contributing your means that the future ameliorate the past.

The Israelites returned to the well-remembered example of youth, but they were none the less culpable, for their recent teachings had been of a kind to eradicate the desire for an evil, the magnitude of which their knowledge of God permitted them to appreciate. Can we wonder, then, that the anger of Heaven was kindled against them, or that even Divine mercy knew no pardon for a crime which multiplied its atrocity by the blackest ingratitude? But sad as the recital is, we are reconciled to its perusal by the opportunity it affords to Moses for a display of that nobility of character which had rendered him worthy to be the chosen servant of God.

“Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may glow against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation.” Thus spake the Omnipotent.

tent. But the "meek man Moses" had no considerations of a personal nature. The proud hopes of a numerous posterity, the brilliant destiny of being the father of a mighty nation, awakened no ambition in the heart that could only bleed for the frailty and ingratitude of his beloved flock. Listen to his appeal for mercy; mark how he invokes pardon by every argument that he thinks can tell in favour of the cause he pleads. The anticipated revengeful gratification of Egypt; the memory of the patriarchs: the promises made to them; these are the themes of his discourse, and, purified by the sincerity whence they spring, they produce the effect desired. "And the Eternal repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people."

Divine man! worthy servant of an all merciful Master! the records of the world may present many characters to which our admiration is due, but to none as to thine, can we attribute that God-like quality of utter unselfishness which separates man from his own individuality, and renders his existence the type of love for his fellow-creatures!

And three thousand victims fell to wash away in their blood the memory of this sad event. Brother rose against brother, friend butchered friend, nor compassion raised one pitying cry in breasts steeled by wrath for the offended majesty of Heaven. And thus is it ever in crime. While virtue constitutes men friends, vice renders them only accessories to each other's interests; so long as their misdeeds prosper, they may cling together from a community of guilt, but discovery once made, they as easily betray as they before assisted. And so the tribe of Levi, less culpable perhaps than the majority of their brethren, earned by their devotion to the cause of God, the brightest reward ever bestowed on any body of men. As to Aaron and his sons had already been given the special office of the ministry, so to the Levites was it now granted to per-

form the various services of the tabernacle, to devote their lives to the discharge of sacred duties.

One other circumstance grew out of this deviation of Israel which is too important to be passed by in silence. When Moses had obtained the final pardon of the repentant survivors, when his offer to consent to his own annihilation rather than that his charge should suffer alone, had proved alike his entire devotion to them, and his utter disregard for himself, he was permitted to receive a recompence never awarded to any other mortal. Placed on the rock, he was allowed to see all the glory of God, and the Eternal himself vouchsafed to declare the attributes by which he desired thereafter to be known to man.

“The Eternal Lord God, gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of abundant goodness and truth, showing kindness to thousands, and to those who keep his commandments, and bearing with iniquity and transgression.”

Here was no terrible God, armed with thunder-bolts or clothed with dread, but a gracious and merciful Being, who desired to rule by love without fear, speaking to man as to a friend, and treating with perishable mortality on terms more equal than those with which human being treats with human being. How different from the idols of which Israel had heard, or which Israel had seen! While blood-thirsty Moloch was said to delight in human victims, and while other heathen abominations claimed self-inflicted wounds at the hands of their votaries, the Eternal God of the universe proclaimed only love and mercy, and asked no sacrifice but rectitude, virtue, and religion. Can we wonder, on remarking this contrast, that the Lord should pronounce, as he did, sentence of condemnation on the nations which Israel was about to dispossess? Israel, we have shewn, had failed through following a bad example; was it not merciful to prevent the recurrence of a like catastrophe, especially when the objects denounced had already become obnoxious to con-

dign punishment by their idolatry, their crimes, and their utter demoralisation? For was not "the cup of the Amorites full?" And was this precaution not the more needful when it is remembered that Israel was to be the exponent and the promulgator of God-worship to the world? How could it be expected that mankind should listen to the doctrine of Israel, if Israel did not show his own appreciation of the treasure he possessed to dispense? Hence can we not understand the denunciation, and reconcile it to the usual mercy of Heaven? "Take heed that thou make not any covenant with the inhabitants of the land which thou art going to inherit, lest it be a snare to thee. But their altars thou shalt overthrow, their pillars thou shalt break to pieces, their groves thou shalt cut down." For, if crime be so contagious that communion with it leaves corruption behind, was it not better and wiser to deal with already-existing offenders according to their demerits, than to allow them to escape a chastisement which their iniquities deserved, and thus to afford them opportunities for perpetuating their errors? How necessary the precaution of Providence was, may be inferred from the baneful effects produced by the presence of the few fragments of Canaanitish people, whom Israel wrongly permitted to denizen among them, and who from time to time ensnared them by the peculiar fascinations which sensual worship displays. A perusal of the book of Judges affords too many instances of deviations from duty not to strike the reader forcibly with the evil results of these anomalous mixtures of idolatry and God-service; and we cannot wonder therefore, that the All-wise who foresaw those results, and whose legislation was specially designed to promote the happiness of his people, should lay down such cautions as his prescience and his desire to avoid punishing, enabled him to know to be required. Mercy seeks rather to reward than to chastise, and of evils to choose the least; annihilation of people who

had already polluted the earth by their vicious practices, and of whom it was said that through their iniquities the land had vomited them from its midst, was certainly a less evil, although perhaps savouring of severity, than the corruption of an innocent but impressible nation, whose mission, once endangered, might become altogether abortive, and through whose failure the future regeneration of mankind might be rendered impossible.

ויקהלפקודי

EXODUS: CHAPTER XXXV.

“YE shall not kindle fire in any of your habitations on the Sabbath-day.”

Let us endeavour to investigate this statute, so prominently introduced, and apparently with so little reference either to the passage which precedes or to that which succeeds it. Let our investigation be carried out in the spirit with which these reflections have ever been made; that it is inconsistent with Divine wisdom to impress commands on man, except reason be permitted to point out their design to promote his happiness; that every ordination has some distinct object to subserve, and is not to be observed simply from blind obedience to the Divine will, but from that higher submission which a voluntary recognition of Supreme authority engenders and sanctifies.

The Sabbath was a new institution. Its design was to introduce heavenly elements into worldly concerns, just as the soul was centred in the body. It was a day set apart from the ordinary occupations of life for the benefit of the spirit. On it, not only was man to withdraw from those avocations which, being industrial, contributed to his physical existence and to his moral welfare, but he was to deviate from the inherent consequences of his original sin, “In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread.” But this cessation from industry was not to be

for the indulgence of enervating or demoralising sloth, nor for any defiance of the will of Heaven; on the contrary, it was to afford renewed vigour, through rest, for fresh exertions, and it was to prove confidence in that mercy of Providence which had promised that six days' labour should supply seven days' provision. This deviation from the inherent consequences of sin was to be the compensating power by which the spring of life was to be regulated; it was to be the removal of the pressure from the surface, in order that a vacuum, as it were, might render effects more conformable to certain ends, but yet all establishing and confirming the great law of equilibrium. It was necessary, therefore, in ordaining the observance of the Sabbath, to consider both the failings of the body and the requirements of the soul.

Idleness, leaving the body unoccupied, gives more scope to the mind, but it also affords more play for the animal appetites; hence, with holidays are generally associated feasting and enjoyment. We know, too, that among the heathens of those times, the days set apart for idolatrous rites were always concluded by banquets and licentious pleasures. Now the intention of the Sabbath was to encourage rest, but not idleness; it was rather to promote a new industry, for which the occupation of worldly affairs left no space. Just, as by the law of impenetrability, two bodies cannot occupy one place at the same time, so the exertion of the physical members, and the business of the eternal soul could not be collocated. The Sabbath, then, was to afford scope for that for which the six working days gave no leisure; but it was to do this under no disadvantage arising from the connection between soul and body. On the contrary, as the Sabbath was designed specially to promote spiritual welfare, care was to be taken that due preponderance should be given to requirements having a tendency in that direction. We have already shown, in our observations on the

leaven of the Passover, how the animal appetites pamper the body and fetter the mind; how the corruption of sensual enjoyments vitiates not only the material, but the immaterial; and we have shown how admirably the wisdom of Providence, appealing to man's obedience through his volition, contrived to deprive pleasure of its sting, and luxury of its voluptuousness, by the abstraction of the intoxicating element from all permitted food. What can be more reasonable then, than that the Omniscient, having adopted this principle as the basis on which to found his institutions, having determined that it was wiser to remove the opportunity for sin than to place temptation before man, having legislated for human happiness as best to be enhanced by voluntary virtue, should impress on the Sabbath—the root and origin of all holidays—the same restrictive power that he had given to the Passover. “Thou shalt not kindle fire in any of your habitations on the Sabbath-day,” was the means to the end, just as “you shall put away all leaven from among you,” was the means to the end. There was no harm in the kindling of fire on the Sabbath, as a simple act. It was permitted in the daily sacrifice; it was enjoined in the burning of the frankincense; it was allowed in any of the services of the Tabernacle. The sin lay not in the act, but in the intention of it. In those almost tropical lands, in which a genial sun renders almost the whole year one continued spring and summer, there was no necessity for domestic fires for the purpose of warming the person.* The purpose of a fire in the habitation could only be for the cooking of food, for the preparation of those appetising luxuries, for the indulgence in which leisure and opportunity afforded

* The rabbins who decided that in cold countries it was lawful to kindle fire for the purpose of warming “women and children,” evidently adopted this particular view, and no other, as they carefully avoided legalising fire for culinary purposes.

only too much encouragement. But such an application of fire would have been antagonistic to the abstemiousness necessary to the indulgence of soul, which alone was appropriate to the Sabbath. Highly-seasoned dishes or tempting delicacies, would not only produce animal excitement or sensual languor on the part of those who indulged in them, but they would entail inventiveness or labour on the part of those who prepared them. Either result would be alike detrimental to the sanctity of the Sabbath; the former inducing thoughts too sensual for devotion, the latter worldly duties inconsistent with spiritual reflections. Cooking, therefore, was to be forbidden as a preventive; and to place it beyond possibility, and at the same time to remove the temptation to it, fire was prohibited from the habitations. Thus, when the Israelite refrained from kindling fire on the Sabbath, he separated himself at once from the only worldly consideration which could attract him during the stoppage of all business duties; and, by confining himself to uninviting or cold, and therefore unstimulating food, he prevented any corruptive influence from alienating his soul from the duties entailed by the Sabbath. He restrained passion by withholding incentives, just as fire smoulders from which is withheld the supply of oxygen needful for brisk combustion. He renounced by an act of self-abnegation all the cravings of his animalisation, and thus, by the very sacrifice, he best expressed his will that the soul should be his primary consideration on that sacred day. And so, again, in this apparently arbitrary statute, we recognise the wisdom of the Supreme; we perceive his merciful desire for our happiness by his removal of the temptation to sin, and we bow to the restriction placed on our desires, from a voluntary conviction that obedience is scarcely a merit when it conduces so manifestly to our own advantage.

But, it may be asked, how does this view coincide with

the manner in which, from time immemorial, the Sabbath has been observed? How does it tally with the rabbinical ordinance by which fasts are not allowed to be kept on Sabbath, and which method of keeping them might be regarded as only more strictly enforcing the principle here laid down? The reply is by no means difficult. The non-observation of the Sabbath in the spirit here demanded only proves the proneness of man to yield to corporeal influences. For, look at the traditional ceremonies enjoined, but scarcely complied with, as proper to the Sabbath. A longer evening service, in which Psalms form a conspicuous feature, gives weight to the synagogue duties. Zemiroth, or home songs of praise, and the reading of Scripture, provide devotional exercise for the domestic circle, and thus exclude those mere worldly pursuits through which leisure indulges in recreation. Again, on the Sabbath day, three services and an additional service occupy some hours; Zemiroth, repetition of the Sedrah and Haftorah read in the synagogue, and the necessary reflections thereon, a chapter of ethics or extra Psalms, all contribute to give food and employment for the mind during the hours to be spent at home. And although it may be true that these observances are not by any means universal, their very institution proves how well the rabbins understood the spirit in which the Sabbath was ordained, how sedulous they were to occupy it with such pursuits only as tended to elevate the soul towards Heaven, and to withdraw the mind as much as possible from contemplating or supplying the requirements of the body. Who that has spent the Sabbath in the bosom of a truly pious family has not felt the truth of this? Who that has witnessed the utter isolation from all worldly concerns; the contracting of those bonds by which the social union of parents and children is confined within more sacred limits; the holy claim

which a father establishes on the affection and duty of his offspring by his exposition of Holy Writ, and by his fulfilment of the primary laws of his tenure of Judaic principles ;* the absence of that sensuality which seeks to indulge in luxurious viands, and, in its place, that primitive simplicity of appetite which supplies the first wants of nature with plentiful but plain food ; the forgetfulness of those artificial distinctions which separate master and servant, and in their stead, the recognition of the equality of all ranks in the eyes of Providence, as evidenced in the assemblage of all Jewish inmates around the same board, to listen to the same prayers, and to participate in the same devotional exercises : the genuine spirituality that has pervaded the whole domestic circle and the happiness consequent thereon, irrespective of worldly weal or worldly woe ; who that has witnessed all this, and has contrasted it with the more ordinary method of celebrating a Sabbath, has not acknowledged that the original institution seemed more consonant with the customs here described ? Who will deny that if any one point of difference has struck the mind most forcibly, it has been the influence of bodily considerations in the one case, and their absence in the other ? And, yielding this, who will deny that, of all bodily considerations, luxurious enjoyment of the appetite holds the first place, and that the prevention of this, by the prohibition of fire for culinary purposes, is the wise means for securing man's appropriate celebration of the Sabbath ?

In respect to fasting, as connected with the Sabbath, the reasoning is somewhat analogous. While the Sabbath is to promote virtue through moderation, it is not to sanction asceticism by total abstinence. In the same manner that God had provided wine and other rich adjuncts to the palate, that man may use and not abuse

* "And thou shalt diligently teach thy children."

them, he commanded the Sabbath to be set apart for the spirit—in its connection with the body—and not in entire distinction from it. When, on the great day of Kippur, the Divine Legislator instituted, “Ye shall afflict your souls,” the reason for fasting, being understood, is obvious. Kippur is set apart for repentance ; it is the day on which we acknowledge that, notwithstanding our utmost desire to obey the laws of God, we have still erred through the very imperfection of our nature ; it is the day on which we confess that, notwithstanding our observation of the Sabbath and other holidays, and our consequent cultivation of the soul, we have still gone astray through the intimate connection between spirit and matter, and the sometime preponderance of the latter ; it is the day, therefore, in which we endeavour for the time to separate the soul from the influence which has prevented its elevation to its Divine source ; on which for a few hours we isolate the spirit from even the minutest worldly concerns, in order to shake off its earthly dross, and to hold communion with its Maker. To Kippur, therefore, fasting is indispensable, alike as the recognition of the influence of the body over the spirit, as the expression of the desire for the preponderance of the latter, and as our confession that this can only be effected by withdrawing the very means of corporeal support. But to the Sabbath, for the same reason, fasting would be inappropriate. The Sabbath is to minister to spiritual wants, not to imply the failure of their supply. It is to enable the soul to rule, as connected with the body, and not as apart from it. It is to remind man of the duties of life, and not to recall the fact that the severance of Kippur is only a type of the final severance of death. Moreover the Sabbath is connected as a memorial with the exodus from Egypt, and is therefore to a certain extent a season for happiness ; and if the law does not class it in respect to rejoicing with other festivals, still less does it connect it in regard

to afflicting the soul with Kippur. Hence, in the disposition of those historical fasts designed to commemorate national afflictions, the rabbins (fully aware of the original designs of the Sabbath, and recognising how opposed humiliation and penitence were to thanks for the mercies of the working days and to confidence in the rest of the day of cessation)—the rabbins carefully abstained from permitting a human institution from trenching on a Divine ordinance by removing from the Sabbath any fast occurring on that day. And thus, alike by the influence of reason and the teachings of tradition, is the Sabbath sanctified; and in every place in which the scatterings of Israel congregate to worship after the manner of their ancestors, the same observance tends to hallow the Sabbath-day. Everywhere, the absence of fire shows obedience to the Scriptural statute and compliance with Divine rescript; everywhere, if not in its entirety, certainly in part, abstinence from exciting viands and stimulating beverages proves the voluntary submission of Jews to the curb placed on animal desires and sensual appetites; everywhere, the cultivation, to some extent, of the higher duties of the soul, sets apart the Jewish Sabbath as a day different from other days, and thus tends to preserve that spiritual distinction which separates Israel from the other nations of earth.

ויקרא

LEVITICUS: CHAPTER I.

REFERENCE to ceremonies whose existence has been obliterated, does not afford much interest to the general reader. The inquisitive and curious may turn with some degree of excitement to the mysterious recitals connected with the names Eleusis, Isis, or Walhalla; but this excitement depends entirely on the mystery connected with all heathen celebrations, and on the importance to be attached to their interpretations. The simple unpretending rites of the Levitical sacrifices; their want of all that can awaken speculation or leave room for controversy; the utter cessation not only of such religious expositions, but of every thing analogous to them; all contribute to deaden the feelings, and to forbid speculation, and therefore to deprive that portion of the law now before us, of much that can make reflection profitable. But something still remains which may not be wholly uninteresting, and which may resolve itself into the following questions:— Why were sacrifices ordained as exponents of man's duties to Heaven? Did they take the place of that devotion which now exhibits itself in prayer? What was their moral effect?

Why were sacrifices ordained as exponents of man's duty to Heaven? It must not be forgotten that the Divine Legislator adopted into Judaism many of the ceremonies already existing among idolatrous nations. Of all such ceremonies, sacrifices held by far the most universal sway, not only among heathens, but even among those older individuals who bowed to the true God. Already in the earliest years of creation, when Abel and Cain sought to pour out into visible form the expression of their gratitude to Heaven, sacrifice was the method

they adopted. When earth, freed from the overwhelming deluge, again bared her maternal bosom to nourish her restored offspring, sacrifice was the type by which Noah displayed his thankfulness for escape from the universal destruction. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob all offered sacrifices as proofs of their devotion to the service of God. Nor can we wonder at this development of human feelings. Gratitude is a sentiment that seeks to express itself in deeds somewhat parallel to the benefits which evoked it. In those times men were essentially agricultural; their riches consisted in the produce of the earth, and in domestic cattle. But the produce of the earth was either speedily perishable or was consumed, as now, for the ordinary maintenance of life. What we call capital, therefore, the accumulations of past labour, consisted then of cattle. Cattle formed the medium of exchange, afforded a ready means for the investment of superabundant vegetable production, and thus became the general standard by which wealth was estimated. The possession of cattle also rendered necessary the acquisition of grazing land and the co-operation of numerous shepherds and herdsmen, and thus contributed not only through numbers to personal security, but to that system of colonization which was so needed to prevent nomad habits of living, of idleness, and of pillage, from holding entire dominion. To cattle men looked, therefore, as to their highest gifts through which they became respectable and respected. To cattle also they owed many advantages; food, means of draught, clothing and numerous domestic conveniences, were contributed by the quiet ox, the gentle sheep or goat. Can we be surprised then that, in seeking to display gratitude to the source of their wealth, men should have chosen for the expression of that gratitude, that which they valued most, or that God, in opening, as it were, relations between himself and mortals, should have deigned to declare himself willing to accept the tri-

bute which the holiest feelings of humanity had already sanctified? Assuredly not; and more, if we were now called on to determine what would have been the most appropriate form for devotion, we should certainly pronounce in favour of what seems to have possessed so many claims for that peculiar end. Always at hand, always valuable, always associated with comfort and happiness, cattle were at all times adapted for sacrifice. Did some long-continued prosperity determine a man to pour out his gratitude, the marks of that prosperity were the best means for his so doing. Did some escape from sudden accident or momentary temptation evoke thankfulness, the store of home at once afforded scope for celebrating the escape, or the resistance of temptation. If famine threatened, what fitter to propitiate than the food on which, in case of famine, existence depended? If we concede, then, that man is as called on by gratitude to Providence, as by his sense of Divine protection and his want of Divine aid, to develop in some way his thankfulness, his dependence or his penitence, we must, at the same time, allow that no type could have been more appropriate than that selected. It returned in some way a portion of his Divine blessing, and, by enabling man to part with that which was valuable to himself and rendered him valued in the eyes of others, it prevented selfishness and avarice, and gave play to those warmer feelings of generosity and benevolence which do so much to cement the bonds of society. Fine sentiments, eloquently clothed, may command admiration and excite respect; but they may be little else than glittering externals covering a worthless character, and may disgrace the utterer as they deceive the hearer. Homely thoughts, simply expressed, may fail to rouse the imagination or awaken the fancy; but when the convictions they convey are substantially proved by the sacrifice of something valuable or pleasurable, while we may fail to approve, we cannot refuse to appre-

ciate the sincerity and honesty of which they are the emanations. Prayer may be only verbiage ; sacrifice must be, to a certain extent, genuine. And this leads to the second question.

Did sacrifices take the place of that devotion which now exhibits itself in prayer ? It is strange that, while modern religion, throughout the civilised world, has adopted prayer as the medium of its communication with Heaven ; while Holy Writ contains abundant evidence that the patriarchs, judges, and prophets of old must all have felt the value of prayer and have used it ; while our present liturgy contains passages of antiquity so remote that no precise date can be given to their introduction, we nowhere find in the Pentateuch any ordination concerning prayer. And this is the more strange, when we consider the minuteness of detail in every respect that can affect human welfare, either through moral, sanitary, social, or ceremonial law. Even the fashion of the priestly garment is not thought too light for a special ordination. How then can we account for the absence of all rules as to prayer, or are we to suppose that sacrifice superseded the necessity for oral communication with Heaven ? To us it has always seemed evident that prayer was not ordained because it was not to consist of any formula prescribed by God, but was to be left to the free-will of man. While it was quite natural that a gracious Providence should point out to men desirous of testifying by tangible means their repentance or gratitude, their sorrow or hope, the manner most agreeable to its acceptance, it was equally natural that the expression of the sentiments which prompted those testifying should be left to men themselves. The solemn and impressive words of a recognised liturgy may penetrate into the heart, although constant repetition render them somewhat too familiar, but the spontaneous effusions of a soul, pouring itself out before the throne of grace, must awaken a responsive echo in the deepest recesses of the

mind and body. Besides, the sacrifices being once ordained, some individuals might have imagined that the whole religious duty was involved in the offering, and that to propitiate or atone, it was only necessary to bring an ox or a lamb with the certainty of its being accepted. And that this could not have been the end of sacrifice is too apparent to require proof. It seems clear, therefore, that the devotion of our ancestors was to be of a twofold nature—real and ideal; the real being the visible sacrifice and ceremony, the ideal being the accompanying sentiment which animated the act with all that rendered it holy, and which expressed itself in the form of spontaneous prayer. There must have been, and doubtless there were, certain formulæ which accompanied periodical sacrifice; such as the two daily offerings, the Sabbath and festival offerings, &c., and these formulæ were probably recited by the ministering priests, and perhaps repeated by the surrounding worshippers; but, for personal sacrifice, the form of the prayer was left to the feelings of the individual, and a standard was thus furnished by man himself for estimating the sincerity of his devotion. But, it may be urged, why, if the prayer was to be determined by man, should the offering also be not so decided? The reply will be evident from a consideration of the third point: What was the moral effect of sacrifices?

Sacrifices were principally of two kinds: of atonement for sin, and thus they partook of the nature of punishment; of thanksgiving for Divine mercy, and thus they assumed the character of charity. Now, as has been before observed, one of the primary objects of punishment is to set an example to the culprit of the consequences entailed by misdeeds—to the world of the evil effects which sin produces. There is also no doubt that the discovery of guilt and its exposure to the eyes of one's fellow-creatures produce more shame than the actual guilt itself; and that perhaps the best means to prevent crime would

be to compel every criminal to publish his shame. Viewed in this light, the determining of the expiatory sacrifice by Divine command was alike necessary to prevent the sinner from concealing his guilt, and important to place him in his true character before his fellow-creatures. And this will be the more readily conceded when it is recollected that although an act of sin offend only an individual, it is essentially a wrong against society, and that the sufferer has neither the power nor the right to acquit the culprit without suitable reparation to the offended majesty of the law. Hence to leave the form of an atonement-offering to the sinner would have been to deprive it of one of its most important functions, viz., its being the medium for exposing the evil doer, and its consequent tendency to prevent error through shame. Even the most hardened sinner could not at some time fail to acknowledge the omniscience of God, and he would thus also recognise the necessity for appeasing his anger in the way ordained by his mercy; the hypocrite also, who, under the cloak of sanctity, violated every principle of morality, would at some moment of compunction feel impelled to attempt an expiation. Both, however, while endeavouring to make their peace with their offended Maker, could only do so by allowing their fellow-men to be the witnesses of their contrition and humiliation; and thus the very best safeguard against the recurrence of criminality was the abasement to which a public act of penitence compelled submission. And that this idea prevailed with the Divine legislator may be inferred by the particular sacrifice ordained for the involuntary sin, or for the "sin of ignorance." A broad line of demarcation was thus drawn between crime and error; while the one was held up in all its flagrancy, the other was exposed only as a warning against frailty, and as a caution to acquire that true knowledge of God's law which might prevent the ignorance that had fallen. But

in both cases the religious nature of the expiation deprived it of all that could render the sinner's humiliation a theme for mockery or a means for insult. Men may pelt the victim in the stocks, but there is something so solemn and holy in an act of devotion to God that even scoffers are silenced and unbelievers can only sneer. A consciousness of the general weakness of human nature may restrain from an acknowledgment of error to one's fellow-man, and may support even under the obloquy of invective to which undiscovered evil-doers are too apt to resort when any opportunity offers for blurring another; but there is no such excuse in confessing frailty before the perfection of Heaven, for there is no degradation in Divine reproof. In regard to the atonement-offerings, therefore, it is evident that the moral effect must have been most impressive; they deprived guilt of all means for subterfuge, and yet awakened no revengeful feelings against human injustice; they compelled exposure of crime and thus produced shame, but it was a shame which left no sting in the culprit, because he felt that sincere repentance was ennobling, and which afforded no triumph to others, because all knew their own shortcomings, and were conscious that it might but too soon be their duty to atone.

The offerings of gratitude, "free-will and peace," were no less beneficial in a moral sense. They were designed to represent man's thankfulness for heavenly goodness, and to be the exponent of his resources in the eyes of the world. But, as has been said, wealth in those times consisted in cattle, and not in money. A man's funds may be over or under estimated by common report or by appearances, but no mistake could be made in respect to property which was so bulky, and of necessity so apparent to the public. If, therefore, parsimony or selfishness prompted to a scanty or inadequate sacrifice, there was no room for pleading a mis-

taken estimate or the scarcity of available capital. Just as true charity left the "corners of the field" ample, while niggard economy contracted them to the very corners, so a free-will offering represented the exact state of a man's philanthropy, and afforded no excuse which the world could not well appreciate. Laws, however, are made to bind only the dishonourable; true honesty requires no bridle. Real gratitude to Heaven, expounded in genuine charity, needed no ordinance to enforce the magnitude of its offering; it was only the pseudo-philanthropy which selfishness puts on as a mask, which was exposed by the extent of its sacrifices. And thus, as now some only give that their names may figure in subscription-lists, or become celebrated as patrons, so, in all times, there have been pretenders to philanthropy and traders in charity. Our means of convicting such hypocrites are fallible, but before God they are exposed in their true colours; we do not succeed in detecting the fraud, and impunity begets courage to persevere; but Divine wisdom is not to be deceived, and conscious dishonesty of purpose dares not prevaricate before its Heavenly Judge. And so, here again, the religious nature of the act of charity, its connection with the service of God, was the best security for its genuineness. While the publicity of the sacrifice and the means thus afforded for comparing its adequacy with the known resources of the giver, were checks against the parsimony of the miser or the niggardliness of the selfish, the sanctity attached to the offering was its safeguard alike against the pretensions of hypocrisy and against the vanity that aims at worldly applause. Bow we then to the wisdom which ordained sacrifice to be the preservative of honesty, the exponent of honour, which opened the door to sincere repentance by graciously showing how its words might be proved by suitable deeds, and which secured man against fraud

and affected sanctimony by reflecting them in acts safely estimable, because they were assayed in the mint of the Lord.



LEVITICUS: CHAPTER VI., VERSE 8.

THE existence of the priesthood having ceased to present any very peculiarly distinctive features, there is little in this portion to excite observation. Nevertheless, it may not be uninteresting to point out the social, political, and religious position of the priest in the Jewish commonwealth, and to trace the changes which have occurred in supplying the vacancy occasioned by the discontinuance of the sacerdotal functions.

The social position of the Jewish priest scarcely resembled that now filled by any minister. He had no locus in the country, he held no stake in the land; the temple was his home, the high priest his chief; the contributions of his flock formed his support. He might marry, and indeed he was even expected to execute that great law of nature, but he could bequeath to his children nothing but his ministry. His principal claim on his charge was founded on personal esteem, derived from a conscientious and efficient discharge of his sacred duties. He was everywhere a detached portion of the household; he could not be said to form one of the domestic circle, and yet no family but admitted his influence, but was modified in its relations by his authority. He was the educator of the people; he trained youth to a knowledge of virtue and advised manhood in its practice. In all the eras of life, his office had a share; at births and deaths, in health and sickness, the presence of the priest was felt as a want and recognised as a privilege. If he could not participate in the agricultural business of his time, he could and did

rejoice in its prosperous result, and his vocation taught him to prevent those results from becoming destructive, by enervating the body, or by alienating the mind from a contemplation of higher subjects. His very presence was a perpetual monitor, warning men to industrial pursuits that they might maintain him in his usefulness while providing for their own subsistence, and exhorting them to intellectual and moral pursuits by reminding them of his holy mission. In short, the priest was in society what reading is in the acquirement of information—the means by which each individual communicated with individuals, by which sympathy evoked sympathy, by which men learned to think for themselves, by forming their judgment on the experience of others.

The political position of the priest was that of a magistrate. He was the administrator of the law and the arbitrator in all cases of dispute or litigation. If legislative functions were denied him, it was in common with his fellow-countrymen, because both he and they were taught that authority existed only in the Divine code, which was to be sufficient for all time. In the simple relations of those semi-barbarous ages, when nation scarcely recognised nation, except for aggressive or defensive purposes, and when consequently diplomacy was unknown, the power of any individual in the state was necessarily limited; but such power as existed was entirely in the hands of the priesthood, and one effect of its use is too important to be forgotten. Composed as the land of Israel was of several distinct territories, appropriated to the different tribes, there was every reason but one that a diversity of customs and interests should gradually spring up, and that the country should rather resemble ancient Greece in the number of its commonwealths than remain an undivided government. That one reason was the existence of the priesthood as a

harmonious whole. Penetrating the entire country; carrying everywhere the exposition of the same principles, and those principles more lofty, more permanent, and more sacred than any of mortal origin; representing in every locality the same grand object that was centred in the sanctuary or temple; the priesthood preserved a uniformity of customs, and a community of interests which maintained the nation in its singleness. The councils and games of Greece and the Diet of Germany were designed for the same object, but they fulfilled it as much more imperfectly as their human institutions were inferior to the Divine institutions administered by the Jewish priesthood. If proof of this service to the Jewish state be wanted, it may be found in the fact that, so long as the priesthood maintained their prescribed characteristics, so long the nation remained entire, and that it only became dismembered because one body of priests desired to retain the worship of the true God and another body succeeded in introducing idolcraft. And indeed, it was to the sufficiency of the priesthood for the political welfare of the nation that allusion was made to Samuel when he was induced to ask Heaven to appoint a king. "The Lord is King of his people," said the Eternal, meaning thereby that all legislative authority was vested in him, while his representative priests held the amount of executive authority requisite to secure justice and maintain rights.

The religious position of the priest was strictly defined, and while he preferred to exercise his vocation as the guide of his flock, and not to be guided by them, there was no danger of his losing caste or of his over-stepping the boundaries assigned to his authority. He was the spiritual adviser of the people, but he had no power to mystify them by unintelligible transcendentalism, because the text of faith was before them in all its literality, and he was as amenable to its doctrines as they were. He

received the confession of sins, and he was the instrument for making the necessary sacrifice of atonement ; but the confessional gave him neither power of absolution nor right of stipulating for terms of expiation ; the text of faith ordained the extent of his interference, and his agency in the matter of the sacrifice was official, not vicarious. He was the depository of the traditional precepts and the expounder of the written statutes, but these were not by prescription his peculiar property, and he was permitted neither "to add to them nor to diminish from them ;" the text of faith made him no oracular patron of the hidden future, and while he might assume some consequence as the honest servant of Heaven, it was only as the zealous minister to the people that he claimed respect. And in this the Jewish priesthood differed from the priesthood of surrounding nations ; while, among idolatrous people, the corruption of the priesthood fed on the ignorance of their disciples, which they had first produced, among the Jews the purity of the people influenced the respectability of the priesthood because the people were the power. When any popular movement took place among the idolatrous nations, it was for the most part directed by priestly rule ; in the Holy Land, the will of the people generally guided the priesthood, and it was only when these stood firm to their principles that the spiritualism of God-worship prevailed over the materialism which has so many charms in the eyes of the mass.

When, after the dispersion, the priestly functions ceased, the first care of the Jewish leaders was to provide for that ministration now rendered considerably more necessary by the dissolution of the national existence. So long as the people had lived in their own land, and as the priesthood had formed one united body, there had been no need for more instruction than the priests could give by word of mouth, and in virtue of their office. But

now that the most important sacerdotal duties had ceased, now that the priest was no longer the representative of the people in matters of worship, and that the prayers of the individual were offered directly to Heaven, without the intervention of sacrificial ceremony, the bond which had united priest and people, and which had of necessity engendered constant intercommunication, was altogether dissolved, and the priesthood, as a recognised ministry, disappeared. Provision, therefore, was requisite to supply that other function of the priest which made him the expounder of the traditional statutes: and accordingly, we find that, in the very earliest period of the captivity, the oral law was committed to writing, and a means was thus afforded for the community to seek from records what they had before asked at the mouth of the priest. Nor was there any danger that these records should not be consulted. At a time when idolatry ruled almost the whole world, and while struggling Christianity was hiding in deserts or suffering in towns, all that the Jew owned to invoke the future was the religion which had attached him to the past. True, that in his prosperity he had not properly valued that religion; true, that in his own land he had relied rather on the mercy which had so often forgiven than on the merit which might deserve mercy; but now, in his adversity, he clung to his faith as the only relic of his past glory; a sojourner among strangers he sought for that mercy which alone could recall him to the country of his inheritance. Moreover, while the Israelites were living as a nation, the language of the patriarchs was their vernacular, the medium not only for their addresses to Heaven, but for their familiar and ordinary communication. Now, that they were to be sojourners over the face of the world, now, that scattered among strangers, their language, like their nationality, was to be numbered with the dead, and they were to adopt the language of their temporary dwelling-places, now, the

language of Holy Writ was the peculiar bond which kept together their dissevered knots ; it was the only representative they had of the sacred mission confided to them from Sinai, the only inheritance which persecution could not alienate, which dispersion could not destroy. The Hebrew language, therefore, was cultivated among the earlier generations of the captivity with a zeal and fidelity which recorded alike their repentance for what they had deserved to lose, and their devotion to the cause which they still hoped to achieve. Nor was this cultivation remitted in those subsequent ages, when Christianity, successful against the oppression of heathenism, seemed resolved to pay back to Jews some of the contumely under which itself had groaned. As in ancient history there is more than once presented the phenomenon of a hardy and vigorous barbarism attacking and overthrowing an effeminate refinement, to be in its turn the victim of the luxury it had conquered, so in modern days it seems to have been the fate of young modes of faith to suffer, and then to aspire to triumph in order that they might inflict suffering on others. Hence, in the ages of the crusades and of chivalry, when the banner of religion was unfurled to be dabbled in gore, and when the protection of innocence meant any thing but Jewish innocence ; when monarchs sold privileges to their Hebrew subjects that they might rob them afterwards ; when people justified the fanatical onslaught of an infuriated and plunder-seeking mob by calling pillage legal confiscation, and the violation of all human rights, Christian ; when bigots shut up Jews in ghettos and thus enervated their bodies by malaria, branded Jews with badges of degradation and thus crushed their spirits by a sense of wrong, excluded Jews from all honourable careers and thus debased their minds to humiliating courses, taught Jews that money alone could purchase a temporary immunity and thus compelled them at all risks to acquire money ; when

intolerant inquisitors, not satisfied with what bigotry had done, invented new tortures,—sent the aged and the young, the grandsire and the maiden, to the stake or the rack, and called this outrage on humanity an “offering of faith,”—tore children from the arms of their parents, and morally inflicted on them the very fate which they so deprecated in the case of the founder of their religion—nailed them to the cross ; when, in short, the Jews found themselves isolated among men, and compelled to seek civilization by stealth, they naturally attached themselves to the only comforts left to them, their religion and their language. Wherever Jews dwelt, therefore, there existed numerous schools, yeshibas and botte medroshem, in which the study of Hebrew was the exclusive occupation, and in which almost the only text books were the Bible, the Mishna, and its commentary, the Gemarah. And thus, as widespread as the Jews themselves, was the knowledge of their sacred duties, and the rabbis who taught and expounded the doctrines which their predecessors, the priests, had preserved, fulfilled the only function that circumstances permitted, and circulated among willing pupils the written lessons which had previously existed only in tradition.

But times changed. By slow degrees active persecution became, first, passive, and then, lingered and died. Men, either from indifference, from inattention caused by absorption in more important personal matters, or from a more liberal and enlightened knowledge of human rights, gradually permitted Jews to leave their ghettos, to drop their badges, to abandon their forced pursuits for honourable vocations, to give up their isolation for intercommunication with their fellow-creatures of other creeds ; and everywhere this change was found productive of good. There were infused into the mass the energy, the industry, the perseverance, the genius of a people always distinguished by the high natural capabilities of the Circassian race,

and the beneficial effects soon became visible. The stream which had previously been confined by artificial dykes was permitted to flow in unrestricted plenty, and it carried light on its surface and fertility in its bosom. But this advantage to the world was purchased at some sacrifice. The philanthropy which was now allowed to develop itself gushed forth with overwhelming force; the hearts which had been compelled by a forced contraction, the pressure being removed, burst into uncontrolled elasticity. Jews became too eager to show their inherent love for their neighbours to mark the distance to which it bore them, they were too glad to be recognised as members of the great human family to notice the peculiarities which they were still bound to retain. And so assimilation began to operate, and to convert heterogeneous materials into one harmonious whole, and one of the first results was a greater cultivation of the vernacular, through which they communicated with the world, and a corresponding neglect of the language of Scripture, in which they invoked Heaven. Circumstances, too, had altered Jewish views. The exclusiveness and persecution of past ages had justified rabbinical institutes, and compelled Jews to look back. Toleration and enlightenment rendered these institutes frequently unnecessary, sometimes objectionable, and often obstructive to Jewish progress, and induced Jews to look forward. The study of rabbinical works, therefore, depreciated; its use was questioned as incompatible with modern civilization, and every day grew stronger the desire to overleap all salient points of distinction, and to merge more and more closely into the universal mass. Again the functions of the rabbis changed. Compelled to advance with the times, and to preserve what was, after all, the essence of their charge—religion, they were to sacrifice to some extent the Hebrew language, and to adopt the vernacular for sacred purposes also. Hence sermons grew to form a

portion of divine service ; and so important was their aim felt to be, that even they, who clung most fondly to talmudical discussions and the like, were induced to dispense with their favourite, but no longer generally understood or appreciated themes, in favour of the less legitimate but more impressive instruction of the pulpit. And thus to subserve the great end of Judaism, and at the same time to enable Jews successfully to permeate mankind, the successors of the priesthood have a new duty. They are bound, if they wish to adapt their religion to the wants of the people, to present it in a garb suited to the age in which they live. As modern Jews drop the caftan and the gaberdine, and retain only the under-garment of fringes as their distinctive mark of dress, so do they also drop the peculiar cultivation of Hebrew for maintaining rabbinical or obsolete institutes, and retain the sacred language only for the inner life which is of their religion. The rabbis must subserve what they cannot control, directing it to a useful end ; and everywhere the truths of Judaism must be constantly enunciated from the pulpit if the rabbis desire that Judaism should flourish.

 שמ"י

LEVITICUS: CHAPTER IX.

“ I WILL be sanctified by those who approach me,” was the emphatic declaration which recorded the death of Aaron’s disobedient sons, and was the caution by which power was recommended not to abuse its privileges. In the battle of life there is no conquest like self-conquest. Among the gauds which attract man permanently there is none so engrossing as power. Passion speaks to the weak heart, now in whispers that enthrall, now in thunder tones that terrify ; but reason ever remains an honest moderator when the intensity of the flame has worn itself out, and conscience, like a faithful friend, holds up the truth in

unalloyed purity. Power alone overcomes both reason and conscience, for it is easy for self-love to convince reason that power is its legitimate right for the benefit of others, for vanity to hold a veil before conscience to colour its pictures.

Among the problems which history presents, none is so frequent as the influence which power has exercised over its possessor, either for good or for evil. It converted the pampered favourite of a too indulgent father into an honest and a zealous servant, and subsequently into a politic, a sagacious, and withal a merciful ruler. Through its purifying fire the compound ore was passed, and Joseph emerged as a perfect metal. It converted the servant groaning under the yoke of a tyrant master, and melting to pity at the miseries inflicted on himself and others, into a tyrant worse than his master, without pity and without remorse. Through its miasmatic atmosphere the healthful character was trailed, and it came out poisoned as the wicked Hazeal. Over the sanguinary career of the ruthless Octavius it cast its shielding mantle, and men failed to recognise Augustus in his garb of peace. In its madly-driven chariot the light and spirited Henry the Eighth was driven headlong on a downward course, till none could identify the intoxicated charioteer, as his car drove furiously over all that stood in his path. With these and thousands of other examples before us, can we wonder that Providence, ever watchful for the virtue of mankind, should seize on a flagrant act to point a moral ?

Power is the peculiar attribute of the Godhead ; in all its modifications, traced back to its first cause, it is of God. But power in the hands of ineffable goodness and untiring mercy is ever wielded with unswerving justice, and operates not for its own aggrandisement, but for universal good. Power in the hands of mortal frailty and mortal selfishness, loses its Divine type, and becomes the rod by which one compels the many to bow, that he may rise on

their prostrate bodies. Of the many to whose charge power has been deputed, experience has shown that none have been so prone to abuse it as priests. While monarchs have more than once enslaved a nation that their successors might rule hereditary serfs; while usurpers, through either military or civil despotism, have more than once crushed liberty from the hearts of those who helped them to rise, priests alone have known how to forge chains into which time eats no rust, which no internal force or external pressure has been able to burst. Nor is this difficult to understand. Where true religion prevails, the priest is the guide of his flock, and their teacher; through him they soar to the height of the Divinity whom he inculcates; through him they learn the duties of man to Heaven, and to his fellow-creature; through him they acquire a love for the universal rights inalienable except by tyranny; through him they know that power is delegated to an individual as a sacred deposit for the good of others, and thus slavery and degradation become impossible. It is only where the worship of God has been clouded by priestcraft, where corrupt humanity has encircled the genuine essence of religion with a shell which it is no longer possible to pierce, that men ignore their privileges and crouch in fear and hatred. But this can happen only through the complicity of priests; it is their province to enlighten, they purposely mystify; they should elevate, they seek to depress; to them man is to look for knowledge, and they give him instead ignorance; they should raise human nature to be little less than angelic, they lower it below the condition of brutes. Under such circumstances slavery becomes the only lot for which the multitude is fit; not the slavery of the body, working in mines or toiling in hopeless drudgery, but that far worse slavery of the mind, which levels reason with instinct, and thus renders example and imitation the only rules for action. Now, it is necessary to

remember that it was precisely this state of things that Judaism was to terminate. Throughout the world, at the period of the Sinaitic revelation, there prevailed an entire system of this slavery. Everywhere, protected by a fence of mysterious charms which priests had erected, priests ruled a debased and benighted mass. Everywhere, this fence was gradually thickening into impenetrability, and thus the end of Heaven in the creation of man was being subverted by man himself. Heaven had destined man to happiness through virtue and holiness, the attributes of the Eternal. But to acquire these it was essential that man should possess a knowledge of the Divine model he was called upon to imitate. Hence mercy gave revelation as the means for human instruction, and man's destination was told in a few but pithy words: "Ye shall be holy, for I, the Eternal, your God, am holy." In the hurry of the world, however, in the pressure of mundane affairs, it was little likely that ordinary men should find either the leisure or the information necessary for perfecting themselves in their task of salvation. Again, therefore, Divine grace interfered actively on behalf of mortal weakness, and a priesthood was established whose functions were to be intermediate between God and man. Priests were to be left at entire liberty from worldly cares; their sole occupation was to be the spread of the eternal principles of truth and religion, and the practice of those rites which brought them into direct communication with their flock on the one hand, and with the Almighty on the other. Moreover, in order to give additional solemnity to their own conduct, and additional authority to their influence over their flock, one of their number filled, as it were, on Kippur, a more elevated state of being, when in the Holy of Holies he penetrated into the very presence of God, and brought thence pardon and atonement. To Jewish priests, therefore, belonged a vocation which could only succeed while they remained

faithful to the duties imposed on them ; the moment they trespassed and passed the Rubicon of obedience, they were rebels against God, and thus lost caste among men.

Duty is a straight line ; a deviation from it, how slight soever, leads to indefinite aberration. This it is which has made men conservative ; it is better, say they, to narrow the path to a goal than to endanger reaching that goal at all, by arbitrary, and therefore always changing, roads. The Jewish priesthood was essentially a conservative body. The sacerdotal functions, even to the minutest, were definitively settled by Divine prescription ; and surely, if the congregation of Israel could become holy only by following the law and its enactments, it was still more evident that those who led the people should themselves show an example of devotion, which proved alike their fidelity to their Supreme Master, and their claim to the respect of their charge. While ignorance is to be pitied, and want of proper information demands commiseration, there is no excuse for presumptuous intellectualisation, there is no forgiveness for knowledge which proudly rebels, and seeks even to justify its rebellion. Besides, there is a prestige in station which gives weight to its proceedings. The acts of an humble individual are scarcely known beyond his contracted domestic circle ; while living he exercises little or no influence, when dead his memory passes away, and is utterly lost for good or for evil. The acts of public men stand recorded on the history of the world, which they invite to imitate or avoid them ; while living they are regarded as the guiding spirits of their age, when dead their memory is the study for future generations. The humble may sin, therefore, and do no harm beyond that involved in their sinful deed ; the lofty need only to err and irreparable evil may ensue, because of the power of their example. " I will be sanctified by those who approach me," is the recognition

of this principle. The sons of Aaron, himself the high priest, were, next to their father, the leading men of the house of Israel. To them the people looked for the best guidance ; from them, therefore, God expected the most implicit obedience. With power such as they possessed, one step in a false direction might lead to a complication which existed in idolatrous nations, but was not to be tolerated in Israel. They took that step, and its danger was magnified by the grandeur of their position. It was necessary that they should be deterred from continuing in the wrong path they had chosen ; it was still more necessary that others should not be tainted by their infection. True, it was a first offence, and might, therefore, be lightly regarded ; but to pardon offenders so distinguished was to render punishment impossible to meaner culprits. There was but one alternative ; the majesty of Heaven must be vindicated, and men must be taught that power gives no privileges beyond the discharge of the trusts involved in its possession. Not by the avenging lightning, which was a natural phenomenon, did the rebellious fall ; but straight from the Deity whom they had dared to provoke came the miraculous fire, and in the very pride of their disobedience they were consumed in a moment. "And Aaron held his peace." Doubtless his paternal heart grieved for the death of his children ; doubtless he felt the disgrace entailed by their crime ; but mourning would have been sinful, because irrelevant with his dignity ; repining would have been a reproach on the justice of Heaven. In his case, silence was the best submission ; in their case, silence was the best epitaph.

The laws relating to food have been the theme for so many comments that it is scarcely needful to do more than mention them. As a subject for these reflections they connect themselves with the chain of reasoning adopted in elucidation of the Passover and the Sabbath. Purity

of mind depending so much on purity of body, we cannot be surprised at the prohibition of any food which, during the process of assimilation, might introduce noxious elements into the system, which might tend to generate disease, or which might urge the fierce current of the blood into a passionate whirl. This prohibition was effected by a reference to certain general principles of nature impressed on the lower animals. Of quadrupeds, those only were permitted that in this age of civilization adorn the most highly cultivated farm-land. The one exception was the pig. It is not that the pig, living, is of filthy habits, and that the effluvium arising from its sty is not healthful, for to some extent the same might be said of other animals. It is the dead animal that is prohibited, and not without reason; its flesh, always containing a very large proportion of adipose matter, yields fuel to the human body without a corresponding amount of wholesome nutriment; it easily decomposes, and therefore is mostly subject to a curing process, which prevents decay, but does not benefit the constituent elements; it is liable during life to a subcutaneous disorder, which remains even after death, but which is not discernible through the non-removal of the skin; this disorder has the effect of injuring those who feed on the animal.* Among birds, the flesh of which is generally of a uniform character, only those are forbidden which are disgusting, as the carnivorous; or coarse, from their size, as the swan. Among fish, one large and important class is among the prohibited, viz., those which have shells. Now, to say nothing of the indigestive nature of some shell-fish, it may be enough to observe that most of them are highly stimulating, that they excite without satisfying, and that they are consequently opposed to that state of body so necessary

* It is an authenticated fact, that some islanders in the Pacific, who live almost wholly on swine's flesh, are afflicted with a kind of constant scurvy, arising from the circumstance here mentioned.

to a mind in equilibrio. Besides, when we compare the longevity of the Jew with that of other men, when we observe his general health as compared with theirs, we cannot refrain from acknowledging that, how restricted soever be his diet, he seems nevertheless to have still sufficient to promote the vigorous maintenance of the frame, and to secure a reasonable length of life. And this conclusion will be rendered more impressive when, in the ensuing portion of the law, we discuss the sanitary laws of Moses. Meanwhile, to the pious Israelite, the prohibition of certain kinds of food will be classed with the prohibition of leaven on the Passover, and of fire for culinary purposes on the Sabbath, that is, as the means to an end. He will not regard dietary laws as a mere clog on his appetites, imposed as statutes not to be investigated, but he will consider them as a portion of the great system by which man was to be brought nearer to the perfection of his Maker. The primary object of this system was human happiness, and this was to be subserved by such wholesome checks as exist in all well-defined systems. Just as individual liberty, in its constitutional sense, means a conformity to the general will, rather than an indulgence in personal caprice; so, in a religious sense, it signifies an adaptation to those principles which promote universal well-being, rather than a repudiation of all principles whatever. Man, having once fallen from the height of his original creation, and having by his subsequent career, shown how utterly he could obliterate all traces of Divine knowledge from the earth, it became necessary, in the revelation of Moses, which, in respect to laws, was to be final, to guard that such a result should never again supervene. Hence the particularity of many of the enactments, and among others of the dietary laws. In these, Israelites (commanded to have the words of God always in their hearts, when they sat in the house as well as when they went on their

way) found a ready subject for conversation of an elevating nature, a subject which could not fail to lead them to other religious considerations, and which thus benefited the soul, while the laws themselves benefited the body.

תוריע ומצורע :

LEVITICUS: CHAPTER XII.

THE discoveries of science are daily confirming the truths of Holy Writ. In the nineteenth century men are learning to appreciate the simple knowledge which shone from inspiration three thousand three hundred years ago. "Cleanliness is next to godliness" has been a saw for ages, but it has been only a saying. Men have prated of the theory of health, but have altogether ignored the practice. In all the great cities of modern times—cities wherein regal or imperial courts hold their sway, wherein learned and scientific bodies have their constant meetings, wherein are collected all that refinement and luxury demand for their most fastidious wants—in all these cities, poverty and squalor have their reeking homes. The foetid hovel of the beggar rises side by side with the palace of the merchant prince; the light and splendour of the fashionable club or *recherché* hotel are blurred by the smoke of the cheap lodging-house; from the streets in which wealth rolls in carriages branch alleys in which paupers wallow in filth and misery. Wisdom has been struck by these contrasts, but it has allowed them to remain as inevitabilities beyond either its province or its greatness. Philanthropy has been outraged by seeing death stalking in the midst of teeming thousands, but it has not exerted itself to remove the dark phantom. From time to time, pallid ague or putrid fever has desolated whole districts of those peopled cities; but the ravages have been confined to the wretched homes of poor ignorance, and rich science has not troubled itself to inquire

for causes or to seek means for prevention. Within the very bosoms of dainty human beings miasma has generated its subtlest poison from foul drains, over-crowded cellars, or mouldering heaps of animal and vegetable refuse ; but the malaria has not been imbibed within the precincts of the great, and the earth could well afford to spare some of the grovelling mass. The trumpet voice of personal danger was needed to awaken the torpid mind of knowledge, to give energy to its paralysed hands and to direct them to useful exertions, and it came—direct from Heaven.

What is that gaunt visage which, Medusa-like, strikes all beholders with sudden death? What is that unseen influence that penetrates into the heart of the quick and the beautiful, and leaves all still and ghastly behind? What is that poisoned breath which shakes the arras of luxury and rustles the rags of poverty, money buying no immunity, wretchedness forming no shield? What is that all-powerful, all-insinuating vapour that passes, simoom-like, over the domestic hearth, and prostrates on it the old and the young, the loved and the forsaken? What is that dread visitant which claims admittance alike to palace and hovel, pauses but to strike and quits with wailing for its God-speed? What is that invisible guest which, coming in the brightness of morning to the glad home of health, tarries but till noon or evening and then tears away in its embrace parents from children, blooming maidens from adoring lovers, helping sons from lonely widows—that severs all ties with abruptness so appalling that precaution has no time to take measures, skill no opportunity for arraying itself against the danger? Whisper the dread name—softly, lest the thing hear thee and come at thy call. Tell the horrible fact to thy terror-stricken soul in privacy and solitude, lest to thine unstrung nerves publicity attract what most they fear. Cholera! Once its dark pinions hovered over Europe and thousands fell beneath their shadow. Men shuddered,

but they awoke not to action. A second and a third time it winged its flight over the same ground, and then at length reason began to trace analogies, to investigate phenomena, to bestir itself to guard its own from the peril which threatened all alike, to try whether it were not possible to prevent what there had been so little time to cure.

And thus grew boards of health and sanitary laws. Men found that the inherent principles of chemistry—the great agent of nature's changes—were as true in regard to vitality as to inert matter. As combustion generates its antagonist, water, and as breathing produces the inimical carbonic acid, so animalization was proved to be the storehouse for the elements of death. The dread horror that had written itself on sallow faces and shrunken limbs, that had convulsed or paralysed, that had stalked, “as the destruction at noon-day,” amid the crowded households of a thousand localities, was found to be begotten and nurtured on the hearths it was desolating. From untold heaps of garbage and refuse, from smouldering accumulations of unheeded decomposition, from charnel-houses and graveyards, the infant giant was born, to enfold in its deadly embrace all that civilization held most dear. And science went back three thousand years; the boasted knowledge of refined cities borrowed a lesson from the inexperience of the untrodden wilderness. What Moses had pronounced to be the basis on which the superstructure of social health was to be raised, the nineteenth century adopted as the foundation for its improved edifice of human life. Cleanliness, the removal of pestiferous elements, the separation of the dead from the living, the isolation of epidemic or endemic diseases, all enjoined in this portion of the law, were the means again to be resorted to for the preservation of existence, and thus one more testimony was borne to the value of Holy Writ for all and every condition.

That men should have been so slow to adopt these measures is the only wonder. Mercy is no cause for congratulation, and Jews desire not to call themselves special objects of Divine favour ; but to the eye of even the least curious, Jewish history presents some phenomena too remarkable to escape notice, and it could only be the wilfulness which arrayed all creeds together, for the one common end of seeing nothing valuable in Judaism, which prevented these phenomena from exciting attention. While in all towns, poverty and misery found their abodes in the meanest and filthiest quarters, there was still one district viler and more wretched than the rest to which prejudice confined the Jews. Poverty, multiplying in the face of death, could at least flee to open suburbs or to the no longer attractive streets of decayed gentility, but Jewish poverty, no matter how fruitful, must still be penned within the original precincts. And yet, when plague or other hideous form of death has swept through Europe, gathering new force from every crowded neighbourhood, it has still been in the most crowded Jewish homes that the destroyer has come less frequently. When pestilence has ravaged the fairest abodes, prostrating the most loved objects of their spacious luxuriousness, the narrow chambers of the ghetto, filled to repletion with teeming life, have still been most free from the grim presence. More recently too, when cholera mowed the thick ranks of full cities, it was still the most serried files of Jewish bands that fell least often before the appalling scythe. Whence this comparative immunity ? Not because Jews can hope to be objects of a special Providence—for there is no longer any ground for supposing Divine interposition peculiarly theirs. Not because Jews can boast of superior medical attendance, of more careful watching—although these are not wanting. Not because Jewish philanthropy, great though it be, has provided ampler accommodation for the needy and suffering. Not because Jews have been

morally and physically in advance of their fellow-creatures, although they have not been behind in the great race of progress. Not because Jews have been naturally more cleanly than other men, although, despite oppression and degradation, they have not been comparatively more unclean. But because, humbly be it said, the requirements of Judaism compel a course of domestic duty conducive to health, and urge on those arrangements which sanitary boards are now finding to be so essential. True, there are some Jews whose habits are not the most agreeable, just as there are some of all creeds whose morals are not pure ; but Jews are unclean in spite of their faith, and not in conformity with it, just as rogues are wicked, not because of any particular teachings of their religious code, but in opposition thereto. Who that has witnessed the tidy welcome that greets the Sabbath in even the meanest Jewish lodging, has not been struck with something like astonishment, recollecting as he would the peculiar position of the heads of the family ? For it is essential to draw attention to the remarkable difference between abject Jewish poverty and the same condition among those of other creeds. Deprived, as the Jew is, by his religious ordinances, of the whole of the Sabbath, (including a portion of Friday,) he has little more than two-thirds of the business hours of other men. His many festivals contract even these hours. He must consequently make the most of what he has, and to do this, he calls in the assistance of his wife, who, equally with himself, undertakes by labour to provide for their mutual family. Hence, Jewish women of the humblest class, have business occupations as engrossing as those of their husbands. These avocations, essential to the domestic maintenance, deprive the home of that wholesome, womanly supervision so necessary to cleanliness and comfort. From early morning to late night, the womanly energies of the mother are engrossed in a conflict fit only for the stronger arm of manhood, and

her return home leaves her too tired to contribute much to grace what she has so hardly helped to earn. But even with this great drawback, the single room of the Jewish family never disgusts by its offensive and noxious effluvia. Religion demands that all pollution shall be carefully removed before the master may say his morning prayers ; and where is the love for worldly pursuits so engrossing that the woman does not find a moment to do her part, that the man does not, in an atmosphere at least unpoisoned, offer in his phylacteries the "sweet savour" of a grateful heart? And when the Sabbath comes, see the little patch of healthful whitewash round the window-sill ; (the mother is spared her out-door labour on Friday, for higher calls than those for food claim her at home ;) see the hard-washed table covers, the scoured floor, the brightened candlesticks, all telling of woman's sweet ministrations, and giving to even the humblest abode an air of sanctity in honour of the Sabbath. And annually, at the Passover, behold the entire clearance ; bedding, furniture, culinary utensils, every article must undergo a thorough purification ; the walls and ceiling must be fresh coloured ; God's feast of the redemption must be solemnized with due regard to its peculiar requirements, as to the removal of leaven. Where else is this attention to cleanliness to be found? Where else does religion interfere to render cleanliness imperative and unavoidable?

And here again bow we to Divine wisdom. As in the other institutions of the sacred code we everywhere recognise the great design of Providence to be human happiness, so in the sanitary laws we recognise a merciful care for human preservation. The Sinaitic revelation was to be for all times, for all circumstances ; it ordained the Israelite to look up to his Almighty Father in every condition, when he went by the way or when he sat in his house. And even as the external life derived its vivifying principle from a pure atmosphere, so the internal

life was equally and similarly cared for. As when the Israelite went abroad he found in the ever-changing air new elements of existence, and in the ever-varied and beautiful face of nature new claims for gratitude, reverence and worship ; so when he sat in his house he was to be surrounded by objects which should no less contribute to stimulate his vigour of body and to promote his strength of mind. For Divine wisdom knew the power of habit, the force of association. The eye constantly familiar with scenes of suffering grows steady to gaze on even the most harrowing of tortures. The ear attuned to vile and disgusting language grows even unintelligent of gentle discourse. The body grovelling in filth and accustomed to dirt loses one of its healthiest functions, and becomes foul and diseased. But the mind is influenced by the body. It is not possible for refinement of intellect or elevation of soul to dwell amid scenes of which every object is revolting to the eye, every sound corrupting to the ear. While the most exalted genius and the most lovely piety have been found in the most abject poverty, that poverty has never choked such genius by its loathsome miasma, it has never strangled such piety by unholy bonds of association. These truths the Eternal impressed on Judaism, and these truths modern civilisation is now learning from the saddest and most impressive of all teachers, experience. And so, what religion has done for the Jews, policy is doing for their neighbours ; and thus again, mankind, by its actions, becomes testimony to the divinity of Holy Writ ; thus again men prove that the nearest approach to human perfection must be through the revelation bestowed on Israel.

אַחֲרֵי מוֹת וּקְדָשִׁים

LEVITICUS: CHAPTER XVI.

THE standard of purity having been set up, and a violation of Divine right having received condign punishment, the inspired legislator proceeds to enter into minute details. It would seem as though the different vices into which man was most prone to fall were attacked in detail, and to this must we attribute the apparent incoherence in the arrangement of the various precepts. Order and connection are altogether absent, for as vice is seldom consistent with regularity, so the cautions against it are aimed without regularity. Civilisation boasts much of its advanced morality, and it is the cry of the present day that men have more refined notions of right in these enlightened days than they had in what is contemptuously termed the semi-barbarian age of Moses; but a careful perusal of the text before us will scarcely fail to convince us that the boast and the cry are alike empty. Morality is based on eternal principles; it neither progresses nor retrogrades. What is right now was always right; what is opposed to right now was always opposed to right. As society becomes more complicated, so its wants and claims multiply, but the great groundwork remains identical. We do not educate our girls as the Spartans did; and yet the dictates of female modesty continue undisturbed. We do not inculcate theft as a social benefit for stratagetical purposes; and if they did in Sparta, it was less to violate the laws of honesty than to promote another set of rules which were there deemed of more importance to the general welfare. The truth is, that all real morality is a part of religion, and came with it from Heaven. Morality, therefore, came to earth as perfect as other Divine productions, and if the practice of any age or century have

seemed to show imperfection, this has risen from the frailty or blindness of man, not from the insufficiency of dispensation. Morality may be compared to solar rays ; directness gives intensity, obliquity produces diffusion and consequent weakness, clouds vitiate and obscure ; the more directly a system of faith is borrowed from the revelation of Sinai the more intense is its moral code ; the more obliquely the system comes, the weaker the results : human agencies—passions and personal interests, priest-craft and popular ignorance—are the clouds which vitiate and obscure. To prove the strength of our position, to show the perfection of the morality enunciated in the Pentateuch, we shall select a few statutes and point out their tendency, and we shall even essay to show that, so far from falling short of the goal of to-day's enlightenment, they proceed far beyond it.

When sixteen centuries after the delivery of the Decalogue, the founder of Christianity enunciated the doctrine contained in the rescript, Do unto others as thou wouldst that others do to thee, he was said to have founded a new code of morals, and all the philosophers of his disciples have proclaimed the perfection of his teaching. Even now, the expletive Christian prefixed to any virtue at once raises it to its culmination. Christian charity, Christian fortitude, Christian forbearance, are models of charity, fortitude, and forbearance. And yet, what is there in the doctrine of him of Nazareth which is not in the simple dictum of Moses, Thou shalt love thy neighbour like thyself? What dignity does the term Christian lend to any above-named virtue which might not be as appropriately found in the word Jewish, as based on the portion under consideration? Say "Jewish charity." Well, listen to its teachings: "Thou shalt not reap the corners of thy field, thy harvest thou shalt not glean, thy vineyard thou shalt not wholly gather ; thou shalt leave them for the poor and the stranger." In those days agri-

culture was what commerce is now. Where is the modern doctrine that says, In thy traffic thou shalt not make more than a certain amount of profit ; in selling goods thou shalt not take more than so much per cent. ? And yet, here, in the business of his life, the Jew was forbidden to realise all the advantages of his energy or skill, and, besides the alms his benevolence might prompt him to bestow, he was compelled to subtract from his gains. "Thou shalt not keep a servant's hire over night." Where is the modern law which teaches more strongly consideration for another's wants, which inculcates more forcibly the uncharitableness of taking advantage of dependence and of presuming on riches ? "Thou shalt not revile the deaf ; thou shalt not put a stumbling-block before the blind." Extend this to its full meaning, and it becomes all this. Thou shalt not malign the absent ; thou shalt not attack a man's character, and he not by to defend himself ; thou shalt not presume upon a man's ignorance to make a profit of it to thyself ; thou shalt not speculate in another's inexperience ; thou shalt not prevent thy fellow-creatures from acquiring a proper knowledge of right and wrong, and then punish them for crimes which education might have prevented ; thou shalt not suffer precedent and official routine to stand between private worth and public good, nor shalt thou permit red-tape to form an obstacle to the advance of the general weal ; thou shalt not allow human beings to drop like flies in autumn, because those who would save them dare not, and those who can, will not ; thou shalt not assume power because it happens that thou art strong and another is weak ; thou shalt not make conscience an impediment to the attainment of civil privileges, nor shalt thou make religious conviction (always a blindness to others) a stumbling-block to worldly advantage ; thou shalt not arrogate to thy wisdom the sole hope of salvation, nor shalt thou deny place on earth or seat in heaven

to any but thyself. Where is the modern code that tells this and calls it charity ?

Pen men in prisons, shut out the wholesome air of vitality, obscure the blessed light of day ; work them through long weary hours at dull and profitless bodily labour which produces nothing but lassitude, let them toil till exhaustion, and never witness one result of their toil ; condemn them to utter silence and the solitude of a living tomb ; prate doctrine from the pulpit which to them is all cant, because it professes one thing and practises another ; tell them that, victims to the law, they are beyond its pale, and then turn them loose on society to pay back in violence and blood the wrongs heaped on them in their helplessness. Call this charity (we will not consecrate it with an adjective) and we shall understand the word.

Degrade men by exceptional and oppressive enactments ; brand them physically with distinctive dress, and morally with crime-creating suspicion ; confine them to abject employments which must debase the body and cramp the mind ; defraud them of all that they cannot conceal on their persons, and render even that hateful as a loophole for violence ; shut out from them every earthly hope but such as money can purchase, and when money fails deny them the prospect of heaven ; say, because more than 1800 years ago a Jew, living under a Jewish commonwealth and amenable to Jewish customs and usages, was tried, found guilty, and executed for a public breach of Divine Jewish law, that therefore that man was a martyr, and his judges bloodthirsty tyrants ; that that man's disciples and their descendants for ever were, of necessity and because only of his martyrdom, to be all that was wise, virtuous, and moral, while the descendants of those judges, only because of their descent, were by Providence condemned to expiate the one assumed misdeed of

their ancestors in ignorance, vice, and immorality; pronounce this to be charity (again without an adjective) and a child will understand and appreciate.

Or let us take Christian forbearance and contrast it with the text before us. "Thou shalt rise before grey hairs and thou shalt honour the aged." Well; when hardy and heathen Sparta did this very thing which intellectual and heathen Athens admired, but did not do, Christian writers could chronicle the deed and hold it up as a pattern to their youth. Did any one ever find this verse in the Bible and proclaim the usage older than of Greece? Did any one ever penetrate into Jewish society and see that the one solitary instance above recorded is there the active and constant practice of everyday life?

"And if a stranger sojourn amongst you in your land, you shall not hate him; he shall be among you as a native, and ye shall love him like yourselves." Where has forbearance like this ever been practised out of Judaism?

"Thou shalt not be a tale-bearer among my people; thou shalt not stand in the blood of thy neighbour." Well; shall we pass into Ireland and ask how this forbearance has been practised there? Shall we count the premiums paid to fatten informers and the rewards held out to create them? Shall we measure the acres inherited in the blood of massacred fellow-creatures? Or shall we go to continental battle-fields and seek the corpses of noble-hearted Irishmen that perished there because blood-money drove them from the dear home of their birth to carve a name and a grave in a foreign land? Or shall we stay in dear England—dear in spite of what she has done, and because when she is true to herself and her mission, these things are of her backsliding sons and not of her loyal children—shall we stay in England and read her annals? Well; Englishmen have not spared insults to British-

born subjects (of other creeds), nor have they quite refrained from active persecution. Has *theirs* been the forbearance, or has it belonged to them who have patiently borne the insults, and patiently submitted to the persecution, in the hope that a wiser spirit would one day wake and rule? When an infuriate and drunken mob set on the Jews in York, these were glad to buy the right of shelter in York Castle, and there, Christian men quietly looked on, while other so-called Christian men beleaguered and blockaded the fortress till the wretched Jews were driven to self-destruction to avoid worse horrors. When a starving, and therefore discontented rabble met on the field of Peterloo to talk, and it may be to act a little too wildly on behalf of their supposed political rights, Christian magistrates did not quietly stand by, but they called in the military and shot the disaffected like dogs. Contrast the two pictures, always taking into account that if the age was different, the Christianity was the same. When Jews clung to a faith in which they and their ancestors had been born, and refused a creed which they could not believe, did the forbearance of their neighbours (omitting the adjective) allow them to retain in happiness and peace the cherished treasure which they had inherited from Heaven? When hungry operatives, too ignorant to discriminate nicely between their sufferings and their wrongs, and too ill-taught to be able to trace the scarcely perceptible line of demarcation between political agitation and political disaffection, mouthed about a charter and cheap bread, the forbearance of their neighbours, well fed, well housed, and well cared for (the adjectives are necessary now), armed special constables, or coerced licence of speech only by military law and overcrowded gaols. Ah! well; we remember when men were hanged in this country as though human life were not too precious to sport with; when the recorder's report went like a devastating plague to the throne (not of mercy) on Saturday night, and a

dozen or so of miserable wretches fed the dissecting house on Monday morning. We have heard too that in Palestine, under Jewish law, an execution was rare even during seventy years, and that the judges who were compelled to sacrifice a life were branded as the bloody Sanhedrin. But, of course, both facts are of the past, and men know better now.

Yes, and so are many other things of the past; and so, one day, will be the arrogance, calling itself humility, which sets up its own creed as for Jews against that which they received from Sinai. So, one day, will be the charity which sees salvation only on its own road, and deals damnation upon the untold millions who have never been able to hear of, still less to tread, that narrow path. So, one day, will be the forbearance which only lacerates men's tenderest feelings by passive resistance, and which rather plumes itself on not actively persecuting. So, one day, will be the piety which sends sleek and well-fed missionaries to convert a few stray stomachs with a tolerable allowance of loaves and fishes, and which leaves thousands of minds in this fair land to starve for the veriest crumbs of spiritual and moral food. So, one day, will be the many-headed hydra (adjectived virtues) which seems with all its heads to have eyes only for itself. And, when that day arrives, men will acknowledge that whether the sermon on the mount or the revelation from the mountain be assumed as the standard of morality, that standard must be darkened by no party preachings, by no individual acts or expositions. Men will be convinced that all true moral teaching is from Heaven; that Christianity, through its founder, enforced only what Judaism had enjoined; that virtue is an emanation of all true belief in God and in his perfection, and is not the attribute of any particular creed. Then, charity will be universal, not only in almsgiving, but in kindness of thought, in

sympathy with distress, in gentleness towards failing ; for "thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart," but "shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Then, respect for the aged shall be shown in Jewish fashion, that is, not only to grey hairs, but to all superiors ; to parents, to teachers, to elders of all ranks. Then, justice shall be even-handed, and shall be distributed according to the law of Moses ; for "thou shalt do no iniquity in judgment, thou shalt not favour the poor, nor shalt thou honour the great ; in righteousness shalt thou judge thy fellow." Then, shall men train their children in conformity with the statute, "Thy seed thou shalt not give to Moloch." That is, education shall lead the young to the highest and noblest desire of imitating God ; no idol, be it real or ideal, shall lure them to debasing and criminal hate ; no imaged prejudice shall, from earliest infancy, be shrined in their innermost hearts, to engross its affections and to prevent it from loving all mankind alike. Moloch was that tyrant of old to whom votaries were passed through a consuming fire. Is there no Moloch now, no fiend like him, but known as bigotry, whose victims are seared by a worse conflagration—one which destroys not only their bodies, but their minds, by preventing them from the free and honest use of those sympathies and instincts natural to humanity ? Are there not thousands who voluntarily abandon themselves to this demon, giving their children to him with more zeal than they train them to serve Heaven ? And do not "the people of the land wilfully close their eyes" to this wickedness ? Alas ! yes. But let us hope that this debasing worship also shall, one day, be a thing of the past ; that men shall find in education the best guide to God-service. Not the education which instils prejudice through sectarianism, which fosters narrow-mindedness through party spirit, which begets hatred for all but its own ; but that nobler education

which looks "through nature up to nature's God," which adopts the comprehensive morality of the Eternal as its morality, which inculcates a love universal like his, a charity unfailling like his, a sympathy entire like his. Then shall the bond of brotherhood unite all mankind in one happy compact; man shall turn to man and seek for points of concord, not of antagonism; he shall regard his fellow-creatures as brothers, erring it may be, but still of his flesh; he shall not judge them by a standard regulated after his own assumed infallibility, but he shall look himself boldly in the face and acknowledge that he needs mercy no less than they do; he shall worship God, not as God only of his creed, but as God of the whole universe, the All-wise, the All-merciful, the All-creating; and then shall the peoples of the world, each happy in its own faith, so long as that faith leads it by any direct road to the imitation of Divine perfection, indeed fulfil the statute of to-day's portion, for they "shall be holy" even as "the Eternal is holy."

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LEVITICUS: CHAPTER XXI.

To all well-governed nations centralisation has seemed too advantageous to be neglected. Even where diversity of dialect or of interests has prevented an exact political union, something analogous has been contrived by other means. Greece had her games, at which the people of every state assisted, and which kept alive a national feeling. She had also her Amphyctionic council, destined for a like end; where this idea of centralisation did not exist, the enlargement of an empire was sure to be attended with weakness. Rome and Persia became, at different times, overgrown giants, whose extremities were so distant from the capital, and were so little connected with it, that they scarcely seemed to belong to

the same body. As, in the animal frame, the circulation of the blood carries the fires of existence to the remotest parts, and brings back to the heart and lungs the exhausted fluid of the limbs, so centralisation acts in a nation, promoting the interchange and communication essential to national vitality. Most modern people, in forming their legislature, have contributed to their healthful strength by means of centralisation. Representatives from different localities assemble to exchange ideas, to carry the interests of one place to another, to represent the wants of one part of the community to the other parts. Returning home they carry back with them the sympathy, the intelligence, and the co-operation of their fellow-countrymen, and thus contribute to diffuse among hamlets and cottages the civilisation of the capital and its palaces. In this way, the seat of government is prevented from absorbing all the wealth and genius of the country, and the humblest village is brought into communication with improving influences.

In the land of Israel political unions were not to be needed, because, as we have already shown, there existed no real power save that which was derived from the finite and perfect legislation of Moses. The law of Sinai was declared to be sufficient for all times, the Eternal pronounced himself sovereign of his people, and the priests, permeating the whole country, carried to every corner, through their scriptural teachings, uniformity of custom and commonalty of interests. Things altered to some extent when the froward Israelites determined, despite the admonition of God, to elect a human instead of an immortal king; but while the priesthood remained true to their charge there was no danger of the nationality's expiring. It was only when Jerusalem and Samaria, as the capitals, absorbed all the energy of the nation, and when the priests became slaves

to the capricious congregations among which they dwelt, and thus ceased to be the bearers of their harmonising religion, that both Judah and Israel succumbed. But so perfect is the Divine provision for human well-being, that the great interests involved in happiness were not left dependent on one measure only. Besides the priesthood, therefore, who might prove faithless, the people themselves were to be the instruments of their own weal, and this too without any interference with their free-will. Nay more, so admirably was the means adapted to its end, that it could only be the most consummate and perverse folly which should refuse to lend itself to what was so evidently designed to promote its comfort. This means was the institution of the three national festivals.

The Israelites were essentially an agricultural people. Every man cultivated his land, and was compelled to give to it that incessant attention which admitted of little repose.* Always occupied in the labours of the field, there was no scope for intellectualization or sociality, and even as now pure country farmers are ages behind the meanest artizans of towns, so then, a nation of pure farmers could scarcely be expected to progress very rapidly under their ordinary vocation. True, the leisure of the Sabbath permitted of some indulgence, but that was so

* The mercy of Providence, always so watchful for human happiness, is particularly distinguishable in the spiritual ordinations of ancient Israel. The Israelites being destined to be agriculturists, and, therefore, to avail themselves of every opportunity of weather, it would have been next to impossible to ensure regular attendance, at stated daily periods, for Divine service. Worldly wants would have been too opposed to heavenly duties. Hence, the continual offerings, made morning and evening by the priests, took the place of public assemblies for prayer, and individuals could offer their devotions to God surrounded by the beauties of nature—his work. When time and opportunity permitted, the grateful could always find expression for their thankfulness in especial sacrifices, and could thus subserve at once the claims of charity and religion.

entirely a day of rest, and was, in its integrity, so exclusively devoted to spiritual pursuits, that little social advantage could be taken of it. With the festivals it was altogether different. Fixed at three periods of the year at which the cultivator of the soil was permitted by beneficent nature to relax his exertions, and to leave her to carry out his labours, they were eminently adapted as agricultural holidays. At the Passover, already the earth had clad itself with its goodly livery of green; the young shoots were opening on the trees, the tender plumulæ were shining above ground; men could determine with some degree of certainty the promise of the coming season, and for a few days might intermit their toil while a transition of vegetable life was going on. At Shebuoth, the productions of the field had passed through another phase, and were waiting the finishing touch of maturing summer; already the blossoms had whitened the ground, and early fruits gilded the trees; already on the corn dawned the first streak of ruddy brown, and again, for a few days might men pause that nature might complete her augured work. At Succoth, the feast of the ingathering—a period of joy and love among all civilised people—the labours of the year were over; already the falling leaves strewed the earth, and formed a mantle to conceal her nakedness. Satisfied with the plenty in their storehouses, men might once more intermit their exertions, both to contemplate the result of the past and to afford the earth, exhausted, as it were, by her fertility, a little leisure for recruiting her strength. These periods were real holidays, given by nature to labour, consecrated by God to happiness. But they differed from the Sabbath in one very important (and to their end essential) particular; they were only times for suspending industrial occupations, they were not destined to that utter rest which distinguished the Sabbath. They could promote sociality—they might even provoke luxury, but it was determined

that they should subserve national welfare by contralibration; and, therefore, were these festivals ordained as national gatherings at the shrine of the Eternal.

Rest was permitted by nature, but it was not to degenerate into sloth. And so the command proclaimed:—

• “Three times in the year shall all thy males appear before the Lord thy God, in the place which he shall choose.”

And so, at the three festivals, Simeon from the south met Naphtali and Zebulun from the north; in front of the Tabernacle was spread out, under the banner of the law, an immense army of worshippers, and that army was a nation. Tribe after tribe poured its thousands into the vast assembly, and even as mountain streams bring their tributary waters to swell the tide of a mighty river, so these overflowing thousands bore their sympathies and sorrows, their joys and their hopes, to swell the common nationality. Religion added its harmonising influence, and gave to each day an opening and a closing service, in which every individual joined with unanimous accord. To the whole people there was but one heart, and that vibrated with the noblest emotions that stir humanity. What wonder then that the leisure intermediate hours were spent in amity, in peace, in brotherhood. Joined by the strongest of ties, a common faith, every soul was directed to one goal, just as every eye watched the smoking altar, the ministering priest. To the broad expanse of heaven there went up the cry of millions—but it was the giant cry of praise attuned as from one impressive and almighty voice. How could bitterness or animosity come into an assembly so constituted? How could jealousy lend one jarring note to disturb the universal concord? As in some fair landscape in which a thousand dumb beauties offer their mute incense to a beneficent Creator, the while myriads of flowers send up their perfumes, and myriads of birds give forth their gentle trills

to join the general choir of praise ; as, in such sunny scene, even some darkling rock, some barren spot, or some hoarse croak of a raven, would rather increase than diminish the general harmony, so in that united congregation, each trifling discrepancy, each exceptional element, but added to the common bond of fraternity, for over all was spread the same Eternal hand, the same Eternal mercy. -

But these gatherings, besides promoting nationality through centralisation, were to stimulate industry, to excite emulation, to circulate knowledge, to diffuse improvement. They had a worldly purpose as well as a spiritual end. Every male who appeared before the Lord was commanded to present himself not empty-handed, but each was to bring some specimen of his labour, "according to his capability." Thus, these assemblies took the character of industrial exhibitions—only the products were confined to vegetable produce and live stock. True, there may have been no scientific implements of husbandry, there may have been no short-horns or southdowns succumbing under mountains of fat, but there were the choicest specimens of the field and of the garden, the noblest of the herb and of the flock—for what worshipper taking his offering would not carry his best to God, what man about to exhibit before his fellow-creatures would not strive to appear in his best colours? Nor were premiums wanting to raise the spirit of honourable rivalry. At the Passover, the finest barley produced was selected for the Omer. Where was the Israelite who would not aspire to the honour of having the work of his hands specially distinguished before the people as the fittest offering to Heaven? The finest cattle were picked out for the additional sacrifices—the strongest inducement to breeders to try their skill in improving their stock. And thus men learned to vie with each other in agricultural and farming pursuits, and this rivalry conduced to the general welfare by tending to increase the national resources. For, while

striving to improve their productions, men exercised themselves in industry, and, if they did not gain the prize of their ambition, they at least reaped the benefit of their additional labour.

Another effect grew out of these gatherings, less noble perhaps, but, as man is constituted, not less useful. Sociality was promoted, and, under the influence of the relationship between guest and host, personal friendship lent its lustre to enhance the general welfare. The vast multitude had to be fed. It was not possible for the neighbourhood in which they were assembled, to supply the necessary quantity of provisions. Doubtless, every man carried with him wherewith to maintain himself. But, as in commercial life, the superfluities of one country are bartered for the superfluities of other countries, so among the Israelites many exchanged belongings for their mutual advantage. One man perhaps, who prided himself on his wine, would make common cause with other men who were equally famous, respectively, for their corn, their cattle, or their fruit. During their stay before the Tabernacle, they would unite their means, they would live together as one family, each contributing his quota to the general table, and while enjoying the convivial meal, genial discourse would lend an additional charm to the pleasures of the palate. They would compare their experiences, they would communicate their hopes; fathers of families would be consoled by the solicitude of friendship for the loss of domestic love, and men would part firmly attached, who had met almost strangers. But their separation would be only temporary; they would bid adieu with the promise to meet again at the ensuing festival; perhaps some child of one tribe would be spared by his father as a kind of hostage, to visit his father's friend of another tribe, and thus the whole nation became only a large and somewhat scattered household, united by ties of religion, by the aspirations after distinction in their common pursuits, by the bonds of friendship and love.

Beautiful dispensation of Heaven! "How manifold are thy works, O Lord, all of them in wisdom hast thou made;" but none of thy works is so comprehensively good as that all-serving revelation which thou gavest to man from Sinai. The animal, vegetable, and mineral worlds supply his wants of food and of clothing, they contribute to his necessities, and pamper him with luxuries. The higher world of science gratifies the loftier cravings of the mind; it forms the reason and strengthens the intellect. But the Sinaitic code surpasses all these; it nourishes the moral faculties, it sustains the soul, and it teaches man the true way to enjoy the benefits derived from other sources, by turning his course heavenward. Let the sensual abandon themselves to enervating and perishable pleasures; they will live without credit to themselves, without profit to their fellow-creatures. Let rationalists dream away existence in vain theories and perplexing speculations; they will live without satisfaction, because they aim at something unknown to themselves, and they will die, to be despised, because at the last moment they but too often confess the inanity of their career. The religionist alone is happy; he alone is blessed himself, and, by his teachings and example, blesses others. Not he who gives up his body to forms, and neglects principles; not he who knows of no excellence but his own, and is intolerant of the opinions of others; not he who observes precepts because his father observed them, without striving to become impressed with their saving excellence; not he who converts faith into an idol, and dresses it in a livery entirely the creation of selfishness, ignorance, bigotry, or priestcraft; but he who sees in religion only the connecting chain between one all-merciful God, and the millions of his failing children; who is happy in having one link of that chain extended to him, and gladly sees his fellow-creatures of all climes and all colours, holding on by other links; who walks the earth,

having charity and love in his heart, and with his eyes turned heavenward—but in his heart there is shrined the image of human kind, and on his retina is imprinted its miniature; who aspires to imitate the ineffable goodness of the Eternal by cherishing all created things; who regards this life as a preparation for a future state, and, therefore, so numbers his days, that he brings his soul to wisdom; who has ever before him the behest addressed to the patriarch, “Walk before me and be perfect;” the rescript addressed to Israel, “And ye shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy people.”

בהר ובחקתי

LEVITICUS: CHAPTER XXV.

So closely do the limits of Almighty behest and human free-will approximate, that it is often difficult to trace their respective boundaries. In many phases of life, man seems so blind an instrument in the hands of inevitable circumstances, that reason, despite itself, thinks of fate, and argues that there must be predestination. And yet, it would be quite irreconcilable with man's salvation and God's judgment to suppose, for one moment, that man acted under a control which he could not resist. For, were this to be, how could reward and punishment exist, and without these what would be the idea of a future state? But even the highest state of liberty is not inconsistent with such wholesome amount of coercion as is compatible with general well-being; and if this be the case in worldly affairs, how much more permissible is it in spiritual concerns? As we have observed in reference to the Passover and the Sabbath, the perfection of Heavenly knowledge was made available to cause man to subserve his own happiness—always our being's end and aim. This was effected too in a way which seemed alike natural to the events out of which prohibition grew, and conform-

able to the sway which man has over his actions. For we must recollect that the design of revelation was purely religious. Moses, in his Divine teachings, made known no scientific truths. Man was created a perfectionable being ; he was endowed with faculties for comparison and investigation, and he was thus in a condition to trace the analogies of physical phenomena, to penetrate into causes, to apply nature's powers to his own advantage. But grand as was his reason, it could not soar beyond the limits of the real or of the abstract ; it might grasp the immensity of time and space, it might span the most abstruse metaphysical truths, but it could not of itself rise to the height of God ; knowledge, because revelation, wanting, it would have no fulcrum on which to rest the lever of its intellectuality. Hence, while, to promote human felicity through religion, it was imperative that Providence should interfere, to advance scientific lore man was amply endowed without special Divine aid. By this means, he was to gain all the merit of his self-improvement, and to lose nothing of his independence because of the instruction of Heaven. It pleased the Eternal to set salvation before mortal eyes as the goal of existence ; the road thither was broad and expansive ; to impress it most efficaciously, certain landmarks were placed by which wanderers might be guided ; but, beyond this, no compulsion was used. Travellers on that great highway might pause to decorate its landmarks ; they might even extend its limits or contract them ; while they journeyed, they were ever permitted to feel their independence by the liberty allowed them of selecting their own way, of altogether ignoring the pathway, and by the facility with which they could at any time regain the beaten track. Time was allotted to man, and, with it, all of creation that he could investigate ; to himself he was to owe the profitable employment of his faculties, so that time might assist his development, that creation might yield materials

for his advantage. Eternity was reserved for God, but through the portals of death man also might enter on that vast immensity; and, in order that those portals might more easily admit of his passage, it pleased God to direct his steps towards them by the smoothest path of most pleasant access. To time belongs education; to eternity, religion; the intimate association of the corporal and the spiritual in man effects that education trenches on the field of religion, that religion cultivates the soul of education.

In the days of Moses, agriculture was not known as a science, it was a trade in which men engaged. They were ignorant of the laws which might have regulated it as a trade; of its being a science they had never even dreamed. Hence, while every man's object was to secure the best crops, no one knew how to attain his end. He sowed and he reaped; he gave to the land his labour, and he relied on the fecundity of nature to do the rest. Little heeded he the causes which made any one soil better adapted for one particular production; little imagined he that there were means by which the fertility of nature might be augmented, or that it was possible for her resources to fail from sheer exhaustion. The system of alternation or assoilment, scarcely determined now, had not then dawned. It was necessary either to teach man the science of agriculture, which would have been inconsistent with Divine plan, or to discover some other means of preventing his destruction of his own storehouse. Now, as we have before observed, while the duties of all trades are engrossing, those of an agriculturist scarcely admit of any repose; while all mechanical or business pursuits retard the development of mind, agriculture almost chokes its growth. The festivals were designed in some way to counteract the effects of too close an attention to agriculture. But alone they were not sufficient. Brief of duration, and

partly occupied by the religious journeys attached to them, they did much good, but they left much more to be accomplished. Providence, therefore, again called in faith to replace science, and every seventh year was to be one entire Sabbath. Man was enjoined to repose on the mercy of Heaven; he was told that the produce of six years should suffice for the consumption of seven, even as six days' labour supplied seven days' sustenance; he was told that even till the seed sown in the eighth year should have yielded its produce in the ninth, the beneficence of nature should permit him to enjoy the "old store" of the sixth year, and thus three objects were served. 1st, The earth received the rest she so much needed; her powers were recruited by elemental changes carried on in the great laboratory of nature, and she was again able, with renewed vigour, to fructify the seeds committed to her bosom. 2nd, Man obtained a cessation from wearing and unintellectual occupations; he was thus enabled to give time to his mental development, and to afford opportunity for the discharge of many social duties impossible while he was actively engaged in agriculture. 3rd, Religion was promoted by the inculcation of confidence in Heaven; man was weaned from his love for worldly advantages, he was arrested in his debasing career after gain, and he was constantly reminded, by the recurrence of his year of rest, to prepare for that fiftieth year of release, when the whole land fell, as it were, into the hands of its declared owner, God, to be afresh parcelled out among its tenants; and he was thus taught to rely on that mercy which should continue him and his among the representatives chosen of the Almighty to hold his possessions on earth. We, living under a system so different, with no direct interference of Providence; we, whose aim it is to obtain property, and to perpetuate it; we, who call in science to assist labour, and policy to secure

protective advantages ; we can scarcely understand the state of things engendered by the Mosaic regulations for Palestine. There, every man had but a life-interest in his belongings, and as life here is but a preparation for a future existence, so, in every one of his pursuits, the one grand object—eternity—was to be kept steadily before him. He was to be industrious and self-supporting, but he was not to allow his industry or desire for self-support to make him oblivious of God. He was to be intelligent, and to gain experience, but his intelligence was to find its highest study in God, his experience was to confirm his ardour for Divine love. He was to benefit himself and his family by his honesty and skill, but he was constantly to recollect that his personal property was of as little importance, compared to his spiritual well-doing, as his span of days was to his endless hereafter.

But while the commands of Heaven come to man with all the authority that omnipotent power, omniscient wisdom, and illimitable mercy can give them ; and while boundless gratitude should entitle them to the strongest claim to respect and obedience, we know, nevertheless, that they are only imperative through human free-will, and that comparatively it is more easy to transgress them than mere earthly statutes. Men make laws for social security, and men break them ; but the punishment follows so closely and evidently on the detected crime, that at a least it may form a preventive. In the case of an infraction of heavenly precepts, not only is the retribution not exacted with the same degree of promptitude, but it is sometimes not even to be recognized. Indeed, were the vindication of Divine wrong as palpable as that of human wrong, man would cease, to some extent, to be master of his volition. Wherefore, it has always seemed to be the will of Providence that moral delinquencies or deflections should possess certain inherent properties as inalienable as

those of physical aberrations. Just as imbibing a mephitic vapour produces convulsion or death, so inhaling a criminal atmosphere, leads to the convulsion and death of the moral faculties. True, God, as Lord of creation, directs; but equally true that man is lord of his own ascendant, and is no more to be considered a blind instrument than an irresponsible agent. Hence, in reviewing the portion before us, we must regard the denunciation of future punishments for disobedience, not as a prophecy, inevitable because of God, but only as the result of voluntary and wilful demoralisation on the part of Israel. The case would appear to stand thus:—The Israelites are selected as the depository for certain great truths, through them to be promulgated to the rest of mankind. These truths are both religious and moral, as regards the world at large, and, in addition, they are ceremonial and restrictive also, in respect to the Israelites in particular. Attached to the trust thus reposed in man, are certain rewards for the faithful fulfilment of duty, certain inflictions for a breach of trust. But either alternative is in the hands of the Israelites. They may elect to preserve their charge in all its integrity; this will render them pious to Heaven, loving to men, charitable to failings, obedient to industrial, social, and moral progress; thus they will become subservient to their own welfare, which will also be indirectly promoted by the Eternal, who will send them “rain in its due season,” and “plenty of corn and wine,” in other words, who will permit nature to lavish her beneficence without any disturbing influences. Or they may elect to follow the promptings of their own hearts, preferring indulgence in passion to adherence to principle; this will render them attached to earth and its corruptions, selfish for personal gratification, intolerant of all weakness but their own, antagonistic to industrial, social, and moral progress; they will thus become stumbling-blocks in their own path to happiness; they will impede themselves and

each other on the common road to perfectibility, and thus degraded before the world, they will be fair marks for aggression from without, for self-destruction from within. For it must be recollected that the future position of the Jews among nations, was to be determined by themselves. Comparatively few in number, occupying but a small territory, they were only to command respect and forbearance by the terror which their manifest protection by Heaven inspired. In proof: what happened when they settled in Canaan? Their whole career was miraculous; before their inexperienced and half-armed bands, the most disciplined troops fell, the strongest towns succumbed; with scarcely a check they achieved a series of victories, which convinced even the ignorant idolators who surrounded them, that there was something more than human in their triumphs. Despite themselves, these idolators were compelled, even as Jethro had already been forced, to believe in a superior power as battling on behalf of Israel. This belief acted on their courage; they were afraid to molest a people before whom bravery could effect nothing, because of an invincible but invisible champion. And this support of Heaven affected the Israelites also. Conscious of rectitude, and knowing that while they thus deserved the support of Heaven they would surely have it, they were impelled to heroic deeds by the sanctity of the cause which they felt themselves to be vindicating. Profane history has since told the same tale many times; patriotism, love of liberty, devotion to God, has more than once nerved a hundred arms to beat back thousands; before the hearths of their childhood, or the homes of their affection, a few breasts have formed an ægis that myriads have striven in vain to penetrate. But when the Israelites, wallowing in the luxury of sensual enjoyment, fell away from God, a reaction took place. Surrounding people saw the same abominations, the same idolatrous practices, the same debasing rites that they themselves practised. They

asked themselves what now existed to distinguish Israel from other nations, and their own perceptions told them that there was nothing. Vice is always inflamed by cupidity ; cupidity only forbears from violence when it yields to fear. The semi-barbarous neighbours of Palestine were both vicious and covetous ; they saw the fertile valleys of Canaan covered with abundant vegetation, teeming with healthy cattle ; their desire to have such treasures, without the labour of earning them, only slumbered because they dreaded to attack the mysteriously protected owners. But as they saw the difference between Israel and themselves melt away, as one by one they beheld the shades of distinction fade, so their fear began also to evaporate, and their cupidity to excite, till at last they resolved to dare something for the rich reward of plunder. Accordingly, they fell with fury on the unprepared and still confiding sinners, and were surprised at their easy victory. For, just as a good cause fortifies the courage, a bad cause paralyzes it. The Israelites, allowing body to predominate over mind, had fallen into evil. Lulled to security by past successes, they did not reflect on the cause of those successes. It was only when danger awoke them to the necessity for self-defence, that they became aware alike of their own deficiencies and of their inability to cope with their now more powerful enemies. Peril beget reflection, and then it was that they became conscious of the fact, that the spirit which had animated them had died when they forsook their God. Religious ardour had made untrained youths heroes ; idolatrous phrenzy converted heroes into cowards. And so they fell an easy prey to those whom in their prosperity they had affected to despise ; and, so, while they had not the moral bravery to seek once more to vivify the spirit of faith, they remained slaves. But when some mind more self-communing than that of the multitude strove once more to aspire to Heaven, and

with renewed belief acquired renewed hope ; when, daring trustfully to invoke God's aid, some soul felt impelled to patriotic and lofty devotion, then that genial support of conscience, which men call inspiration, guided high thoughts to noble deeds, and even shepherds and farmers, nay even gentle women, rose to the requirements of warriors and legislators. Their exhortations and their example kindled a sympathetic flame in the bosoms of their brother tribesmen, and again some few resolute men became invincible, because they were fighting for a right commanded of Heaven. Not once this happened, but several times ; and it was only when repeated sins had provoked repeated punishments, when experience brought no wisdom, and admonition no improvement, that the final fulfilment of the denunciation of Moses was permanently accomplished by the Israelites themselves. This denunciation had been intended as a warning and as a caution of what *would* be, not of what *must* be, the results of crime ; the pertinacity of sin and unrepentance converted the warning into a prophecy, and thus contributed to render inevitable what had only been prohibitory. In regarding this portion, therefore, let us not say that the destiny of Israel was therein foretold with such certainty that they could not avoid it ; let us rather say that with all the consequences of sin laid bare before them, they obstinately rushed into their fate, and only compelled mercy to cease when the cry of avenging justice drowned the soft pleadings of compassion. There is no fate ; for good or for bad, men choose their own courses, and the results, within certain limits, are all of men's production. Just as it is impossible to prevent certain physical combinations from occurring ; just as season succeeds season, and year follows year, so certain moral combinations lead to definite consequences, not always to be traced, but as inalienable as other great principles of creation.

: במדבר

NUMBERS: CHAPTER I.

AGAIN we tread on the traces of man, as he prints them on the sands of time that border the ocean of eternity. Evanescent marks that vanish as the tide of events washes over them; new footprints replace them, to be in turn effaced, and still mortality travels to its appointed goal. Silent and thoughtful sits a watcher holding vigil over the passing millions, and ever, as some stamp a deeper impress, he transfers their career to his open tablets, to form from them the pages of history. His tale is faithful in so far as he is honest, but such are men, that each individual describes an image as it presents itself to his vision, and thus the same object seen from different points of view is differently represented. He alone fitly paints who is above the failings and weaknesses of mankind. Hence, the sacred historian writing under the direct influence of the Omnipotent, delivers lessons as truthful as they are authoritative. Of these lessons, some—as those of Leviticus just quitted, are entirely spiritual; they appeal to our souls through gratitude, to our observation through experience; some are social, and appeal to our senses through combination, to our imitation or avoidance through their effects. Of this latter kind no part of the inspired books contains more salutary examples than the book of Numbers. In the accounts here given we read man as he really is; neither prejudice nor selfishness has interposed a lens to distort his portrait. And a dispassionate examination will show us that such as we find our fellow-creature here, so do we meet him now; the same passions, the same temptations, the same self-denial are every where to be met. Advancing civilisation and increasing knowledge have done their work on the human character, but they have changed it in so

small a degree, that we can scarcely note the shades of alteration. For, amid all the effects of time, those only are clearly perceptible which affect human combinations or human productions. Habits, commerce, policy, and the like, vary with the age, but the works of Providence remain unshaken through countless generations. When the Creator of the Universe formed the heart of man, he placed in it two opposite principles, the love of good and of Heaven, and the desire for evil and for self. On the very threshold of existence, man, of his own free-will, decided that the latter of these principles should preponderate. Whether, because it was more easy to sin than to restrain, or because of the attraction of imitation, it were hard to say, but the descendants of our first parents confirmed their choice, and hurried in a downward career of vice which led to their destruction. The condign punishment inflicted on the generation of Noah, lost its terrors as time consigned it to the past, and succeeding generations plunged again into the devouring vortex of evil. Thus, man seemed determined to assert, that only that portion of Heaven's work in his heart should exist, which ministered to his passions, and gratified his baser nature. Then it was that Divine mercy deigned to interfere, with a view to afford mankind an opportunity of recovering the lost dominion of virtue. For this purpose was established religion—a heavenly work, and only as such capable of operating on another heavenly work. By means of religion, man was taught how he might assert the superiority of the principle of good, and the Eternal vouchsafed to set his own attributes before mortals, that they might thereby form themselves on the most perfect of models. But the senses operate on all, the intellect prevails only with the few. Every man is amenable to certain physical wants, which it is more pleasant to gratify than to limit; a few men only feel the purifying requirements of the spirit, to supply which

is to improve by drawing materials from Heaven. Hence, with the mass, the great truths of religion prevailed but little, and even this little was diminished by the fatality with which men learned to cling to their own peculiar views. Belief was admitted as a necessity, but it was to be squared by the rule and compass of human prejudices. Modes of faith, therefore, became as numerous as modes of dress, and as fantastic. And yet, as each man fancied he looked heavenward, because he directed his gaze to a divinity or divinities modelled after his own design, so each presumed to dictate that every other man but himself looked in the wrong direction, and that to wean him from this error was the highest moral duty. Thus, under the name of religion, every one of the best teachings of religion was systematically ignored. Men murdered, tortured, plundered, oppressed—and all for what they called religion's sake; forgetful that they thus stamped their God as a God of murder, torture, plunder, and oppression. They sacrificed to their divinities the victims of cruelty, and pretended thereby to propitiate mercy. On the altars of their faiths arose the smoke from ruined hopes and desolated hearths, and amid the shouts of the riotous worshippers arose the groans of their victims; and that was their incense, these their hymns of praise. The result was but too distressing. Men assumed to set up their own interpretation of a heavenly principle for the principle itself, and thus permitted the salutary effects of true religion to be all but lost. Instead of accepting the dictum of God, the Eternal, that his attributes were to be the basis on which they were to build their characters, they infused into their hearts the poison of their injustice, and thus vitiated their entire bodies. The human character, therefore, remains all but unchanged. Now and then, a few individuals shine like beacons over a sea of darkness, but they are few and far between; the entire mass is still unilluminated, and will

remain so while the pseudo-God-worship of man's fashioning replaces the genuine adoration of Heaven's own ordination.

But this evil to man from a violation of heavenly law is not an exceptional case. The same happens whenever humanity presumes to set its little knowledge against the infinite wisdom of the Eternal. On the broad bosom of creation the Almighty impressed certain indelible characters which it is impossible to eradicate, save by the annihilation of nature. Any attempt to alter these characters may seem to succeed for a time, but it must ultimately fail, as all human exertions must succumb when opposed by the might of Providence. Among the characters impressed, pre-eminently distinguishable is the right of free-will, and so inalienable has this been decreed that even Heaven itself has never interfered to violate it. As has been more than once shown in these reflections, the commands of God were only exhortations, his prophecies only a denunciation of the possible, not the inevitable.* But as happened in the matter of religion, fell out also in the case of free-will. Men arrogated to themselves the power to do what God avoided, that is, to coerce volition, and the means they adopted was slavery. Considering that human invention has always exhibited a remarkable amount of ingenuity when fellow-torture was the question, one can scarcely wonder at the apparently remarkable adaptation of this means to its designed end. While the most abject slavery leaves man, to some extent, a free agent, lord of his passions, his appetites, his love,

* A remarkable instance of the truth of this doctrine may be adduced from the portion under consideration. God had originally designed the firstborn of Israel to be sanctified to him, but now, owing to the devotion exhibited by the tribe of Levi, on the occasion of the making of the golden calf, he substitutes that tribe for the firstborn, and thus alters a plan of Heaven to suit mortal conduct.

and his revenge, it contrives so to confine his powers of judgment as to degrade his reason into little more than instinct, his humanity into mere brute forbearance or action. If a slave, as a type of his order, excels in any thing one of the inferior animals, it will be rather in his power to plot than in any nobler faculty. One of the results of this attack on the dignity of human nature has been unproductiveness; the elephant does not breed at all in captivity, and man disdains in some degree to yield to influences that die even in a brute. With slavery, therefore, is of necessity associated traffic in fellow-creatures, to keep up the stock, and to supply by fresh importations what nature denies to conjugal ties. As ever, wrong creates wrong; that some men may revel in the licentiousness of tyranny, other men are sold "like sheep to the slaughter," the most sacred affections of humanity are violently outraged, the bonds that unite parent and child, wife and husband, are snapped asunder, and when the slave, thus rendered an outcast, writhes in the excess of his bodily agony, the master aspires to be the "God of God," and denies him even the right to think. And so, bound in unnatural fetters, men drag out a miserable existence, unsolaced by the sweet hopes that garner in the bosoms of parents, but also undistressed by the pang which might give to death an extra horror, that they are leaving children to inherit their shame.

To this fate the Israelites had been condemned in Egypt. Policy, the name under which cunning seeks to cover what is never right, had devised a thousand ways to perpetuate its sway and the slavery of its victims. Hard labour made the day bitter, and converted the night into a dreadful anticipation of the morrow; children were condemned, even ere their birth, to a violent and inhuman death; men were torn from their families and scattered over the land of Egypt, to search for

materials for their work ; every species of oppression that could weigh on the hearts of human beings, and wring from them a cry of despair, was tried against the doomed race. But, as the heathen Jethro subsequently acknowledged, a power was opposed to these tyrants which, "in what they were most presumptuous, was above them." Men were called on to witness a phenomenon never before observed, never since repeated. The wretched slaves still remained faithful to the great law of creation, "Be fruitful and multiply ;" and "the more they afflicted them, the more they increased." Holy writ, as impressive in its teachings through history, as it is sacred in its moral instructions, proves this miracle in the portion before us, when it records the thousands of the various tribes. With seventy souls Jacob went down into Egypt ; from the house of bondage there came out more than 600,000 adult males, besides women and children. Man's volition had not been interfered with ; the Egyptians had been freely permitted to use the power of slave-masters, the Israelites had been left to two centuries of bitter servitude ; those had exercised their assumed right "with rigour ;" these had even forgotten their God "from bitterness of spirit and from hard labour ;" and yet, even though the murder of male children had been superadded to the wrongs inflicted on the Israelites, despite the general law of nature that bodily degradation produces enervation and unfruitfulness, the despised race had far outrun the ordinary rate of increase, and had multiplied in proportion to their sufferings instead of diminishing under them. Can we wonder, then, that the inspired legislator should expatiate with so much minuteness on the numbers of the various tribes ? When we bear in mind that many of the relations of the Pentateuch are only useful to us because of the moral they point, when we recollect that the silent impression of facts is often more improving than the eloquent voice of the preacher, shall we not perceive in

this apparently uninteresting catalogue, a tacit but solemn declaration, that where God wills, he can rule, even though men exercise the plenitude of their volition. The word that never fails had announced to the patriarch, "Thy seed shall be as the stars of heaven and as the sand of the sea-shore;" and that promise was to be fulfilled. What, though man had decided against its accomplishment; what, though tyranny had set in motion engines which, under ordinary circumstances, crush vitality into a thing of forms; the Lord fought for Israel, and man's decision and his engines were alike powerless to frustrate.

And thus, since the captivity, nearly eighteen hundred years, the Israelites have been the scorn of the world. Moral, if not physical, slavery has been forced upon them. They have been subject to every debasing influence which might have prevented their increase. It is doubtful whether under similar treatment another people might not have deteriorated in bodily form, becoming hideous or stunted, or altogether have vanished before more vigorous races. But there existed in these victims to man's caprice, a spirit which was altogether beyond man's control. Scorn has not been able to fix one national stain which might merit contempt. Moral slavery has not succeeded in diminishing, still less in extinguishing, the fire of genius; the grasp of intellect still remains potent, the lustre of virtue and religion still remains undimmed. Increase has been steady and commensurate with extraneous circumstances; bodily form still presents some of the noblest specimens of true Caucasian beauty. Contrast the fate of other nations. Trace the various streams which man pours into the sea of time. See how many of them have altogether disappeared, absorbed in the earth or merged into other confluents. Romans, Greeks, Persians, are all gone; Vandals, Goths, Huns, where are their remnants now? Meanwhile, the brooklet that took its rise in the valley of the Euphrates runs

eternally on towards the illimitable ocean. It defies mortal attempts to dam its course, it disdains to mingle with adjacent waters. Clouds at times obscure its day, but the sun of its guidance still penetrates to illuminate. And why is this? Because the spring that supplies the brooklet wells from an omnipotent source, because the waters of its bosom are the waters of life everlasting, because the works of man only are perishable, while the works of God are as the hills that change not.

XIV

NUMBERS: CHAPTER IV. VERSE 21.

WHEN the merciful Creator impressed upon human nature the principle of love, he provided the best safeguard for the preservation of society. "Wherefore man will leave his father and his mother, and cleave to his wife, and they will become one flesh." Obedient to this law, man, through the marriage contract, becomes the means of forming the most hallowed union that is known to earth. Friendship, as sung by poets, or painted by authors, is a beautiful idea; the reality is too often fair on the surface, but rotten at the core. Self sets up its host of wants and interests, and these, as various as the characters of men, diverge into opposite extremities, instead of converging to a centre. Even the sublime tie that binds parents and children yields to the link of marriage; for, as parents themselves sought helps meet for them, so do children, in their turn, build homes elsewhere, and, in the new associations, forget the old love. But the bonds of matrimony are permanent; man assumes them voluntarily, to part from them but with death. Wife and husband, where the union is perfect as it should be, cease to be different individuals. They are essentially the reflex of each other. No image represented in a mirror resembles

more entirely its original than do husband and wife. His interests are her interests ; his success or failure is her success or failure. For her, he forgets his sternness ; for him, if needs be, she lays aside her gentleness. For her, he forsakes the most fascinating attractions of worldly pleasure ; for him, society presents no allurements to her. This intimate communion benefits both. Man gains therefrom a solace from his labours, a haven of comfort which receives him buffeted by the storms of outer life, a refuge from himself when embittered by the coldness or falsehood of the world. Woman acquires a protection for her weakness which commands the respect of society, a shield to defend her from the attacks of malice or violence, a support which gives to her soft nature strength to endure her share of earth's troubles. But, above all, means are provided, through marriage, for the proper introduction into life of well-qualified members. Man, the highest of created beings, is also the slowest to attain the mature development of his faculties. Inferior animals, requiring only physical powers, may be dismissed from the parents' lair as soon as their young strength enables them to provide for their wants, and their future career will derive no loss from the dismissal. Man requires mental and moral training ; not only must his years of infancy and childhood pass in necessary education, but even his puberty must not be without its cultivation. He needs not only precept but practice ; it is not enough that he is taught what is right, he must see it performed ; his mind must be fortified by precept, his imitativeness must be guided by example. And where but in the hallowed precincts of the home of marriage can children receive this requisite treatment ? Contrast the fate of those unfortunate victims to their parents' weakness who are ushered into life without the pale of matrimony. How many fall a prey to disease, either of mind or morals, and

become the pariahs of civilisation ; how few attain to any thing higher than the brute perfection of physical growth !

But, in order that marriage may fulfil its legitimate functions, it is necessary that there be entire confidence between husband and wife. Each is the depository of the other's honour, and this is a trust so sacred that it must be guarded even at the sacrifice of life itself. Nature and society league in some respect to give immunity to man which is denied to woman ; but no cloud must obscure the brightness of her fidelity. Pure as the unsunned snow that glitters eternal on the mountain top, she lives only in her isolation from all external influence. Yet the weakness of mortality oftentimes operates against her ; she may become the object of a suspicion which she does not merit, or she may have violated her duties without being suspected. Grant the latter, and the results must not only be fatal to her own peace of mind, but to her happiness as a wife, to her fulfilment of her charge as a mother. Crime trails its serpentine course along the domestic hearth, and leaves misery and evil behind it. Grant the former, and the consequences are no less hurtful to her. Her husband sees in her affection only a hollow mockery ; a hideous skeleton fills the place of a living love in his heart ; his children become hateful to him, because he doubts their mother, and instead of seeking his home for comfort and affection, he flees from it as from something too horrible to contemplate. With these obstacles to human happiness before us, can we wonder that Providence, ever so watchful in our behalf, should have deigned to interfere in favour of an institution of its own creation, and which tends so much to promote its design ? Now, if the demon jealousy, with all its train of attendant fiends, invades a household, peace for ever departs, and there is no chance that any future contingency can restore the calm once broken. In the days of our ancestors, in the land of promise, there was a means sanctified

by religion, and dictated by One who, having fashioned the heart of man, knoweth all its imaginations. "The offering of jealousy" was at once the sure dove of hope, or the certain arrow of destruction, between husband and wife. Say she was innocent; before the evident manifestation of her purity, as ratified by God, even the most inveterate and deeply-rooted suspicion vanished. Restored again, as she deserved, to her husband's arms and love, she found herself the object of increased attentions and care, that all past sorrows might be obliterated; her soul revived under the invigorating beams of affection, and expanded into all that is beautiful in the wife, all that is tender in the mother; roses again bloomed where once had grown weeds, and harmony gave to life a strain of melody to replace the jarring notes of domestic discord. Say she was guilty; say she was that sinful thing which had crept like a parasite into the bosom of a husband, to tear therefrom all its existence, and to leave the trunk which had supported it sapless and dead. There was no retreating before the punishment that awaited her, there was no concealment of the vengeance of outraged honour. To her God she appealed, as the bitter waters passed her lips, and he answered as she deserved. To crime against her husband she added perjury before Heaven, and even as a physical disobedience of our first parents introduced moral corruption into themselves and their descendants, so, in her case, a moral deflection produced physical disorganisation. She became a monument of her own disgrace, and thus, convicted before God and man, she could no longer pollute the home which she had already outraged. And by this means was man defended from the effects of his unfounded suspicions, by this means was woman either preserved to her legitimate and honourable functions, or she was degraded according to her demerits, beyond the opportunity of doing further evil to her husband, further wrong to her children.

To man belongs only the present, and so fleeting are the moments that pass, that even as he endeavours to arrest them they elude his grasp, till he can scarcely call one his own. Even when he begins to act he knows not if he shall be able to accomplish. He, therefore, who opens his mouth to say that he will, opens his mouth to folly ; he that vows, and thereby attests his folly by God, commits a positive crime. The law of the Eternal does not coerce man ; it seeks to prevent rather than to punish, to restrain, not to force. But Providence demands respect, and wisely insists that any pledge taken in its name shall be held sacred and inviolable. Hence the regulations affecting the Nazarite. A man who, having arrived at maturity, must be fully cognizant of his own inherent infirmities, must have felt the constant struggle between the principles and the passions, and must know the strength requisite to ensure stability of purpose, voluntarily imposed on himself obligations which it might even be an impossibility for him to perform. His folly fully deserved that he should suffer, his sin that he should be a warning to others. It was necessary that he should, as much as possible, be sustained in the contest into which he had thrown his nature ; it was more necessary that others should be cautioned against involving themselves in struggles which might prove fatal to their happiness. Hence, he was called on to refrain from all intoxicating drinks, from all delicate and luxurious viands, so that his appetites not being pampered, his blood might permeate his veins under due control, and not run like liquid fire through his frame, inviting him to passion and excess. He had set himself apart to God, and therefore God set him apart from the world and its temptations, because it was better that he should altogether be deprived of the sensual pleasures natural to his humanity, than that he should enjoy them at the expense of his honour and truth. Man is framed for social intercourse, but he should rather

violate all his propensities as a solitary hermit than abandon himself to them as a member of society. Besides, the Israelite who took the vow of a Nazarite probably knew too well the failings which he desired thereby to correct, and it was wiser to exterminate these failings, to prevent them from again leading him astray, than to permit them to exist, even though in a latent but still dangerous state. But it was nevertheless not consistent with right that man, by vowing himself to a certain line of conduct, should arrogate a power over the future. Hence, as in the case of the voluntary servant, who preferred his dependent condition to the free lot which is man's birthright, some external distinction was needful to deter others from imitating a bad example. The Nazarite, therefore, was to wear his hair differently from the rest of his brother men, and was thus to hold himself up as a constant warning, first, to deter men from assuming votive obligations inconsistent with their condition, and not demanded by religion ; and, secondly, to caution them against that insane indulgence in passion which had hurried him into excesses, to curb which it was necessary to lean as much beyond the straight line of right as he had before fallen short of it.

“The Eternal bless thee and preserve thee : the Eternal cause his countenance to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee : the Eternal lift his countenance to thee and grant thee peace.” These were the terms in which the priests were commanded to bless the Israelites. Nor are they improperly placed in close connection with the laws of the Nazarite. Blessings, like vows, belong to the future ; they also, in so far as man is concerned, are empty words, whose accomplishment does not depend upon him who utters them. God having pointed out, by implication, the unnatural condition to which man might reduce himself, and having placed before mortals a fellow-creature as a warning,

immediately points out that other condition of human nature by which man may subserve the claims of nature, and still not oppose the demands of Heaven. But God especially desires that there be no mistake. In the outset he prevents us from supposing that his power over the future is to be delegated to frail man. Blessings and curses are of God only; man can only exhort or admonish, and, when he promises, promise in the name of Him who faileth not. Wherefore having announced the words in which the priests are to address their flock, he distinctly says: "And *they* shall put my name upon the children of Israel, and *I* will bless them." In other words, *they* may recommend to my people the line of conduct necessary to their welfare, but happiness or misery must depend on me alone. And what is the intent of these words? The evil consequences of indulgence having been pointed out, the contrast is at once presented. Man alone is weak and erring: even where his will is strongest, his volition is most weak. In spite of himself and of his independence, he requires that hidden and unapparent support which is of God. This it is which enables him to support the soul against the body, to maintain that in its aspirations, to fortify this in its resistance against attacks. The words of the blessing, only so called because it is a lesson by the learning of which man's conduct shall prove a source of blessing to him, are therefore admonitory, and mean as follows: The Eternal bless thee with his unseen and often unappreciated aid: may he preserve thee from those erring tendencies to which men are so prone, and which once indulged, prove so destructive: may he cause that divine light which is the reflection of heavenly purity to shine on thee, and so to illumine thee that thou see the true path in which man should go, and mayest thou proceed in accordance with the road thus placed before thee, so that he can be gracious unto thee: may

he turn his countenance to thee, watching over thee and guarding thee from all ill, and may he give thee that peace of conscience, which arises from a sense of rectitude, and which is the perfection of all happiness !

Thus, in three different ways the portion before us displays providential care for human welfare. But these ways, though so opposite in their direction, are all connected with each other by leading to the future, after which it is our nature so constantly to aspire. The offering of jealousy is designed to promote the future happiness of the domestic circle, and to secure the affection and harmony necessary to the proper training of another generation. The law of the Nazarite renders him a tablet whereon the past engraves indelible characters for the benefit of the future. The blessing of the priests points out the direct road by which man may gain salvation. The first governs the future by giving man a test whereby to detect his own weakness; the second gives him a warning to caution him against himself; the third shows him the source of his real strength to be dependence on God. And so again bow we to the ever-vigilant wisdom which seizes on every phase of life, and renders it available to our virtue and well-being. Again bend we in adoration before the all-watchful mercy which makes our failings subservient to our happiness by showing us thereby how to avoid sin. And ever as we feel ourselves the objects of this wisdom and this mercy, let us pour out our hearts in gratitude to the Divine Parent of mankind, who has created us for his glory and our own regeneration.

בהעלתך :

NUMBERS: CHAPTER VIII.

A YEAR had elapsed since the exodus. The Israelites had learned to become familiar with the sweets of liberty

and with the precious truths which made that liberty useful. Fed by the direct interposition of Providence, and clad by the same mysterious agency, they needed to have no care for worldly concerns. And already across the treeless plain of the wilderness loomed a prospect of the fertile vales and vine-clad hills of Palestine. Already the guiding cloud glided across the empyrean, and its direction was towards the promised land. And a nation journeyed; far and wide stretched its wings, moving to the sound of the silver trumpets; and in its centre, even as a heart which gave the vitality of circulation to the body, was the sacred ark of the covenant; and above, even as reason, which is in the image of God, was the high intelligence that led the whole. It were to be imagined, with such surroundings, that harmony should have dwelt in the soul of that nation; that gratitude should have influenced its every thought, that the silence of the desert should have been broken by its reiterated songs of praise. But, alas! for the frailty of that double nature which constitutes mortality. A year's respite from labour had been a year of enervating sloth, and this had produced its usual result—sensuality. Instead of devoting their thoughts to the contemplation of their newly-acquired spiritual treasures, the Israelites had accepted them as men are too prone to receive other gifts of Heaven, in unthankfulness. As day followed day and brought with it no change; as each morning witnessed the same outpouring to gather the same manna, and as each noon saw the same round of monotonous and comparatively unindustrial employments, the people, incapable of appreciating the blessings of tranquillity, and pining only for that excitement which is the food of intemperate minds, turned longing eyes back to the past, and sighed silently, but no less sinfully, for the stimulants which had varied their lives in Egypt. What though they had toiled till exhausted nature bade them recruit her forces

with needful sustenance ; at least there was abundance of those appetising luxuries which pamper the palate and gratify the senses ; now there was nothing but one constantly repeated fare to satisfy bodies which, unexercised by labour, required but little support, and scarcely even relished that. What though the lash of the taskmaster had driven them like beasts, at least there were corporeal comforts to atone for corporeal pains. What though a savage tyranny, had scattered them over the whole land of Egypt to search for straw ; at least their wanderings had the charm of novelty, and in the ever-changing scenes of nature and of art there was some solace. So reasoned they on whom idleness had so well done its work. And soon their silent reflections found a tongue, and through the camp there resounded the voice of murmuring against the bounty of Heaven. Anxious only for their bodies, the Israelites cried for what they conceived to be bodily pleasures ; forgetful that the body is corruptible, and that all which tends to promote its pleasure, carries to it something of decay.

It might have been enough that Providence should vindicate its majesty by striking the murmurers with some signal mark of its vengeance, but the moral would have been lost ; we might have been unable to trace the connection between cause and effect. Besides, man being a free agent, the Israelites, ever so ready to find fault, might have taken ground for complaint in such a chastisement, as incompatible with the liberty of volition, and as tending to crush the legitimate expression of opinion in the case of a well-founded grievance. It was necessary to show them, first, how mercifully Heaven could bear with their ingratitude, and how miraculously it could supply the most extravagant cravings of lust ; and, secondly, how pernicious becomes even the food of life when indulged in sensually.

When, into a magnificent world, filled with all that

could satisfy his necessities, contribute to his comfort, and promote his pleasures, man was introduced, he was enjoined to use, not to abuse, his means for enjoyment. His own feelings taught him too constantly how inconvenient was any deviation from this law. Disease followed excess so closely that there could be no doubt as to the one being a consequence of the other. And yet, so little does the future weigh in proportion to the present, that men have at all times been found not only willing to accept the pleasure of to-day with the almost certain chance of pain to-morrow, but even passionately determined to rush into voluptuousness that must lead to misery. And so Israel cried for meat, and the Eternal answered their cry with an abundance so extraordinary and unnatural, that even doubt could not refuse to believe in the miracle. And they who had longed for the well-remembered flesh were able to gratify their utmost longing, and still find to spare. But it is a feature of sensuality never to be satiated; it may be prevented, by temporary saturation or prostration, from further absorption, but no sooner are its capabilities for indulgence once more loosened than it again hurries to its wonted gluttony. What better could be expected of the already guilty Israelites, who were not satisfied with the wholesome and agreeable food provided by Heaven? They fastened on their coveted dainties as sloths fasten on their prey, to quit them only when utter exhaustion rendered them incapable of further exertion. Torpor succeeded to the lustful banquet; to torpor again succeeded lust. Can we wonder at the result? With the flesh still between their teeth, while they were still revelling in their unholy banquet, the excesses into which they had rushed produced their result. Corruption grew from the riot in which they had wallowed, and even among the feasters death stalked as an avenger. The shout of the bacchanal turned to the wail of the plague stricken; the orgy of

maddened delight was stayed by the silence of the tomb. And on the desert there arose mound-like monuments to tell the fate of those who lusted. And as the survivors journeyed from the scene of guilt, the eyes of many ran over as they felt themselves torn from the graves of those they had loved, and which now stood sad and stern warnings against the sinfulness of sensuality. Thus ever ; no sooner does man yield to the influence of his body, abandoning the nobler impulses of the mind, than he becomes his own enemy, and he ultimately succumbs to the decay which is engendered by his vicious propensities. Let us quit the sickening sight which imagination conjures before us.

In discussing the character of Moses an attempt was made to justify, through his merit, his choice as a servant by the Eternal. It was shown that he was of all characters the greatest—a self-conquered man. In the portion before us there is ample proof of some of the high qualities which dignified him in that capacity. His complaint to God, when his flock murmur, is at once touching and impressive. The joy with which he submits to share his authority with the seventy elders, shows how little the charms of power had affected him. Thinking not of his own gratification, but of the welfare of those intrusted to his care, his first interest is in them. To him power was only welcome because of the means it afforded for securing the happiness of others. No sooner, therefore, does he find that, to some extent, he has failed, than he invokes the interference of the Eternal, and even prays that he may die rather than that the Israelites come to harm. For, with the modesty of true worth, in the rebellion of the people, he sees not their fault only, but he attributes blame to himself for their backslidings, and tacitly reproaches himself with shortcomings in the execution of his duty as an excuse for their misconduct. When we compare

this conduct with the ordinary conduct of men, who are so tender of themselves, and so heedless of others, who see the mote in the eye of their neighbours, but ignore the beam in their own, we cannot refuse our admiration and respect. But we are impelled to still higher veneration when we behold the tribute which Heaven itself pays to his virtues. "And Moses heard the people weeping, every man at the door of his tent; and the Eternal was exceeding wroth, and it was evil in the eyes of Moses." Even the mercy of Providence is provoked to great anger, while the forbearance of Moses stops at simple displeasure. Divine justice can find no excuse for ingratitude so black; mortal weakness, conscious of its liability to err, can bear with the sin because of the frailty of human nature.

Such was Moses as a public man; as a private individual he was no less admirable. It is certain that he was not blessed in his domestic relations. He was married to a woman rather forced on him by circumstances than selected from affection. She was of another race and another religion, and her sympathies were, therefore, not those of her husband. He was the father of two sons, but how little pride he could find in them may be inferred from the circumstance that, after the record of their birth, he never mentions their existence. The veil of silence is the best cover the faithful historian can hold up, because where there needs to be concealment, there needs to be mystery. As husband and father then, he was not happy. For him, no wife to multiply joys and divide cares; for him, no children to mirror his virtues while he lived, and to represent them when he was dead. He stood by his hearth alone, no congenial spirit to minister to him, and the son of a stranger was to be his successor. Nor was he more fortunate in the secondary ties of blood. Aaron was rather his associate in power than the brother of his love; a weak-headed

man, whose extent of energy was to do the duty laid down for him, and to follow where others led. Miriam, his sister, seemed to be jealous of the superiority of a brother so much her junior, and waited but the opportunity to vent her spleen. It is the privilege of little minds to immerse themselves in trifles, and, where there is no serious fault for them to cavil at, to take advantage of accidental circumstances, and convert them into subjects for ridicule. Flies will defile every object on which they light. Moses was unhappy in his marriage; a generous brother and sister would have sought to solace him, to fill, by additional attention and kindness, the void in his heart. According to the custom of the times he might easily have released himself from his wife by dismissing her when he sent away her father; but he was too honourable to abandon a woman who was the mother of his children. Here, then, was a glorious occasion for fraternal littleness to manifest itself; a brother was in his own person above reproach, but his wife was an alien, and he might be twitted for that. And so "Aaron and Miriam spake against Moses, because of the Cushite woman whom he had taken." Poor spite to vent itself so meanly, even although the honest historian strives to excuse it by saying that there really was ground for the observation, "because he had taken a Cushite woman." One can only pity the malice which was not slander, and admire the heroism proof even against the sting of unpleasant truth.

But, having once begun to speak, Aaron and Miriam, true to the instincts of their class, did not know how to be silent. Wasps betray themselves by their buzzing. And so, from the woman they affected to despise they turned to the man they sought to degrade. "Hath not the Eternal spoken also through us?" exclaimed they, as though honourable association could dignify where per-

sonal merit was absent. "And God heard," and again he permitted Moses to pay a tribute to mortal merit, such as it has seldom deserved. "And the man Moses was very meek, beyond every man on the face of the earth."* Nothing that could be said of him could move him from his determination to overcome his temper; taunts could not awaken an unkind return, sneers could not provoke an angry rejoinder. The Almighty, however, jealous of the honour of his servant, himself took up his cause, and vindicated at once the rights of justice and the wrongs of outraged consanguinity. He administered to the culprits a reproof which crushed them by its stern defence of the brother they had attempted to vilify. He spoke of the faithful one in terms never before nor since applied to man, and such that they rendered all further design to misrepresent him futile. He inflicted on Miriam a punishment so loathsome that she became an object of abhorrence even to the meanest; and, to render her humiliation more severe, she was to owe her pardon to the very man she had designed to contemn. And, if Aaron was not afflicted like his sister, it was doubtless more out of regard to the sacred functions he discharged than from any personal merit of his own. His immunity, however, must have been equally painful if he possessed any sensibility whatsoever; and the fact that he was the first to hasten to Moses to solicit his interference on Miriam's behalf, afforded proof that he felt how wrong he had been, and was ready to show that he had rather imitated than originated the calumny.

* The Hebrew is very emphatic; as applied to Moses, the term man signifies a distinguished man, as though the text would contrast his greatness with his forbearance, his real claims to dignity with his modesty; as applied to other men, the term man means a simple child of earth, as though to point the moral that the humble have not always the greatest humility, and that it frequently happens that demerits and pride increase in conjunction.

Thus again does Holy Writ teach by the force of example. It interests us very little whether one man was slandered or whether another was a slanderer; but it does concern us to know the effects of misconduct; it does concern us to learn the opinion of the Perfect Judge on moral deflections, and to see the way in which he treats them. For so shall we be able to shape our own conduct, avoiding the vices and copying the virtues which history presents to our notice; and so shall we be better able to appreciate the Divine lessons, on which all true goodness is based.

שלח-לך

NUMBERS: CHAPTER XIII.

THERE is a limit even to Divine mercy, because, beyond a certain point, it could only be a toleration of determined perverseness. The Israelites had seen sufficient direct interposition of Providence in human affairs, to satisfy the most doubtful. They had seen the tardy justice done to them by the Egyptians, when in the hurry of departure from slavery their greedy taskmasters gave them in precious things a long arrear of wages. They had seen the pride and panoply of the most potent kingdom on earth vanish like a mist of the morning before the breath of his nostrils; "the depths covered them, they went down into the abyss like a stone." They had seen the warlike bands of Amalek, inured to war, and with their courage sharpened by the hope of plunder, fall like grass under the sickle, before the half-armed and untrained youth led by Joshua. They had seen the wondrous display at Sinai; they had heard the dread voice of the Eternal; their food had been supplied from Heaven; for their sake water had flowed from the flinty rock; they had witnessed the condign punishment of Aaron's froward sons, and more recently they had beheld the direful effects of unrestrained

appetites in the burial of those who lusted. But all had failed to eradicate from their minds the fatal elements of corruption, originally implanted there by slavery. They were now to set the seal on their disobedience, and to render it impossible that they should any longer be deemed worthy of the final destination to which all past mercies and miracles had tended. Already they trod on the confines of that land of promise, which, from the days of Abraham, had been designed as their inheritance. To this goal all their previous career had taught them to look forward, alike as the culmination of Divine favour and the termination of their pilgrimage. Arrived there, they would assume that place among nations which would give them respect in the eyes of their fellow-creatures, and they would have both leisure and opportunity for the performance of those duties which were to prove them the representatives of revelation. There, they would by practice be enabled to show their appreciation of their mission ; there, in the discharge of the functions commanded by religion and morality, they were to reap a rich earthly reward in prosperity and health, and to deserve the richer heavenly recompence of eternal salvation. One might suppose that the memory of what they had experienced, and the hope of what they could do to deserve such benefits, had been sufficient to stimulate them to all that might be desired. Let us see what they did.

Commanded by God, Moses sent twelve men, heads of their respective tribes, to search the land of Canaan, and to report thereon to the people. The intention probably was to enable the spies to judge by inspection of the fertility and beauty of the country which they were about to possess, and to enable the people to receive an impression from brethren in whom they had confidence. Hitherto, they had heard of the land only from God, and he who knew their innermost hearts, read doubtless the lingering feeling that existed there, in favour of learning something

from men who had seen what they described. He had no wish to coerce them ; still less did he desire them to rush into what they considered a mystery, and might therefore regard as suspicious. Having no design to deceive them, the Almighty, in the true spirit of that lofty morality which he had taught them, gave the choice into their own hands, and instead of compelling them, consented to abide by their decision. And so the men went. They passed through the south of Palestine ; they traversed its fertile valleys and saw them teeming with abundance, to which even the abundance of Egypt was as nothing ; they saw its mountains, not bleak and sterile blots on the landscape, but crowned with the vine and the cedar, and literally running down with honey from myriads of wild bees that nested in their fissures. They saw also strong cities "walled up to heaven," and giants compared with whom they seemed as grasshoppers.

At the end of forty days these searchers returned. A tale never loses in the repetition, nor does the moral of it depend so much on the matter as on the manner of its telling. All the twelve agreed in the account which they gave of the beauty and luxury of the places they had visited ; only two founded their other conclusions on the analogy of the past. The ten others told all they had seen, and added the impression it had made on them. They spoke as men might have spoken sent without the warrant of Heaven, or as men who had never been the objects of any declared special Providence. They forgot the defeat of the Amalekites, they forgot the express promise of God that he would drive before them the inhabitants of Canaan ; they were sufficiently willing to enjoy the fertility of the land, but not sufficiently brave to dare the apparent danger of gaining it. With the true pusillanimity of cowards, they magnified difficulties to which fear had already lent fictitious greatness. Joshua and Caleb alone spoke with the courage which confidence

in the Eternal inspired. What to them were giants and walled cities? Had not the might of Egypt, her chariots, her horsemen, her king, and her people, all succumbed before the word of the Lord? Could not the Eternal so direct that the same thing might again happen? Had he not promised victory, and did his word ever fail?

Numbers prevailed; the fear of the ten spread like a contagion: the spirit of the two excited no kindred ardour. The whole congregation were stricken with terror as with madness. Their senses must have been paralyzed, or they never would have gone to such extremities. Their gratitude for Divine mercy could never have been sincere, or they would not so have ignored its very existence. Listen to their insane murmurings: "Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt; would God that we had died in this desert. And wherefore has the Eternal brought us to this land to fall by the sword, that our wives and little ones should be a prey; were it not better for us to return to Egypt?" And they began consulting the propriety of appointing a leader to conduct them back to Egypt, and they threatened with death Joshua and Caleb, who, true to their God, endeavoured to stay them. Was ever human perversity so wilful? Was ever human blindness so monstrous? In a moment, because a nameless terror had seized them, they would have destroyed the work of four centuries, they would have frustrated the design for the eternal regeneration of man. Already, in the days of Abraham, the Almighty had declared his high purpose in the selection of the patriarch. He had determined in precise words the vocation of Judaism; he had announced the means for mankind's becoming blessed through the seed of his faithful servant. Since that time, the whole history of the descendants of Abraham had been one long preparation. Their descent into Egypt, as we have shown, was necessary to their development. Their abode in the desert was

necessary for their instruction in the great principles of religion and virtue, and for giving them time to become accustomed to their newly-acquired liberty. Their entrance into Canaan was no less necessary for the accomplishment of Divine ends. Thereby, vengeance was to be taken on idolators who had shamed the face of nature by their atrocities; proof was to be afforded to mankind that no power is safe which is not based on the sure foundation of right; the world was to be taught that immunity, how long soever enjoyed and abused, is no security for crime; Israel was to assume a place among nations, and was thus to claim a share in the great community of the earth, which through it was to be regenerated. All this was in imminent danger of being prevented. Free-will, though mighty, and, as here shown, hitherto uncontrolled, was not to be permitted to perpetrate a deed which would render permanent the reign of idolatry and ignorance. The terror-stricken cowards were not, with Divine sanction, to plunge into a system antagonistic to the eternal laws of nature, inflicting not only on their guilty selves, but on innocent unborn generations for ever, the wrongs of slavery. In spite of themselves mercy should operate—only they should not receive it. And so, even as the infuriate mob would have hurled death on the two spies who were faithful to God, “the glory of the Eternal appeared in the tabernacle to all the children of Israel.” A panic seized the guilty herd; the ready stones hung in their paralyzed hands. Their cries of revenge sank into whispered murmurs, and ended in the gaping silence of dread.

“And the Eternal spake unto Moses, How long will this people provoke me, and how long will they not believe in me, notwithstanding all the signs which I have done in their midst? I will smite them with pestilence, and dispossess them, and of thee I will make a nation greater and mightier than they.” Fearful sentence on guilt; bright prospect for the faithful servant that his

seed should replace the appointed children of the older patriarchs. But the meek Moses knew nothing selfish ; in his heart the love of duty reigned paramount ; none stood before his flock in the deep affection of his nature. He acknowledged the culpability of the people, but he deprecated the sternness of justice, and supplicated for mercy. Now stood him in good stead the awful vision which passed before him when he was placed on the rock. He recalled to the incensed Deity the attributes of long-suffering and untiring goodness which God had himself proclaimed as his peculiar right. He spoke to the Eternal not of the sin which was to suffer, but of the effect of the pronounced sentence on mankind. The world, he urged, ever so prone to find occasion against what it could not understand, would attribute inability to God, whose majesty would thereby be lessened in the eyes of man. People would reflect not on the crime but on the destruction, and *they* would be regarded as martyrs who otherwise were only criminals. And, although the Almighty needs not to justify his ways to man, he recognised the force of Moses' prayer. Men *might* say that in the case of Israel the privileges of volition had been violated ; for that a nation had been forced against its will from Egypt, and had been dragged into a desert to be put to death. And there would seem the more plausibility in the assertion, because the interference of God had been direct and declared, and because how much soever men might be supposed, under ordinary circumstances, to act under the influence of Providence, here at least there could be no doubt that they had so acted.

“Forgive, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people,” exclaimed Moses, mindful of the eternal declaration from Sinai, that the iniquity of parents is to be visited on children to the third and fourth generations. “And the Eternal said, I have forgiven according to thy word.” Let us not mistake either the intention of the prayer for

pardon, or the pardon itself. It must not be supposed that the terms of the commandment which tells of the visiting of iniquity on the innocent are to be taken in their literality. It would not be consistent with mortal justice, still less with Divine mercy, that children should receive direct punishment for the sins of their parents. The commandment seems to be only a declaration of what we know too well to be the force of example. Man is imitative; what children see before them in the home wherein they are trained, that they will do. Thus it is that evil seeds produce evil fruits. Iniquity, as here understood, is the result of a failing or weakness of human nature, and just as certain physical organisations descend from parent to child, just as certain diseases are hereditary, so weaknesses of character as developed in daily life pass from generation to generation through the mere force of example. The Israelites had shown the weakness of their character in want of confidence and rebellion, oftentimes repeated. What could be expected of their children, if they who had seen the miracles and mercies of God did not believe? Distrust would be perpetuated, future generations would fall away from God, till, at length, the very first object of revelation would be altogether lost. Against such a contingency Moses desired to guard. When, therefore, he prayed for pardon of the iniquity, it was less for the act than for its effects, less for the actors than for those who might copy their deeds. And when the Eternal vouchsafed to forgive, it was precisely the effects, and not the offenders that he pardoned. "I have forgiven according to thy word;" that is, By my omnipotent influence I will so rule the minds of the children of this people, without interfering with their free-will, that the pernicious example now before them shall produce no results; I will so ordain that these children shall lose nothing of their faith by imitating the acts of their parents, but they shall be in all matters of belief as though

this defection had never been set before them. But this pardon for the innocent was by no means extended to the guilty. It had the effect of saving Israel from destruction, and of leaving the inheritance of the promised land to the descendants of the patriarchs, but the rebellious were to suffer as they deserved, and as they themselves had spoken. Their carcases were to fall in the desert; in it they were now destined to wander till all the proud array of men that had just been numbered should have fallen in death; and the children, for whom they had feared that they might fall a prey to the Canaanites, were to go up and successfully inherit the land which they had not dared to invade.

Sad result of disobedience; sad termination to the triumphant career which had led them "with a high hand" from Egypt, which had heard their song of glorification at the Red Sea, which had witnessed the spontaneous submission, "We will do, we will hear," at Sinai. And still more sad, because parents were thereby taught to know that their memory was to fade from the minds of their children as something too vile for contemplation. The joyous longing of fathers, that sons may prove their worth by wiser execution of wise precepts, was no more for these condemned. Between parents and children a wide gulf yawned, and ever as its banks opened more and more widely, the ties of blood grew weaker, till at last they snapped altogether. And the future was entirely lost. For them no more that happy ignorance which knows not when to anticipate death; no more that elasticity of life which even in old age dares to spring forward. Their days were numbered; for them fate had nothing in store but the monotony of wearying decay. Hope, which weaves its bright veil for all, was dead to them. The howling desert was to be their tomb, and even their children were destined to forget them.

Can we wonder that the terrible denunciation should

render the guilty Israelites desperate? Better far any lot than that maddening sameness which knew no change, that isolation and solitude amidst their kindred that left them alone on earth. Now therefore, they would fain atone their error. Now, they would fain dare any danger to annul their dread sentence. But it was too late, as is ever the repentance that comes after detection. Persistence now was as much disobedience as resistance had been before. Their cause had lost the approval of Heaven, it had not even the support of their own consciences; it was a bad, and therefore a losing cause. The high moral courage derived from conscious rectitude was not there to support their undisciplined ranks, against the trained troops opposed to them. And so, they who had refused to advance because of their want of trust, now rushed forward in consequence of it. Before, they had dreaded the enemy; now, they were afraid of themselves and their fate. The result was not doubtful. With the awful sentence of their offended God still ringing in their ears, they hurried to their fate, and thus became the first fulfilment of the denounced doom. In the strength of their manhood they willed to act, and Heaven, ever mindful of man's right over his conduct, did not interfere to stay them. They sought to penetrate into the once promised, but now forbidden land, and on its border they perished violently. The inhabitants whom they regarded as giants, crushed them like grasshoppers, and thus from their own lips came their condemnation, even as the Eternal had spoken.

Truly said the Psalmist, "If the Lord build not the house, vainly the builders of it labour." There is no prosperity without God; there is no success without the Lord. Men strive to attain skill and experience, and they are right, because in the struggle they are developing the faculties which distinguish them from inferior animals. Men plan and perform, invent and perfect, and again they are right, because the intelligence with which they are

gifted, is thereby made available for the general welfare. But skill and experience, plan and performance, invention and perfection, are only productive of permanent and universal good, when they are based on the eternal principles of religion, when they are designed to evince man's dependence on a supreme God, not to manifest his independence of Heaven. Temporary success, partial benefit, may arise from exertions which are selfish and biassed, but the end will show how evanescent and unreal are such unholy victories. "Trust in the Lord, and do what is right," is a sage advice, for it contains the whole secret of happiness. It inculcates love of virtue and justice, and it points out the necessity for belief in Divine aid; the former prompts to honourable deeds, the latter makes them pious; that directs men in their course on earth, and this teaches them to light their path by the illuminating beams of religion.

 קרח

NUMBERS: CHAPTER XVI.

SILENTLY and surely do men, even when they seem to act most independently, carry out the designs of Providence. Silently and surely do circumstances, apparently either fortuitous or of human arrangement, effect ends pre-ordained of the Eternal. The fiat had gone forth against rebellious Israel, even as to-day sentence of death may be recorded against some guilty criminal. But there is a difference; whereas the culprit of to-day, during the period that elapses between his condemnation and his execution, loses his volition, save as to personal action within the limits of his prison, the people condemned by God were still free agents, and the doom denounced against them was to be the result of their own uninfluenced proceedings. For the all-seeing wisdom of Heaven was enabled to foretell, with unerring certainty, the future of

those unfaithful tribes whom a thousand miracles had failed to convert, whom a thousand mercies had failed to render grateful. He had said ; Forty years will ye wander in this wilderness, and in it your carcasses will waste ; we are now to see how human passions and human frailties rushed into fate, as though destiny were unavoidable, because foretold.

The glitter of power dazzles most men ; the solemn grandeur of spiritual power has charms only for the few, but those charms are irresistible. There is something magnetic in that absorbing influence which religious dominion confers ; but it attracts only the kindred metal. Thousands have dared to be traitors for temporal authority ; isolated units have made up the sum of those who have aspired to prophetic rule. And it is wise that it is so. The usurped sovereignty of earthly things is evanescent ; gained by violence, by fraud, or by some lucky accident, it is as easily lost, and when it has passed away and a new power has replaced it, all traces of its existence speedily vanish, and time runs on as though it had never been. What avails it now that Alexander overran Asia, that Attila scourged Europe ? what influence has the usurpation of Richard the Third had upon the history of this country ? Spiritual sovereignty is more lasting ; and its effects, even when the cause has ceased to be, are often visible through ages. Mahomet lives still in his doctrines ; who shall say when the teachings of Mormonism shall fail to lay hold on human destinies ? Beautiful therefore is that peculiar dispensation of Providence, which leads so few to aspire to this influence, so powerful for good or for bad. Powerful for good, only when it is based on those Divine truths which came from Sinai, which unite God to man by the ties of mercy and love, which unite man to man by the bonds of brotherhood and charity. Powerful for bad, when it is based on those pseudo-truths which, professing to be heavenly, are only of earth, which unite one section

of humanity with a so-called divinity, and associate the rest of mankind with perdition, which preach brotherhood and charity in theory, and practise intolerance and tyranny to all without the pale. Of those whose aim has been something like this, Korah stands pre-eminent.

The Eternal had just established, through revelation to Moses, the purest theocracy. He had announced himself as Sovereign of his people, their sole executive and legislative Lord. He had vested certain of his executive functions in a priesthood, but, as has already been shown, these functions were purely of detail, and were as inviolable to the priesthood themselves as to the people on whose behalf they were exercised. The laws of Sinai were to be for all time; in them, and in them only, Israelites were to find happiness here, and salvation hereafter. They were to be preserved in all their integrity, because, one infringement permitted, who should say where the aberration might end? And, up to the period at which the sacred historian has now brought us, they had been so preserved. Rebellion had more than once broken out among the Israelites, they had more than once murmured against certain mercies of Providence, which in their ignorance they had not recognised as mercies; but here crime had stayed. Even on the last and most important occasion of their unfaithfulness they had not aspired to violate the spiritual authority which God had assumed over them, and which Moses and the priests administered in his name. In proof, the man who was found profaning the Sabbath, was executed in obedience to the command of the Eternal; and the Israelites, to awaken their reflections, cheerfully accepted the ordinance of the fringes as a memorial to be ever before their eyes, to remind them of their duties. Korah was to be the first to direct rebellion against the system of religion laid down for Israel; he was to be amongst the first of the thousands of victims whom ambition, selfishness, or

passion, was to claim on the desert plains over which Israel was to wander during its period of purgation.

“And Korah the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, presumed.” He was of that tribe in which God had vested the priestly duties. It might be supposed that as one of the designed ministers of the tabernacle he should be well acquainted with the will of his Divine Master. His acts, therefore, being based on a sort of official sanction, would have an authority and a weight not attached to the acts of a meaner individual. As might be expected, especially among a people so prone to rebel, his example found ready imitators. Dathan, Abiram, On, and two hundred and fifty princes of the congregation rose against Moses and against Aaron, and said: “Ye take too much upon yourselves, for all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Eternal is among them; why then lift ye up yourselves above the assembly of the Eternal?” The idea is evident. The spiritual authority of Moses and Aaron had led to the terrible sentence recently denounced against Israel. That authority therefore was wicked (so reasoned these men); it had prostrated a whole people before the terrors of a definite and dreadful future. It had goaded them, in the madness of their despair, to dare what in the moment of their unfaithfulness they had refused to do—attack the Canaanites, and it had failed adequately to nerve their arms. They had thus fallen an easy prey before their enemies, the while Moses and Aaron and the ark remained in safety. Brooding melancholy sat with pall-like wings over the congregation, darkness covered the present, no hope illumined the future. Here, then, continued Korah and his companions, is an opportunity for us which may never occur again. If we can succeed in convincing these people that the authority from which so much misery has supervened is usurped, if we can induce them to reject that authority, and to follow whither we lead, who shall

set bounds to the influence which we shall thereby secure, especially if through some new doctrine or through some new exponents of Divine functions, we ourselves assume to stand between our followers and Heaven. None knew better than Korah the power of spiritualism over the mass, and the bold manner in which he ventured to act, in the face of the miracles recently performed before the whole congregation, proves that he was one of those desperate men who venture all on the hazard of failure or success.

And again the old repeated cry is raised to excite the lustful Israelites. "Is it a small thing that thou hast brought us up out of a land flowing with milk and honey, to put us to death in this desert; that thou wouldst make thyself altogether a prince over us?" In other words, Having enslaved our bodies, wouldst thou control our souls? Can we wonder that even the meek Moses was very wroth, not so much perhaps at the unmerited reproaches heaped on him, the instrument of God, as at the assumption contained in those reproaches, and which he plainly perceived was making him the scapegoat to cover its intrigues after a new spiritualism? "Turn not to their oblation," said the faithful servant to the Eternal; that is, Disgrace them in the moment of their arrogance, so that none but themselves may be the dupes of their schemes. "I have not taken one ass from them, neither have I done evil to one of them," was his appeal to the congregation, alike to justify himself, and to deter them from listening to the designing words of Korah. But God was at hand to vindicate his own, just as he had been at hand to avenge his servant on those who sought to vilify him. And Moses said, "Hereby shall ye know that the Eternal has sent me to do all these works, that I have not done them of my own mind; if these men die the death of all men, or if they be visited after the visitation of all men, then the Eternal hath not sent me." And

the offended majesty of Heaven, speaking thus through the mouth of its appointed one, launched its bolt against those who had violated their own trust, and had sought to implicate others in their treason. "The earth opened her mouth and swallowed them up, and their houses and all the men of Korah and all their substance; they and all that appertained to them went down alive into the grave, and the earth covered them, and they perished from among the congregation." A miserable end to a miserable attempt to set up human for heavenly spiritualism. The impostors were exposed in the very heart of their weakness; even as they were attempting to exhibit proofs of their mission, they vanished in destruction before the very persons in whose eyes they wished to be aggrandised. And not only they, but all that belonged to them, adults whom they had corrupted by evil communion, children whom they had vitiated by false teaching. For such is spiritual crime, whose object is to influence not only the present but future generations, that nothing short of utter extermination can possibly prevent its spread. Leave only one fibre, and it will strike its pernicious radicles somewhere. No grave arose to mark the accursed spot, no relative remained behind to sustain by mourning the memory of beings doomed to excision. From among the people they had attempted to deceive into further sin, they were violently torn, and not a vestige, save their fate, was left, to tell that they had ever been. "The tombs of those who lusted" might stand out as monuments alike to mark the fate of indulgence, and to point a warning against earthly pleasures, but no monument of Korah was to remain, that others might strive thereon to raise a superstructure for enslaving their fellow-creatures. His crime had not been an act the consequences of which were personal or evanescent; he had sought to alienate a people from its allegiance to God's ordinances, and to lead them to prefer a spiritualism of his

creation to one of Heaven's institution ; he had endeavoured to substitute the darkness of superstition, and the rule of priestcraft, for the light of religion and the dominion of an honourable ministry, and he had thus designed to enslave unborn generations without end. Therefore he was to be annihilated—even the great law of nature which renders matter permanent and self-productive, which ordains that decomposition be the means through which one class or age shall support another class or age—even this seemed to be suspended. Deep down into the bowels of the earth, with no trace to mark the spot ; so deep, that even his decay could scarcely affect humanity or vegetation, to which his released elementary particles could not ascend—deep into an abyss that yawned for his body, but engulfed also his soul, went down the guilty Korah and his associates, and Israel was saved from further corruption.

But the punishment of the guilty was not, of itself, sufficient. It was necessary, if possible, to prevent the recurrence of a like attempt. The murmuring against the report of the spies and the desecration of the Sabbath had led to the institution of the garment of fringes, that there might exist a visible sign to remind the Israelites of duties dependent on impulses of the mind. Providence determined to adopt a similar expedient now, and to establish some tangible proof of the spiritualism he had vested in the family of Aaron. As the fringes were to induce men to “remember all the commands of the Eternal and do them,” so the new token was to bid men bear in mind the nature of the revelation of which the priests were to be the exponents, and to caution them against listening to doctrines which another priesthood might teach for sinister purposes. To carry out this design was performed the miracle of the blossoming rod. A lasting memorial was thus furnished of the choice of God. No man thereafter could assert, as Korah

had asserted, that the Eternal had not selected Aaron and his family as the spiritual leaders of the people, for there, in the tabernacle, was deposited a proof which none could dare to doubt, both on account of its institution and of its wondrous nature. To symbolise the continuous existence of the chosen priesthood and to mark the inanity of any other body of priests, a significant miracle was presented to the world. Each tribe was represented by the rod or staff of its leader; the rod of Aaron represented the tribe of Levi. The rod of Aaron bloomed and brought forth almonds; at the word of the Eternal the dry stick assumed vital powers, just as at the same behest the rock gave forth waters, and the darkness of Sinai gave light and life to morality and religion. The other rods remained in their inertness; a type that those they represented were, in spiritualism, without vitality, just as man without religion would be but as the dead. And so again, in the performance of a miracle, man was left to the exercise of his volition, and was admonished and cautioned instead of being constrained by an uncontrollable authority.

חקת ובלק

NUMBERS: CHAPTER XIX.

NATURE works in a series of harmonies. Throughout the whole extent of the physical word there is a gradation of being so symmetrical and regular that it may be compared to the scale of tones which forms melody. Through successive and scarcely perceptible stages of intelligence, creature rises above creature till we approximate to the divine in man. Through an endless variety of form—from the infinitesimal atom that almost mocks the microscope to the all but immeasurable orbs that traverse the empyrean; through an interminable diversity of existence and motion—from the fleeting ephemeræ

to the eternal soul—from the eccentric comet, now rushing with incredible velocity as it approaches its perihelion, now sluggishly rolling into the invisibility of distance, to the methodical planet that ever pursues its measured course ; all tells of harmony and design. Nor does nature only so work as a whole, her every part operates in like manner. The moral world of humanity is an instance of this. Men are not subject to exceptional laws of progress, but one age is allied to another so closely that it is scarcely possible at all times to mark the lines of separation. And even in one generation the same analogy exists. One individual does not single himself out to our observation as wholly distinct from his fellows, but, even where he most differs, he presents points of association so numerous that we recognise his identity with the mass. That it is so, is good for the future prospects of man ; it is one of those compensating balances which, as in certain machines, preserve the general uniformity. Selfishness is prevented from exercising undue influence. Man is taught that he cannot rise alone, but that all mankind must excel together. The regeneration of society is not to depend upon the peculiar excellence of the few, but upon the universal merits of the many. And thus, in obedience to laws which harmonise responsibility with prescience, man occupies his place among the glories which nature presents as testimonies of the power and wisdom of the Eternal.

Of all the men that have stood out in prominent relief among the thousands of their fellow-creatures, Moses is the most remarkable. If any man may be said to stand alone, it is he. Selected by Providence for the most honourable and onerous task assigned to human being, his every act showed how just had been the selection. Where another might have triumphed in the dignity of his position, he only became more humble in power. Where another might have made his authority subservient to self-

advantage, he only sought the advantage of his flock. When rebellion or infidelity shook the people, he alone remained faithful. When Divine justice would have inflicted punishment on the wicked, would have dealt out reward to the pious, he had sufficient self-control to refuse a recompence which would have elevated him on the ruin of others. Patient under insult, he bore with all the taunts of envy and malice; loving all men as himself, he regretted their fallibility, and ever sought excuse in that for mitigating the severity of offended Heaven. But he was nevertheless human, and we are now at length to find him amenable to the same frailty that had betrayed so many about him. True, we can find abundant excuse for him, even though he sought to find none for himself; true, his fault seems so venial and so natural that we should scarcely recognise it as a fault at all, but for the sentence which it evoked; and yet in his fall we see one of the harmonies of creation, we learn that men cannot entirely isolate themselves.

The forty years appointed by Providence for fulfilling the fate of the murmuring Israelites were dragging their length along, and the guilty people seemed only too anxious to deserve death to wait for the ordinary stroke with which nature closes existence. Now it was one rebellion that brought destruction into the camp, now it was another: and ever as new thousands fell before the avenging hand of the Lord, the survivors learned no experience, but continued headstrong in perverseness. Ever arose the one forbidden cry—Would we were still in Egypt, and, as its echo, came the wail for those stricken before their time. And still Moses was able to command himself, still his great characteristic, forbearance, stood him in good stead.

But he was to undergo an ordeal yet more severe. In the wilderness of Zin a new and more horrible cry went up to Heaven: "Would that we had died when our

brethren died before the Lord." Because "there was no water for the congregation" the ungrateful dared to forget the numerous and long-continued miracles by which their wants had been supplied, they were sacrilegious enough to express a preference for the terrible visitation which had overtaken the wicked. "And the Eternal spake unto Moses, saying: Take the rod and assemble the congregation, thou and Aaron thy brother, and speak to the rock before their eyes, and it shall give forth its waters." And, in obedience to this command, Moses stood with the congregation before the rock. Then, doubtless, there came before his mind their numerous acts of rebellion, and the repeated pardon which he had obtained on their behalf; he saw their continued frowardness, and the untiring mercy of God; he felt perhaps some misgivings as to the zeal which he had displayed in admonishing. Hitherto he had been over zealous in the cause of forgiveness, it was time that he became more stern in the cause of chastisement. Hitherto he had been only a mediator, it was time he became the vindicator of the often-insulted God, whose servant and minister he was. We recollect that he had been of a violent temper, for that through an act of unpremeditated violence which could only have been committed in the heat of passion, he had taken a human life. He had strenuously resolved to conquer this defect, and, as has been shown, he had till now succeeded. But jealousy for the majesty of his Divine Master awakened the long dormant anger. The restraints which he had imposed on his impetuosity were loosened, and again for a moment he suffered himself to be carried away. "Hear now, ye rebels!" is his angry exclamation; and losing the control necessary for his self-respect, he twice struck the rock, to which he had been commanded to speak. The deed was trifling, the loss of caste was fearful. In a moment he fell from the security which command of temper had given him; he

proved that he was no longer capable of upholding with dignity the impartial majesty of law.

And again the Eternal spake: "Because ye did not believe in me, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given to them." Moses, who had been so ready to frame an excuse for others, had none for himself. He who could plead for the most flagrant rebellion, could find no deprecating word for a single hasty movement. He reflected, no doubt, that a leader could only hope to secure the respect of his flock by the constant and unbroken display of that conduct which proved him unshaken by the ordinary emotions of man. He felt that he must either be the exponent of Divine actions or nothing; that to give way to passion, if only for a moment, was to declare himself mentally disqualified for administering justice; that to indulge in vituperation was beneath his position; and, above all, that to display confusion and want of judgment in a crisis that called for calmness and precision, was to declare himself unfitted for meeting any future emergency. But the people were going to a land through the trying career of a war of extermination, in which emergencies must inevitably occur; he, therefore, who had shown so lamentable a deficiency, who, by his undignified conduct as God's representative, had failed to sanctify his divine Master and His power of support—he was not fit to conduct the Israelites under such emergencies; and, acknowledging this, he did not presume to find an excuse for what to himself was unpardonable. True to his long-preserved and only momentarily-forgotten character, he bowed with submission to the decree of Heaven, and thereafter no unavailing regrets rendered difficult the task of resigning himself to the punishment he had merited. And so even in his fall he is admirable. It was nature speaking in her untutored licence that sinned; nature in her trained

knowledge repassed the line of demarcation, and bade us forget her presumption in her contrition. The man who, through eighty long and not happy years, was the faithful exponent of heavenly virtues, and the unflinching advocate of human frailty, may well command our respect that he failed but once, and then only just enough to prove that he was mortal.

Again the people murmured, so that the Eternal sent among them fiery serpents. Again Moses prayed on their behalf, and God pardoned them at his intercession. The sacred record tells us that "Moses made a serpent of copper and put it upon a banner; and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he looked on the serpent of copper, he lived." Let us not misunderstand this miracle, inasmuch that it was a remarkable tribute to the freedom of volition. Want of faith had caused the murmuring of the people and their consequent affliction; only by a full and entire return to faith could they be saved. They, therefore, who had been bitten, and who, judging by the death that had overtaken others also bitten, imagined that their own fate was inevitable, thought it useless to look on an emblem which, in their opinion, could not benefit them. These died in their unbelief. But they who trusted to the mercy of the Eternal, believing that, despite the virus which was carrying death through their veins, nothing was impossible to the great Author of nature, they reaped the reward of their confidence, and the fatal poison became harmless within them. So ever; the bite of the fiery serpent is as the bite of sin; its taint penetrates into the very springs of existence, and pollutes them at their source. Dissolution waits on the traces of the venom, and it comes with a thousand more terrors to those hardened culprits who resign themselves without an effort to its deadly influence. But when, in the full career of guilt, the stricken victim pauses, and looks up with confidence and hope to the other serpent, emblem of repent-

ance and faith, then is the mercy of the All-wise sufficient to neutralise the poison already imbibed, and to produce from it elements of future life and regeneration. And thus again by the impressive force of example, Holy Writ teaches us our duty, pointing out not only the path we should take, but that also which we should avoid.

The war of extermination has begun ; already before the armies of the Lord are falling some of those nations who have polluted the earth with their crimes, and heaven with their abominations. Sihon and Og have paid the penalty of their sins ; they, their children and their people, are smitten until there remains no trace. Surrounding tribes look on with fearful wonder that the warlike bands who have hitherto proved irresistible should have succumbed before mere youths, led by an inexperienced commander. They say, in their ignorance, There must be some incantation in this, some supernatural influence, which paralyzes the arm of the brave, and inspires boys with the vigour of men. They do not see that it is the power of a good cause battling against the desperation of vice ; they judge according to the superstitious mummery in which idolatry has plunged them. Among those who see with dread the victorious progress of the Israelites is Balak, King of Moab. He becomes convinced that prowess alone can avail him nothing, and he resolves to meet incantation with incantation. Balaam becomes a ready instrument for promoting the views of Balak.

The character of this Balaam is a study. He is one of that class of men who know what is right and do what is wrong ; who believe in Heaven and act as of earth ; who profess piety and practise wickedness ; who abuse the power of volition by becoming slaves to their own selfishness. Than Balaam no one knows better how futile is any attempt to imprecate those whom the Eternal blesses. He says so, and yet, with the peculiar contradiction of his nature, he asks of God if he may comply with the request

of Balak. Refused ; upon a second application, he again solicits permission of God, for the glitter of tempting bribes is before him, and this time he is allowed to depart with the messengers sent to bring him to Balak. But the serpent is deprived of his fangs and becomes innocuous : he can only go to speak the word which the Eternal shall put into his mouth. Accordingly, the machinations of Balak and the pertinacity of Balaam are made to recoil on themselves. The former is made to listen, not to the idolatrous jargon of incantation, but to the prophetic poetry of Divine inspiration ; the latter, ever active with renewed sacrifices, and ever watchful to discover some weak point in Israel through which even God may permit him to launch a malignant dart, is made to see nothing but perfection and godliness, and the curses which would have grown in his heart for the sake of obliging his patron, turn to blessings on his lips, to his own shame and discomfiture. And thus again do we learn the wisdom of Providence, who uses the wicked as tools for effecting his great purposes. We see how vain are the efforts of weak man to counteract the designs of God, even though free-will be permitted the most unlimited sway, and we bow to the truth that there is no blessing save of God, no curse save of the Lord.

פִּנְחָס

NUMBERS: CHAPTER XXV, VERSE 10.

ISRAEL, dwelling in the security of his own law, had been able to defy the malice of Balak and the cunning of Balaam, active to detect a weak point. Vainly the trembling king and his ready minister of evil sought to influence the destiny of God's chosen people. On which side soever they cast their eyes, they beheld the harmony of religious security, the beauty of faith that knew no stain. On the corrupt lips of the seer curses grew to

blessings, even as from the mouldering remains of death grow the brightest things of life, and still Moab sighed to find himself thwarted in his purpose, and foiled by his own instrument. But what will not determination effect? Israel, safe from without, might be attacked from within. What had been denied to hate might be granted to desire. Israel, on his guard against hostile force, might succumb before the wiles of treachery, especially if these were masked in beauty's most attractive form. The strength of man had failed, the weakness of woman might prevail. And the dark-eyed daughters of Moab, tutored by their king, spread their blandishments for the survivors of those who had lusted in the desert. What availed the modest charms of the daughters of Israel against the meretricious seductions of all-absorbing passion. In that sunny land, wherein man's blood rushes through his veins like liquid fire, who, not restrained by the sternest virtue, can resist sin in its brightest garb? The Israelites, who had already proved themselves so prone to yield to bodily desires, were little able to withstand the tempting poison. As snow melts before the beams of the day-star, their virtue melted before the glowing ardour of their enslavers. The boundaries of right once passed, crime ran riot through the camp. Intoxicated, the men of Israel flew from passion to passion, and still the daughters of Moab ministered to their wild orgies. Intoxication rose into delirium, and still the daughters of Moab goaded their victims to new madness. Soon the tempters and the tempted were mingled in one horrible tide of ill. Men forgot their shame as women had forgotten their modesty; what profane history tells of an idolatrous saturnalia, the sacred page records of Israel and Moab. Who thought of consequences in that unhallowed orgy? What cared the infatuated Israelites that death 'had already claimed "those who had lusted," even in the midst of their enjoyment; what heeded they the ties of religion, their duty to

their God! In every bright-eyed beauty they saw a new divinity, at whose shrine they were ready to sacrifice even their souls. The whole congregation must have become vitiated, for sin unutterable stalked in brazen hardihood before them, and guilt refused to hold up even a veil to hide its haggard front. But it was not the will of Heaven that the innocent youth who were to go up to possess Canaan should be polluted by those who were already condemned for past sins. With the flesh between their teeth the lustful had died at Kibroth-Hattarvah; in the height of their lascivious joys the lustful died when they prostrated themselves before Baal-peor. Guilt and destruction culminated together, when "Phineas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, the priest," stood forward as the champion of God, as the avenger of outraged decency, and thus "turned away wrath from the children of Israel."

And on the face of the desert arose new monuments to tell of mortal sinfulness and mortal punishment; twenty-four thousand victims fell in their shame, to warn by their fate succeeding generations, and one individual became signalized for ever as the zealous supporter of Divine authority. To Phineas, in reward for his pious interference on behalf of Heaven, was decreed a covenant of peace, even a covenant of priesthood for ever; and amidst all the ruins of ages, the wrecks of time, that covenant remains permanent and indestructible. For even as Israel exists among nations, the only link of the mighty past with the unfathomable future; so, in Israel, while all traces of descent, all distinctions of tribe, are utterly lost, the tribe of Levi still remains separate, and in that tribe the family of Phineas is still existent, as in the days of Baal-peor. Priests of Israel may have forgotten the example set them by the founder of their race, but they could not deprive themselves of their descent, and therefore of their participation, through Phineas, in the eternal rights of the priesthood. They may have become exiles from their

land, they may have been dissociated from the temple's service ; but their indissoluble connection with the sacerdotal functions has never been alienated, and when it shall please Providence that human volition render the Holy Land once more the home of Judaism, under their spiritual guidance shall incense once more smoke on the altars, shall offerings once more ascend as "a sweet savour in honour of the Eternal."

As though, with the sad exhibition just recorded, the cup of Israel's iniquity were full, and the penalty to be exacted for the rebellion at the report of the spies were paid, again the sum of the people is taken. Of the proud array that had passed beneath the hands of the tellers in the wilderness of Sinai, not one was now counted, save only Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh. The remarkable proof afforded by the myriads of Sinai, that even slavery fails before the unseen power of the Eternal, had been swept away by the very might by which it had been established. As, in the first instance, human free-agency had been permitted full play, and had still been subservient to Divine will, so here, also, the decree of Heaven had been executed by human means. The rebels, doomed to die within the forty years of wandering, perished through their own misconduct, uncoerced and responsible. And again a great natural law is suspended through the invisible influence of the Great Creator. Again, unprecedented and unaccountable increase proves that God is all potent to effect his designs, even where man appears most uncontrolled. More than six hundred thousand males, above twenty years of age, are numbered in the plains of Moab, and to these Moses is told that the Promised Land is to be apportioned. His last duty ; for not he shall divide that glorious inheritance, not he shall lead the congregation which he has done so much to qualify.

"And the Eternal said unto Moses : Go up into this

mount, Abarim, and see the land which I have given unto the children of Israel. And when thou hast seen it, thou also shalt be gathered unto thy peoples, as Aaron thy brother was gathered."

The dread sentence pronounced against the faithful servant in the wilderness of Zin, was now to be accomplished, and the pious servant, in his death as in his life, was to prove himself worthy of the Divine selection. At the age of one hundred and twenty, but with vigour undiminished, and faculties unimpaired, death, announced and definitely fixed, loomed before him. But the terrors of the grave were nothing to him ; through its portals he was able to look with unflinching gaze, and there his mind beheld only a closer union between his spirit and its Maker. He needed not to repent, for his whole after life, with the one exception about to be expiated, had been one long repentance, and his death was the crowning act of his atonement. Cowards might tremble before the uncertain and dark future, sinners might blench before the prospect of meeting an incensed though merciful judge ; but Moses was not of these ; faithfully he had walked before his God in life, trustfully he could meet him in immortality. His last thoughts, therefore, were not for himself ; his past had created his future. He still had first in his mind the people whom he had so carefully guarded, so honestly guided ; and no sooner did the Lord communicate to him his approaching dissolution than his first words were :—

" Let the Eternal, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation, who may go out before them and who may come in before them, who may lead them out and who may bring them in ; that the congregation of the Eternal be not as a flock without a shepherd."

What father, parting from a beloved son, ever breathed more fervent prayer for the welfare of his child ; what mother, about to be severed from a cherished daughter, ever

invoked Divine aid with more solemn earnestness! He, who so long had watched the people, who had gloried in their glory, and mourned their waywardness; who had seen the perversity of the generation that had left Egypt, and who feared lest their successors might tread in their footsteps; who knew the proneness of the multitude to follow the impulse of a commanding mind, and who dreaded most of all that those whom he had led to God might, without proper counsel, be turned aside to idolatry; who foresaw the difficulties attendant on the conquest and settlement of a new land, multiplied as these would be by the transition from the untrammelled life in the desert to the organized restraints of civilization, and who felt the necessity for some administrative genius to direct a naturally wayward nation; he, whose experience gave just cause for apprehension, might well ask such aid from Heaven as he felt could not come of earth.

“And the Eternal said to Moses: Take thou Joshua, the son of Nuu, a man in whom is spirit, and lay thine hand upon him; and thou shalt put some of thine honour upon him, that all the congregation of Israel may be obedient.”

The prayer of the departing guardian was answered, in the manner, too, which he himself most desired. A man, in whom the necessary spirit already existed, was appointed to succeed him; and that nothing might be wanting to complete his qualification, by Divine permission some of the honour of the great lawgiver passed to him. And so his mission was accomplished; and without a murmur, without one expression of regret, the most distinguished of men sees himself deposed, and thus adds dignity to his character by his beautiful resignation to the will of God. How differently have other men acted! It is recorded of one that he passed with something like pride from the purple to the plough, just as he had left the plough for the purple with something of

deprecation ; but perhaps there was a little shame in both feelings as the memory of his son's unworthiness passed through his mind. One, after wading through oceans of blood, and trampling over thousands of human victims to secure power, voluntarily laid down his dearly bought gaud, and submitted at length to the laws he had so often violated ; but perhaps satiety had palled his appetite, and certainly we look on the moderation as the rebound of past excess. One is said to have broken his proud heart on hearing the bell that announced the reign of his successor. One laid down the reins of a splendid government, and thereby destroyed the empire which it had cost him so much to raise ; for he deprived it of the only mind capable of guiding it, and by dividing it among his children he sowed the seeds of its dismemberment. One resigned a proud inheritance and retired into the silence of the cloister ; but we form our own conclusions as to the weakness that prompted the deed, when we know that superstition induced him to perform his own funeral, and so preyed on a mind already prostrate as to lead him to a premature grave. But our lawgiver leaves no qualifying reservation in the crowning act of his career ; he accepted power at the express wish of the Eternal, and wielded it as his representative. His own personality never appeared in the exercise of his duty ; past all passion, he bore his exposure on the pedestal on which Providence had placed him with a purity that defied all suspicion, with a blamelessness that envy could not accuse. If we think of him at all in the recital of what he did, we do so with wonder that he should have been only a mortal and still have been so nearly perfect, that he should have been only human, and, with so many opportunities, should have availed himself so little of them. Truly does he stand alone in the history of the world ; the only man to whom the Eternal deigned to speak face to

face, he seems to have been the only one worthy so distinguished a privilege ; God bears testimony to his dignity when he calls him the most humble of men, and men bear testimony to his worth by the fidelity with which they preserve his dispensation.

Ever anxious for the happiness of mankind, Providence designed a system of religious observances well calculated to inspire a constant recollection of his mercies. These observances appeal to our reason by their evident subservience to wise designs for our welfare ; they appeal to our gratitude by their association with personal benefits unattainable but through Divine aid ; and, in order more effectually to guide us, they appeal also to our senses by the external appliances with which they are invested. As has already been shown, sacrifice formed a prominent feature in these observances, and we cannot wonder, therefore, that, ere he closes his career, Moses should again be commanded to direct attention to these visible signs of the connection between God and man. The particularisation in the portion before us completes the chain of precautions taken by the All-merciful for our preservation. We find them in every condition of our lives. The Abrahamic covenant distinguishes our persons, and affords to the eyes, and through them, to the memory, a constant sign of the original cause of our selection as the depositories of the truths through which the earth is to be blessed. Our garments of fringes and our phylacteries ; our peculiarities of food and of building ; the "omer" at the Passover, and the "goodly fruit" at the Tabernacles ; are so many mementos continually reminding us of our vocation, and bringing our domestic existence within the pale of our spiritual duties. The sacrifices were the types for public worship ; they were the tangible tokens by which Israelites saw their religious observances to be of Heavenly import, and the constancy with which they

were to be offered rendered them also unailing for the purpose of awakening memory. And thus the cycle of "signs" was completed: person, habit, dwelling, food, domestic life, and public worship, all contained means for recalling man to a knowledge of his duty by bidding him "remember all the commands of God and do them."

 מסורת ומסעי

NUMBERS, CHAPTER XXX.

THE time appointed for the pilgrimage in the desert is passing rapidly on, even as a shadow flits over the sun-dial; and sin is leaving its sad traces in the graves of those who perish by the way. We have done, at length, with murmurs and rebellions; our hearts bleed no more for the violent and premature fate of crime; but surely, though silently, the destroyer is doing his work, and the tombs of two millions of human beings tell his solemn progress. Out of a comparatively small community, fifty thousand are carried away yearly, till it may be said of Israel as of Egypt: "There is not a house in which there is not one dead." Through the bosom of families the dart passes, and none can arrest its course. Over the hearth of happy homes the angel of death spreads his dark wings, and young and old fall beneath the shadow. But chief the old; vainly for them have been wrought the miracles of Egypt and of the Red Sea; vainly for them have been thundered the truths of Sinai; vainly has Heaven given manna, and earth, water; vainly has Amalek been discomfited and Moab conquered; vainly has the visible presence of the Deity shone in the Tabernacle, and the guiding cloud wandered across the firmament; vainly have the chains of slavery been stricken from body and mind; vainly have the sweets of liberty and the blessings of knowledge been rendered self-producing and permanent; their

carcasses feed the desolation of the desert, and their children are torn unrepining from graves that they cannot hold sacred.

Sad fate, when men are bound to disregard the last resting-places of their fathers and their own birth-places ; when those no longer bring the past vividly before the future, and these no more connect it with the present ; when earth, like the ocean, bears no impress on its changing surface, nor offers one projecting feature to arrest the gaze. Sad fate, when the landmarks which affection raises to guide memory, are swept away in a torrent of shame ; when the recollections of the dead, so hallowed by virtue, lose themselves in a cloud that hides their disgrace. Blessed are they who can look back, and thereby learn how they should go forward. Blessed are they whose parentage knows no higher duty than to hand down what it received ; who can point to the deeds of their fathers as the basis on which they have founded their own honour for their children. Theirs is the true immortality, which outlives all the more glittering show of lighter fame. As the earth absorbs heat from the sun and radiates it on all created things, so virtue receives vitality from ancestors, and transmits it to descendants. Miserable they who dare not contemplate the past ; to whom the memory of parents, that blesses others, is a curse ; who labour, through long years of sorrow and heart-burning, to raise by their reputation a wall to shield their children from the blight which seared them, and rest to find it rotten at its foundation. Miserable they who, coming as it were from a lazar-house of sin, are kept in quarantine, lest the plague spot which burns them infect also their fellows.

Not vainly, then, does the sacred page record the journeyings of those who had left Egypt "with a high hand," for these are the lessons the narrative teaches. Life has no honour but that which man gives it. To start in the race of existence from a happy goal is not

always to ensure a successful termination. To win, man must labour, less to surpass others than to excel himself. It is pride that induces the strong to rely on what they have done as an excuse for not further exerting themselves ; it is worse than pride which relies on the past mercies of heaven, and does nothing to deserve further favour. Often, the weakness which we affect to despise, and therefore help to corrupt, rises in our despite, and becomes great, notwithstanding our pernicious teaching. Still more often, parents who devote all their energies to create and preserve worldly wealth, that their children may have a rich inheritance, are careless of the best legacy they can bequeath, an honest name deserved by honest conduct. And still more often, they who contrive to maintain a fair reputation before the world, and who mouth wise precepts and wiser commandments, systematically ignore in act what they advocate in theory, and, forgetful that constant example far outweighs occasional preaching, leave their children in full tilt for hypocrisy and sin. They who lose sight of these truths may have entered on their career "with a high hand ;" but, like the Israelites of old, they may leave their carcasses unmourned in the wilderness, nothing but the miraculous interposition of Providence preventing their corruptive practices from contaminating their children.

Moab and Midian had sought by the allurements of vice to deprive Israel of that purity which was its best support. Balak, wise in the knowledge that men yield rather to pleasure than to force, decoyed those whom he could not drive. Balaam, his ready counsellor and willing tool, to whose advice he owed the plan which had made Israel succumb at Baal-peor, abode among the Midianites, and was to pay the penalty attached to evil association and evil intentions. The Eternal, mindful of the future regeneration of mankind, which he was entrusting to the Israelites, knew full well that to ensure their fidelity it

was necessary to remove temptation. Once before, when the original revelation to our first parents had all but disappeared from the earth, and when the tyranny of crime seemed to threaten the permanent extinction of the great aim of creation—human happiness; the Almighty had deemed it more merciful at once to destroy what he had formed, and to give another revelation, than to permit unborn millions to plunge more and more deeply into the abyss of perdition. Better that the smaller number perish to save the larger, just as it is better that a limb be lost so that the body be saved. But when the liberated Noah, destined to be the second Adam, propitiated God by his grateful sacrifice, mercy swore never again to annihilate as it had done. And yet the inhabitants whom Israel was to displace in and about Canaan were, to the full, as wicked as those who had deserved the flood. Already it had been found just by Heaven to visit the “cities of the plain” with a fate which, by its fearful nature, should have roused men to a sense of what crime might expect. The Dead Sea lay a terrible warning to surrounding peoples, and yet no reformation took place, till at length “the cup of the Amorite was full.” A third and crowning revelation had become necessary; one destined to be final, and to possess within itself all that was needed for the Eternal salvation of man. This had been accomplished at Sinai, and its dispensation was entrusted to the children of the patriarchs, prepared by a long series of miracles for their glorious charge. These depositories were now on their road to the fulfilment of their task. But to render that task accomplishable, it was necessary, 1st, that the Israelites should hold a status among nations; 2ndly, that they should be guarded against those debasing influences which had already rendered two revelations ineffectual. Both conditions were fulfilled by the same means. The Canaanites, untaught by the admonishing waters of the Dead Sea, were to meet

the fate their crimes had deserved ; by their extinction they were to purge earth of intolerable abominations, and to give place for the representatives of Divine truth. On Midian, on Bashan, on Gilead, and the neighbouring places, fell the first weight of the war of extermination ; nor must we wonder at the severities enjoined against the conquered when we reflect on what was at stake, and on the fatal consequences denounced (and, alas, proved but too correct by subsequent events) against sparing any of the condemned criminals. What might have been the condition of Israel and of the world had the former faithfully observed the counsels of Moses, and utterly destroyed every vestige of those whom they were to dispossess, it were impossible to say. It is not impossible to conjecture that, removed from the contagion of evil contact, from the corruption of evil example, from the influence of evil association, Israel might have remained attached to the law of God, and might have reaped the rich reward promised in earthly greatness and prosperity, and in the respect and admiration of the rest of mankind. Had this been, perhaps religion, in its most abstract sense, would at this day have meant Judaism, and all that intolerance, that bigotry, and that cruelty which have since desecrated sectarianism, would have been spared to the world. That it has not been, is the tribute which Providence pays to volition when it recommends but does not coerce, when it points out the effects of good and of bad, and leaves man to decide on the course he shall adopt.

And so Midian paid the penalty of his misdeeds, and among those who fell was Balaam. When we recollect the pains which this man had taken to find some imperfection in the Israelites, and, failing that, to injure them by his pernicious advice, we recognise the hand of Providence mysteriously working through the means of human free agency, and we bow to this signal example of retributive justice. Twenty-four thousand Israelites had perished

miserably in their sins, enticed by the cunning of this one man, and his death seems but a small return for so much misfortune ; but it must be borne in mind that the responsibility of every man rests with himself, and, therefore, that those who lusted at Baal-peor must be regarded not by their numbers but by their individual acts. Man is not an inert mass of fluid, which a single drop may permeate and colour, insinuating its particles throughout every portion without resistance ; he is a sentient being, gifted with reason to control, and with judgment to guide. He knows by experience that certain causes will produce certain results, and if he blindly permits imitativeness to rule in the place of intellect, he has only himself to blame for the consequences. Just, therefore, as the single act of Phineas, which was the means of arresting the plague, because its righteous boldness awoke the sensual Israelites from their lethargy, and roused in them the dormant spirit of repentance, is to be judged on its own merits ; so the death of Balaam atoned for his misconduct, inasmuch that, although he had originated the design for enslaving the passions of his victims, they had but eagerly helped to carry that design into execution. The self-love which sways men is but too apt to find excuses for backsliding ; any thing is blamed rather than want of principle ; but were men to look at themselves honestly, they would be compelled to confess that they have always sinned voluntarily, and that, even where temptation and opportunity have lured them on, it has ever been in a course to which want of self-control had predisposed them. If there be one characteristic which entitles Moses to our respect, it is that he always did consider himself with as little prejudice as he would have judged another ; he states his conduct in all its reality, he does not attempt either to palliate or to conceal, and the lessons which he thereby inculcates are as useful for our worldly guidance as his counsels in religious concerns were beneficial for our spiritual welfare.

Another tribute is paid by Heaven to volition. Providence had originally destined the land of Canaan, between the Great Sea and the Jordan, the Lebanon and the desert, as the inheritance of Israel. To effect this purpose Israel was now on the eastern edge of the Jordan. On the road thither several conquests had been effected ; and now, at their own intercession, two tribes and a half are permitted to hold territories not included by Providence in the Promised Land ; what stronger proof can we have that man is lord of his own career, and that to say that he must inevitably accomplish his destiny, is to say no more than that the prescience of the Eternal enables him unerringly to determine what that destiny will be, but further that he does not interfere. The real inevitable is that to which man wilfully directs himself. In the capacity of a benevolent ruler, the Almighty deigns to advise, to admonish, to exhort ; he never pretends to command. He has himself pronounced, in emphatic words, the terms by which he assumes to hold authority over human beings :—

“ And thou shalt love the Eternal thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.”

The rule of love is based on the gratitude and the voluntary desire for obedience of the governed, not on their fears, or their slavish, because compulsory, compliance. This is the tenure by which mercy condescends to wield what might be illimitable power, and in this respect, therefore, the laws of man are far more coercive than the laws of God. The laws of man care for their own observance ; they visit with punishment any infraction, and while they cannot compel obedience beforehand, except by the terror which their severity may inspire, they to some extent control even volition after crime by depriving malefactors of liberty, and sometimes of life. The laws of God are altogether different. They are based on a knowledge of those great principles upon which the

universe is established, and which are only enunciated to man through the results which they produce. They never interfere directly with man's free agency or responsibility ; but they point out the consequences to which his misconduct will lead, and they leave him to avoid or to incur those consequences at his pleasure. While life remains, they act as finger-posts that point in the direction of virtue, religion, and happiness ; the wayfarer may pursue the roads they indicate, or he may travel by another pathway to the common goal of existence. And then another phase of difference presents itself. The operation of human laws ceases with death. The operation of divine laws in reality commences only after death. He who obstinately resists the ordinances of God, and thereby brings himself into difficulties or dangers, has no one but himself to blame for the shame or trouble in which he is involved. But when he has passed from the world wherein he has abused his free-will, then the laws of God will compel his soul to answer for its perverseness, and then he will receive the recompence due to his choice of evil instead of good. And this is another of the great compensations of life. There are many who, despite every exertion in a just career, are constantly plunged in misfortune ; they are the victims of circumstances beyond their control, of villainy they cannot, till too late, detect, of errors of judgment rather than of intention. Such individuals struggle in vain against what seems an adverse fate, but which is really some innate deficiency of their own. They have been badly educated, and therefore cannot discriminate with sufficient nicety ; they have grown up with bad examples so constantly before them, that, despite a sense of right, they have not the moral firmness to shake-off inveterate habits ; they have but loose ideas of religion and of its moral application to the social laws which regulate industry, which determine the relations between master and servant, between employer

and employed, and which affect all the combinations into which man, as a member of the great human family, enters. They do well as far as their capacity admits, but their standard falls short of what the inherent requirements of human progress demand, and they suffer what is commonly termed misfortune, but which is the result of a deviation from the eternal principles of right impressed on creation. Trust in the infinite mercy of the Eternal bids us hope, that such as so suffer in this world will not be made responsible hereafter for conduct, the cause of which was not in them. And as, more or less, all men are fallible, as even those who are best educated, best trained, best acquainted with religion and morality, still err from want of that perfection of knowledge which is only Divine, so the same trust in infinite mercy is that on which all men must rely for immunity from those Divine laws which have been ignorantly trespassed and not perversely outraged.

דברים

DEUTERONOMY: CHAPTER I.

IN one of the grandest works that mortal mind has created, there stands the record : " Si monumentum quæris, circumspecte." With how much more justice such words might be prefixed to the book of Deuteronomy it were needless to prove. Of all the acts which history holds up for our imitation or avoidance, there is not one that will bear comparison with the final act of our great lawgiver. Other careers have been triumphant; men have proceeded from victory to victory, and their greatness has culminated with their deaths, but their glory vanishes before the sublime lustre that surrounds the crowning deeds of Moses, even as the stars "pale their ineffectual fires" before the beams of the sun. Say, we accept as true the myth known as the legislation of Lycurgus; what is the depraved heroism which sought a voluntary death to the intellectual supremacy that made the solemnity of a dying claim the means of rivetting obedience by exhortation, and faith by example? What are the last moments of Addison to those of Moses? If the former might bid people, "See how a Christian could die," may we not say, "See how a Jew went to his fate?" Doomed to death for a fault which is altogether eclipsed by his merits, the faithful servant bows with a resignation which has never been paralleled. Knowing to a moment the period of his existence, he parcels out the time which remains to him with a care and a precision which speak rather of the divine than of the human. Devoted to the performance of a mission, he permits no thoughts of self to interfere in the discharge of his duty; even where such thoughts might have been excused, he astonishes us by the fidelity with which he banishes every recollection but that he has a task to fulfil for others' benefit, till

we are at a loss whether to venerate more his personal merit or the sanctity of the cause he represents. When a vocation dignifies a man, he may be unworthy; when a man dignifies his vocation, he must be admirable.

In order to understand the necessity for the minuteness with which Moses repeats the ordinances of God, we must bear in mind the fact, that the major part of the precepts had been given to that generation which had just been swept away in the desert, and that, except by the teaching of their parents, the present generation knew nothing of those precepts. Nor is it to be expected that the impression made by such teaching, in the few cases in which it had been given, could have been at all deep, when it is recollected that the teachers had perished because they had not valued the revelation entrusted to them, because, in short, their practice had been the very converse of their theory. To be successful, a teacher must himself carry out the lessons he inculcates on others. They who now stood round Moses in the plains of Moab, had been especially exempted by the Eternal from the evil effects of bad example. If God did not interfere with their volition so far as to induce utter forgetfulness of the past, he at least so ruled their free-will that they were little anxious to remember parents who had transmitted to them nothing but the disgrace of their rebellion, and the horror of their punishment. There was danger, however, that oblivion of the sinners might induce ignorance of the cause for whose violation they had suffered. Hence, either a new dispensation was necessary, or such a repetition of the old dispensation as might assume all the authority of the original. But the original, invested as it was with the wonders of Egypt and the terrors of Sinai, had failed of its effect; even the communication of the will of Heaven by the very mouth of the Eternal had not been able to lead man on the road to virtue and religion. The inspired legislator determined, therefore,

to try how far he might prevail where God had not succeeded. Nor was the idea presumptuous when we reflect that Providence did no more than recommend, and that Moses could do as much ; in both cases man's volition being altogether uncontrolled. Moreover, in favour of the attempt of Moses there were many circumstances which did not obtain in favour of God.

Moses was himself a living and visible testimony to the truths which he desired to inculcate. His character, his high integrity, his undeviating honesty, his entire self-abnegation, his unexampled self-control, were so many proofs of the value of his dispensation. He was himself a practical example of what man might become by pursuing the path indicated in his teachings. The Eternal, although more pure, more entitled to gratitude and obedience, was still invisible, and, save to the few, unintelligible. Many who would not scruple to desecrate their communion with God by unseemly behaviour and irreverent manners, would not dare comport themselves with disrespect before an earthly superior. God is far off ; his punishments are not always immediate, nor are they always to be connected with the acts which evoke them ; he is merciful and long-suffering, and, when he strikes, men are prone rather to number their visitations among the ordinary chances of humanity, than to count them as the result of their own deserts. Moses was aware of all this, and he was no less aware that even the very essence of his dispensation—the ten commandments—had fallen on unheeding ears. He had seen the first commandment violated in every rebellious murmur of the people, from Marah to Baal-peor. The second had been forgotten in the worship of the golden calf, the third by the man who blasphemed. The fourth had not prevented some from seeking manna and one from gathering sticks. How often the other commandments had been infringed, we may infer from the disregard paid to these. What, there-

fore, could be more natural in the pastor, who had always been so anxious for the well-doing of his flock, whose greatest pain in parting from them was lest an inefficient leader should supply his place, than that he should avail himself of the warm feelings always excited by a farewell, to appeal once more for a faith hitherto unattained ?

In the history of the world how often are we told that a death-bed pleading has awakened emotions to which other appeals have in vain sought to give birth. Moses was now, as it were, on his death-bed, and his exit from life was invested with a mysterious awe well calculated to impress and inspire. Other men gradually fade away ; one by one their powers of life give way, their fountains of existence dry up ; they are seen sinking to their rest so gently and so easily, that even sadness finds a palliative in the satisfaction derived from the belief, that exhausted nature is better so extinguished than languishing through protracted sufferings. Moses was still full of the vigour of manhood ; the fires of intellect were as vivid as when first he undertook his great charge ; he stood before the Israelites without one symptom of decay, without one token by which the approach of death might be detected ; and yet he and they knew that the seal of death was as irrevocably set on him as if he were fading away through disease and old age. And how calmly, how unrepiningly he bore his fate ! Worn out by sickness, men hail death as a release, but he awaited it as the atoning act of his one fault, and was as serene as though his passage from life were only another entrance into the Holy of Holies. Even grief could find no consolation in extraneous circumstances ; there was nothing but death in its most terrible form, and yet terror was altogether absent ; there was no longer any hope of life, and yet hope never beamed more brightly. And so, rapt attention took the place of mourning ; the ears of his auditors, and not their eyes, were the gates through which he sought to

reach their hearts ; and the fervid eloquence of his words, the impassioned language in which he repeats the ordinances, the warnings and the cautions of God, the height to which his invocations rise as he approaches the close of his address, are proofs that he carries his audience with him, and that in proportion as they are greedy to listen, he is zealous to teach.

The Deuteronomy, then, was no needless task ; it was undertaken as a necessary and wise adaptation of the respect engendered by leave-taking, with a view to the conversion of regard for the teacher into love for what he taught ; of affection for the agent into consideration for the object. It was a step rendered all but imperative by the fact, that the change of generation had been effected in a way to render the past of little value as a means for guiding the future, and Moses thus stood in the place of a parent to all those assembled around him on the plains of Moab. From him they were to learn those lessons which their rebellious fathers had failed to inculcate ; to him his own mission was to owe its perpetuity. His dispensation had hitherto produced few results of which he could be proud ; dying, he was to make a final effort to ensure what, living, it had been denied him to see.

Now it was that the erudition of his youth, gathered from the lore of Egypt, stood him in good stead. He set about his task with a degree of skill that showed that he was versed in the art of instruction, and that he could as ably discharge the duties of a teacher as he had faithfully fulfilled the duties of a medium between God and man. Hitherto he had been called on to convey divine truths to his fellow-creatures, and all that was required of him was fidelity and industry. Now he was to systematize and argue ; not only was he to convey truths, but he was to impress them by force of language ; he was to deduce consequences from them by appealing to the perceptions of his hearers. He did, therefore, what all wise teachers

would do ; he stated his facts, and his reasoning grew out naturally from those facts. First, he dwelt on the rebellion of the past generation, on the occasion of the sending of the spies, because this it was which rendered him the speaker and them the listeners. And then, lest any foregone conclusions should rise in their minds to destroy his influence, and, therefore, militate against the success of his design, he repeated to them the cause of his own disgrace and the appointment of Joshua, and thus bespoke alike forbearance for himself and respect for his successor. Subsequently, he recounted briefly the principal events which had varied the monotony of their desert life, not omitting to dwell with considerable emphasis on the conquests already effected. His design in this is palpable. Cowardice and want of faith had been the stumbling-blocks in the way of their parents, who had refused to face enemies of whom they had conceived exaggerated notions. In the belief that past success is the best stimulant to future exertions, Moses reminds the Israelites of the difficulties already overcome, and lays considerable stress on the physical qualifications of the kings and places that have fallen. Giants had frightened the fathers ; he is desirous of disarming them of their terrors to the children. Walled and fortified cities had in imagination been too strong for the fathers ; before the children some had already fallen, and why not others ? Therefore, says the sagacious teacher :—

“ All these cities were fortified with high walls, doors, and bolts. Behold, the bedstead of Og was a bedstead of iron ; is it not in Rabbah of the children of Ammon ? nine cubits was the length thereof, and four cubits the breadth of it, after the cubit of a man.”

How skilfully he makes their self-gratulations minister to their further zeal in the cause of the Lord ! How can they hesitate to face any enemy that Canaan can produce, when they have already done so much before reaching

Canaan! If, they would say to themselves, we could overcome while inexperienced, what may we not achieve when victory adds strength to our arms and discipline to our armies? And thus self-reliance grew out of success, and in the hands of the wise Moses even a weakness of man, his vanity, was made subservient to promote his strength.

ואתחנן

DEUTERONOMY: CHAPTER III, VERSE 23.

“SEE, I have taught you statutes and judgments, as the Eternal, my God, has commanded me, that you may do them in the land which you are going to inherit; wherefore keep them and do them, for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the eyes of people.”

When the inspired lawgiver spoke these words, Israel, of all the nations of the earth, alone possessed a knowledge of God. Since then, that knowledge has spread, but still the truth enunciated by Moses remains unchanged.

Amid all the vicissitudes of time and the revolutions of empires, Judaism has remained permanent, the only vestige of the remote past which has entirely defied decay or dissolution. Mightier people than Israel have appeared on the great stage of humanity, but they have vanished like the shadowy figures of a phantasmagoria. On their ruins other people have arisen, but conquest and admixture have so modified them, that beyond a few centuries, no man can trace a certain ancestry. Why is it that three thousand three hundred years have passed and have left but this one verdant line amidst an immensity of desert; this one solitary star in a firmament of darkness? The words of the lawgiver solve the problem.

When of old, men raised their vast structures of physical power, they employed none but human materials. The elements which alone could give stability—principles

of eternal right derived from their eternal source—were altogether wanting. Time therefore did its work. By the ordinary process of waste, of antagonism, of brute force, the gigantic fabrics, which already contained the germs of decomposition, common to them with their founders, were swept from the earth. Nations suffered this fate so completely, that their very existence is to be traced rather to their conquerors than to themselves. In the era which separates ancient from modern history, a new chaos supervened, as though to show man that his works stand in vain against the laws which regulate him and them. The dark ages, as this era is called, and out of which modern civilization grew, as the original earth grew out of the first chaos, not only effectually covered with its veil all that antiquity had created by merely human agencies, but it enveloped in an impenetrable shroud the origin of all that modern times was to know from the same source. Three things survived the general wreck, and formed connecting links between the past and the future.

. First, the literature of old struggled through the storm. When the strongest and most mighty peoples perished, nor left a vestige behind, the small voice of their immortal minds was borne on the air-waves of time to an eternal future. Over this emanation from the divine, that which could annihilate mortal work, however substantial, passed harmlessly. Some fragments of papyrus or parchment were consumed, and with them a few stray ideas were lost; but the great truths which genius had investigated and recorded, the sublime language in which the soul of one man in one age had spoken to the souls of all men in all ages, the lofty conceptions by which morality had proved its connection with an imperishable and heavenly origin, these no physical convulsions could destroy, they were above and beyond such accidents.

Secondly, Christianity survived the fiery ordeal, be-

cause that, too, owed its existence to the eternal revelation of Sinai, and man could only modify, not extirpate. It did not pass through the flames unscathed, because it contained mortal elements; but its morality, its God-teaching, remained intact. In the battle which it had been compelled to maintain against the barbarous forces of northern and eastern idolatry, it had fought on terms so unequal that it had been necessitated to call in strategy to its aid. The luxurious easterns were best ruled through their passions; the uncouth northern, transplanted to the genial south, were best governed by their old superstitious fears. Those followed the patriarch of the Greek church, these the father of the Roman church. But, in both churches, what had been abstract faith—that is, the tie which binds man to God, became concrete religion—that is, the tie which binds man to forms and modes of belief. This result was arrived at through the agency of those who had recourse to strategy, and who, in adopting expedients, sought by their profession and practice to prove their efficacy. That became priestcraft which had been Christianity; a change, and a sad one, but there is hope, while vitality was not destroyed, that some future elementary revolution may restore the original combination. Then, charity, which, in the doctrine of abstract faith, means love for universal mankind, shall cease to be what concrete religion made it, love only for self and self's imitators. Then, man shall acknowledge that true God-worship consists not in observance of any particular customs, but in the humble, zealous cultivation of those qualities by which the Eternal has made himself known to the world. The members of one creed shall not arrogate to themselves peculiar morality and peculiar salvation, denying both to the members of other creeds; but they shall learn that morality and salvation are the cause and effect of all earnest endeavours to rise to the knowledge of revelation. Men

shall cease to attempt the substitution of one set of forms for another set of forms ; they shall satisfy themselves with being honest and dignified exponents of their own mode of belief, and shall not seek to coerce what heaven itself has left unfettered—the rights of conscience. They shall strive to remove all obstacles to the spread of God-worship, by showing how superior are the happiness, the intellectuality, the virtue of its professors ; but they shall stop there, not even for the sake of securing their object preferring their own faith for that of another. This was the original combination under which Christianity was called into existence ; this was the power which enabled it to survive the shock which had destroyed all else, and to this must it return before its mission can be perfectly accomplished. What the teachings of Sinai were to the children of Abraham, the teachings of the other mount were to be to the rest of the world ; one was not to supersede the other, but to render it accessible.

Thirdly, Judaism and the Jews escaped the general wreck. Not quite purely, because rabbinism from within, and persecution from without, did partially what priestcraft did entirely ; but with enough of the divine left to withstand what must have proved fatal to any thing less imbued with the spirit of the Eternal. While nation contended with nation, and race with race, all made common cause against the people of God. Diversity of religion knew of no harmony but that which taught scorn of Israel. Men, through their various forms and tenets, looked with less fidelity to heaven than to those spots of earth which held Jews as objects for persecution. If they differed in all else, they were unanimous in hatred. While the doctrines of faith had failed to inculcate love, they had found excuses for contempt and cruelty. But through all, Judaism and the Jews remained. Over the fair face of nature there passes a convulsion ; heaven sends its flooding rains, its searing lightnings ; earth, upheaved

by volcanic agency, opens to entomb, and the sea, carried beyond its boundaries, ingulfs the ruins spared from earth and heaven. Desolation holds undisputed sway, and seems to threaten that there, at least, life is for ever extinct, vitality for ever annihilated. But the spirit of God still shines in the glorious sun, in the new forms of existence that permeate wave, earth, and air, in the elasticity with which all recovers itself in obedience to the divine law, "Day and night, summer and winter shall never cease." So has it been with Judaism. What physical convulsions do for nature, human brutality has done for Judaism, and with like effect. The essence of eternal existence has never been eradicated, and still from ruin, from desolation, from despair, new life has gushed with unabated vigour, new vitality soared with pinion ever sublime. And why? Because in Judaism the Eternal implanted the germs from which salvation is ultimately to spring; because, no matter what form religion may since, for wise purposes, have been permitted to assume, all that it contains of holy and pure is identical with the holiness and purity of the teachings of Moses. Therefore said the inspired legislator, "It is your wisdom and your understanding in the eyes of people."

Thirty-three centuries have not effected any change in the value of this declaration. Thirty-three centuries, with all their diversity of thought and execution, of passion and principle, of persecution and forbearance, of bigotry and faith, of struggle and conquest, of tyranny and resistance, have left this untouched. Just as the human soul remains identical with what it was, as the revolutions of nature are carried on with unvarying uniformity, as all that is of Divine origin retains the eternal impress of its creator, so this truth continues unalterable and inalienable, because it too is of Divine origin. Men may blindly seek, in the exercise of their volition, to palter with first principles, but they must

fail, because they attempt to establish human institutions on the ruin of heavenly institutions. The history of all ages bears testimony to this failure, from the time at which Persia essayed to trample on Greece to the day on which military despotism fell at Waterloo. At Marathon, eastern sloth and luxury, with their attendants, slavery and mental degradation, attempted to triumph over that heaven-born liberty of body and of mind which had found its home in the West. One hundred thousand troops, of an army previously deemed invincible, were routed by ten thousand men, because the former fought for mortal control, the latter, though perhaps they knew it not, for the eternal principles of freedom. Subsequently, when Athens, false to the cause she had vindicated, sought to inflict on Sicily what she had rejected from Persia, she suffered at Syracuse as she had conquered in Attica. At Arbela was destroyed that enormous fabric of human weakness which held all civilized Asia in its paralyzing embrace. On the field of Poitiers, Mahomedanism, with its enervation and polygamy, so impossible to European civilisation, fell before Christianity, giving a victory not to form over form, but to free government over tyranny. When the bigotry of Spain tried to crush liberty of conscience in its last home, her mighty armada was swept from the seas, not by broadsides nor by fireships, but by the irresistible spirit which God had infused into England's sons as the champions of eternal freedom. A little later, when England, following the policy of Athens, would have forced an unjust rule on her American colonies, and would thus have betrayed her mission, she bore at Saratoga what her prototype had suffered at Syracuse. Later still, when once more carrying out her vocation, her banners were unfurled at Waterloo, she achieved the noblest conquest that graces her annals. She terminated for ever the tyranny of the sword, and paved the way for the establishment of universal

peace. Instances might be multiplied, from the expulsion of Greek abominations from God's temple by the Maccabee, till the defeat of the great pontiff of the Roman church by the unknown priest of Eisleben ; but all would tell the same tale, how the great principles of right have prevailed against all the power which man could wield against them, because on them, and not on power, is to depend the regeneration of the earth.

And now, although, to a great extent, the external pressure against Jews and Judaism has ceased, the necessity for observing the words of Moses is increased. Men are always on their guard against enemies. Danger from without usually draws closer the bonds of resistance from within. Even a doubtful cause becomes attractive when its votaries are persecuted ; a righteous cause threatened makes its supporters heroes or martyrs. So long as Judaism was in this condition, Jews were united to guard it with their lives, to hallow it in their deaths. These sacrifices are not required now, but another danger menaces, not less fearful because it is masked. Jews are growing to associate with those who once repudiated their society. These men claim to hold the privileges of earth and the keys of heaven. They demand, as the price of their friendship, conformity to some of their views ; they would insist on compliance with all, but that they are content to bide their time, and to leave something to the natural result of the process of assimilation. Jews accept the conditions proposed, because they aspire to a share of the visible privileges ; and, because they are the smaller party, and have something to lose and nothing real to gain by disputing the question of the keys of heaven, they leave that claim in abeyance, and half allowed, because uncontested. They accept as a concession what they should refuse, except as a right ; they are content with toleration when they should demand equality. Meanwhile, assimilation produces its anticipated effect.

Admitted, despite their religion, and not in consequence of it, to the coveted social distinctions, they gradually "follow the multitude." The points of difference which may grate against the tender prejudices of those whom they jostle, are carefully kept out of sight, or they are sedulously rubbed down till they disappear. The visible prevails over the invisible. In their desire to escape a separate recognition, for which, as prejudice still exists, they might have a fancied reason to blush, they prefer to merge into the mass, and to lose their identity for the sake of their ease. Thus, in time, religious rights, always so far above and beyond civil rights, become secondary to them. To become consistent before man, who judges from the surface, they become inconsistent before God, who reads the heart: and, because they cannot square the requirements of faith with the claims of modern refinement, they affect to consider useless and obsolete whatever spiritual duty interferes with their social duties. They naturally desire to share in the mission with which God has intrusted every member of the human family—that of promoting the happiness, the social, the moral, the intellectual progress of his fellow-creatures. They feel that grievous wrong has been done them when barriers have been set up to restrain them from this task, when restrictions have coerced their capacity of heart and of mind; and they feel the wrong more deeply because it has been inflicted under the sacred name of religion, which is thereby vilified, and because they are thus deprived of all hope of the reward so precious in this world, the approbation of mankind. To obtain both ends, their legitimate share in the advancement of civilisation and their meed of worldly praise, they consult expediency, which is only the subterfuge under which mortal blindness presumes to array itself against eternal prevision. They temporise where they should be firm. They ignore the spiritual charge which is theirs, because at the moment

it is not present to their gaze, and because they cannot see how precisely to adapt it to the circumstances of their case.

But, ah ! how sad is all this ; how like the conduct of Israel of old, who ever presumed to judge in opposition to the recommendations of the Eternal, setting up human devices against the great principles of right upon which the universe was established ! And how signally does this obsequiousness fail of its object ! True, the time-serving Jew finds himself apparently courted and respected, but it is because he is supposed to copy a certain model, not because he sets a standard himself. To him it may be said : " And they who flatter, scorn thee ;" for the best that they think of him is, that it is a pity he is a Jew ; and the best that they hope of him is, that his eyes may be opened.

Ye little wise, who pander to prejudice that ye ought to defy, when will you present to the world the dignified front which is the emblem of innate high principles ? Ask your own intellect, are you inferior in any one mental quality to the members of any other creed ? Ask your own heart, are you deficient in any of those attributes which raise men above men, and render them universal benefactors and philanthropists ? Ask your own faith in Divine mercy, can any form of religion teach a purer morality, a more lofty virtue, than that which God gave you through Moses ? Ask the mighty past, stained with your blood and darkened by the clouds of atrocities in which persecution has enveloped you, in what has any doctrine taught a charity stronger and more forbearing than that which you acquired from Sinai ? Ask the refined present, with its classism strong as the caste-system of old ; with its bigotry fierce as of yore, only that now it argues you into the degradation into which then it thrust you ; with its intolerance only less hateful because it hides its deformity behind a mask which is not horrible to

behold ; with its prejudice that only yields to force and never to conviction—if society presents any object so noble that it is beyond your reach, so towering that Judaism cannot soar to its level? Ask the unborn future, to which, through their volition, a certain destiny is leading all mankind ; in which either right only must prevail or creation be a mockery ; out of which must be shaped those hitherto unattained combinations which are to lead to regeneration and eternity—ask if there be any hopes more holy than those with which you can trust yourself to its immensity, because they are founded on the Rock of all ages ? And if you give a faithful answer to yourselves, if you honestly permit conscience to look convenience steadily in the face, then will you be convinced that while all your social and political ends are consistent with your Judaism, it were better that you do not achieve those than that you hold this light, it were better that you let men do wickedly, and force you into isolation, than that you abandon “your wisdom and your understanding in the eyes of people.”

עקב

DEUTERONOMY: CHAPTER VII, VERSE 12.

AMONG the many beauties which may be traced in the book of Deuteronomy, none are more remarkable than the cautions occasionally introduced by Moses himself. They display a profound knowledge of the human heart, and prove that the opportunities for forming a just estimate of character, afforded by his position, were not thrown away. Standing alone among men, uninfluenced by the passions which exercise most sway over them, his fellow-creatures passed before him as under a microscope. He saw their most minute traits with as much distinctness as he saw their greater defects. In his warnings he is more a prophet than in his prescience. When he

tells the Israelites that they are a stiff-necked people, he describes them from his experience of the past ; but he also depicts them in the future, because he feels that national characteristics remain, for that it is more easy for a people to change its destiny than to alter its tendencies. Further, when he says,—“Take heed that thou forget not the Eternal thy God, in not keeping his commandments and his judgments and his ordinances which I command thee this day ; lest when thou hast eaten and art satisfied, and hast built goodly houses and dwelt therein ; and when thy herds and thy flocks increase, and thy silver and thy gold is increased, and all that thou hast is increased ; that then thy heart be exalted, and thou forget the Eternal thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage and thou say in thine heart, My strength and the might of my hand hath gotten me this wealth. But thou shalt remember the Eternal thy God, for it is he that giveth thee strength to get wealth ;”—he writes down the whole history of his flock, from the moment of their standing around him on the plains of Moab till the present day.

The story of Job is a beautiful allegory. Its object is not, as is generally supposed, to show the inefficacy of poverty and affliction to alienate man from God, but to point the more natural sequence, that suffering and tribulation only draw more closely the ties which connect earth and heaven, and that these visitations are therefore, to some extent, blessings. Regarded in this light, it inculcates a great moral lesson by showing another instance of the compensations with which life is filled.

The despot, at whose nod millions tremble, who is amenable to no law but his own momentary caprice, into whose lap pleasure exhausts her cornucopia, may seem an object to be envied because of his power for gratifying every desire as it rises : but, if his comparative indepen-

dence of man leads to a corresponding fancied independence of God, he is rather to be pitied for his abuse of opportunity than envied for his means without end. We know that life's compensation will come hereafter, and that the time will be when he will be as responsible as the meanest slave that has shaken beneath his rule.

The mariner, clinging with the energy of despair to some friendly spar which the fierce violence of the waves is gradually tearing from him, who is suddenly quitting a world which he has shamed by his blasphemy or indifference, whose resources have been squandered in riot as his manhood has been wasted in brute efforts of strength, may seem an object for pity; but if, amid the darkness and horror of the storm, there come to him the light and calm of trust in God—if, when all other hope has left him, there at length wakes in his dying heart a hope in that ineffable mercy which is enough for all mankind, then he is rather to be regarded as blessed in his miserable end, because it has proved his life's compensation.

The inspired writer who penned the book of Job knew full well that poverty is not the road which leads to infidelity. He knew that such is man, that ever as earth falls beneath his feet, his soul soars heavenward. He desired to inculcate resignation to the will of the Eternal, and to point out that even in the bitterest misfortune man cannot be wretched if religion remains to him. The object of the "faithful servant" is the same, only from a different direction. He desires to caution against that mundane happiness which is the goal of the many, but which is not a wise aim if religion is to cease. And this desire comes with additional force from one who knew so well the people to whom his caution was addressed. He remembered that they had been slaves and were now free, but that the transition had not been accomplished with a beneficial effect on their moral character. Although their Divine deliverer had given them through revelation

all that could render their liberty valuable to them and useful to others, they had either been too oppressed in Egypt to rise at once to the height of the eternal truths presented to them, or they had been so long accustomed to be amenable only to bodily influences that their minds were not now sufficiently strong to shake off the old yoke. The cowering fear of the slave had developed itself in the overbearing pride of the master. They were essentially stiff-necked ; people in whom only some terrible calamity could awaken a sense of mortal nothingness. Against all ordinary troubles they were proof. Blind, as such characters always are, to the fact that their own evil doings were the cause of their misfortunes, (according to the great law impressed on creation, that there is no chance but that physical ill grows inevitably from moral obliquity,) they continued in their riot till a sudden shock brought them to a halt, and made them fearfully sensible of human infirmity and human responsibility. Then came the revulsion ; they were as abject in despair as they had been reckless in prosperity. It was only when continued affliction had restored their moral equilibrium, that they were able to understand the beneficial result of the compensation under which they had groaned. Then was it that they returned to God and to virtue. But when this return had produced its fruits, happiness and worldly good, they again acted the same part, again went through the same phases. Moses knew this of the past, and he was anxious to guard the future. With how much justice let history tell.

When, guided by the miraculous strength of the Eternal, the Israelites overcame the nations of Canaan, and quietly settled in their new possessions, what did they become ? No sooner had Joshua passed from the scene than prosperity puffed them with pride, and they contrived, despite themselves, to show their neighbours how little difference there could be between God-worship

and idol-worship. Reduced to an ignominious servitude, they suffered till repentance brought back faith and its attendant virtues, and they were released. The period of their Judges is a repetition of this same tale. Heaven showers its blessings and men forget their dependence, and from hearts that should hymn praise, rises the self-glorifying boast—"My strength and my right hand hath gotten me this wealth."

The long and righteous rule of Samuel failed to eradicate this reliance on mortal resources. They longed for a king, because they preferred resembling the people around them to remaining distinct as the servants of God. They forgot that there should be no resemblance between the purity of religion and the corruption of sin, even in externals. Their desire was gratified, but within an age their sovereign became their leader into iniquity, and what they gained in the dignity of their ruler, they lost in his power to guide them to ill. Better the judges, with no external emblems of power, who dispensed for a season the law of Sinai, than the crowned tyrants whose grandeur made them oblivious of all but their own importance, and whose larger means were only the means to larger evil. Again the impious cry of self-reliance burdened the air; now, under some pious king, a little hushed; now, under a Rehoboam or an Ahab, swelling into a rebellious shout, till all was stilled beneath the crushing thunder of Assyrian wrath. Then arose the unavailing murmurs of regret, unavailing because they came not in the hour of triumph and joy as the spontaneous acknowledgment of error, but because they were the forced relief of hearts bowed beneath physical sorrows, and glad even of that comfort.

Seventy years of captivity taught no permanent lesson. Vainly Antiochus threatened, and the Maccabees stirred the latent fires of patriotism. Vainly the Greek Alexander left a faint impress of his passage, the Roman

Pompey a more lasting one ; still in the hearts of the Israelites grew the fibres of self-dependence, seared by past troubles, but not extirpated ; still from their lips welled the stream of self-love, and its ripple sang, " My strength and the might of my hand hath gotten me this wealth." Titus came, and his legions trampled out the last remains of national vitality. Thenceforward, Israelites ceased to exist as a distinct nation, but they were to carry with them into the regions wherein they settled the characteristics which had marked them in their own country. These characteristics, however, were to be modified by external circumstances. In the new fate thus inflicted on them, what had formerly been only temporary now became permanent. In Palestine, they knew sorrow only occasionally ; they had, even in their worst hours, their moments of joy. In their dispersion, sorrow was all they could depend upon as theirs. Seasons might revolve, but each brought the selfsame spirit of persecution. Dynasties might rise and fall, but every race of kings was alike inimical. Others might toil and prosper, they could only labour and bear. Thus oppressed from without, they hung with more tenacity on what men could not wrench from them. If they could not propitiate man, they might at least invoke God. If earth opened not her friendly bosom to give them a home, at least they might aspire to a resting-place in heaven. And so the same spirit that had been awakened in the days of Ehud and Deborah, was destined to live with more constancy in the final captivity. Let us hope that the modifications it has effected in the national characteristics have so changed them, that henceforward they never again are what they have been.

But we must be careful. Another, and it may be a better change has come over dispersed Israel. Active persecution has comparatively ceased. There bursts forth now and then some volcano-like eruption to remind us of the past, but it is rarely. Already in many countries

Israelites are no way distinguishable, in worldly matters, from their fellow-citizens of other denominations. In many more countries a sinful intolerance or an unwise toleration still restricts, but there is reason to believe that this will not long be. Again Jews may labour with the assurance that they may enjoy the fruits of their labour. Again they may claim as their home the land in which they were born, and in which their fathers died ; for the restoration to Canaan, they know, is to depend on events in the accomplishment of which all mankind is to unite voluntarily, and while they hope for such restoration, they are no more affected by the hope than other men. For all practical purposes, then, the Israelites have both prosperity and a home ; it must be theirs to guard themselves from returning to the impiety which so often lost them such treasures in days of yore.

Nor is the danger of their return without the bounds of probability. In the rush after worldly honours, men are too prone to tread only on worldly ways. In the crowd, ever jostling each other on the road to fame, the believer and the infidel, the pious and the indifferent, the God-worshipper and the self-worshipper, meet and mingle. By this contact the good generally suffer, the bad are but seldom improved.

Again, Jews are anxious that their children obtain the blessings of knowledge. They feel that, for all the more advanced business of education, their comparative fewness and their limited resources will not permit them to establish universities and colleges of their own, which may vie with those maintained by their more numerous neighbours. Hence they send their children to non-Jewish academies, carefully requiring them to abstain from any religious instruction there given. But, if there be not careful measures adopted at home to supply the hiatus thus made in the mind, heart, and morals, what can be expected to counterbalance the impressions conveyed by

constant association with the giddy, pleasure-seeking crowd that follows a student life. The religious element, which harmonises all other branches of information, will be absent alike from the theory of school and the practice of home. The intellect, filled with the resources of language and science, will want the compass of faith to direct its career. But it will not founder; tossed on the ocean of the world it will steer its course among rocks and quicksands, and ever seeking, but never finding, its true harbour of refuge, it will still sail onward and onward, always defying the waves it has so often conquered. Of the world, it will be worldly, and again will the old cry rise, the cry of self-reliance, of infidelity.

Therefore must Jews be careful. There is so much in which they do assimilate with their fellow-citizens of other denominations, and so much more in which they will assimilate when prejudice on all sides shall have given way to the true enlightenment of abstract religion, that the danger of altogether losing their identity may be incurred when retreat will be cut off. Jews have two futures; an historical future, which will restore them to their proper place in the great social commonwealth, by the extinction of bigotry and the destruction of fanaticism; a spiritual future, quite independent of the other, which will elevate them to their old position in the world, as the guardians, for the universal good, of the sacred truths of revelation. To both these ends, mankind at large, no less than Jews themselves, must contribute, because the former is dependent on those inherent principles of right which will ever prevail over wrong; because the latter is the certain behest of the Eternal to be effected by man's volition. Every effort in opposition to these results will only retard the ultimate object of Jews and Judaism—the regeneration of the world; and none more than the Jews, therefore, are bound to have these distinct futures always in view. But all must fight under the bau-

ner of God, whose wide folds can cover the whole earth. Wherever and whenever men raise the standard of self, there will be sorrow and strife; friend will contend against friend, brother will resist brother; again, as of old, the harmonies of nature will be drowned in shrieks of agony, in groans of despair, and everywhere will resound the discordant cry:—"My strength and my right hand hath gotten me this wealth."

ראד

DEUTERONOMY: CHAPTER XI, VERSE 26.

"YE shall not do after all the things which we do here this day, every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes."

Between the condition of modern Judaism and the life of Israel in the wilderness there is more similarity than would at first be imagined. This similarity arises in both cases from the want of proper authority. In the wilderness the Israelites were in a transition state. Most of the precepts enjoined by Moses were only to become effective in the land of Canaan. They were placed before the people with a view to their being observed when time and circumstance should render their observation not only conducive to morality, but subservient to happiness. Meanwhile every man did much as he pleased, and to this want of uniformity is perhaps to be traced the partial disaffection which at times developed itself. But there was no executive law by which obedience was to be maintained. Religious consistency was, therefore, unknown; the caprice of the individual gave a colouring to conduct, and personal interpretation stood for authoritative rescript.

Modern Judaism presents a picture very like this. Since the decline of the national existence there has been no real power to enforce submission. The earlier rabbins

laid down ordinances intended to bind together the loosened members of the scattered tribes; and, as has before been shown, many things contributed to give their legislation a higher value than even they themselves designed. Affection for their persons; respect for the firmness with which they represented Jewish faith before the world; admiration for the zeal with which they sacrificed worldly advantages to enable themselves more closely and uninterruptedly to study the law, and for the cheerfulness with which they gave up even life itself for their religion; the natural tendency which men have to cling to the spiritual when adversity renders the real hard to be borne; these were among the causes which operated in favour of rabbinical institutions. The progress of the dispersion which every generation saw wider and wider; the increase of active persecution, which drove its victims now into one locality, now into another; the necessity for money making as the only means of securing even the temporary protection of that which was designated charity, and the consequent necessity of devoting to secular pursuits the energies before given to intellectual study; these were among the causes which still further contributed to render those institutions permanent. For many hundreds of years no author * has written a single line to explain or to supersede the code laid down by the earliest rabbins. Hence the custom has grown up of regarding that code as inalienable, because those who might act, decline to take the initiative, or to go further than their ancestors went. What has been done, say they, since time immemorial, needs not to be altered now. That which has preserved Judaism till the present day will preserve it till a future day.

But the conditions are altogether changed. Modern

* Maimonides and Mendelssohn might be named as exceptions. But what an outcry did their works raise, and how little weight have they in the orthodoxy of to-day!

rabbins refuse to trench on what they believe to be sacred ground. The old motto was : " Make a fence round the law," and a fence was made ; and lest some intemperate scapegoat should break through this barrier, it was allowed to grow till it far passed the boundaries originally designed for it. But it must not be forgotten that many of the institutions, and much of the legislation, resulted from extraneous pressure. They were directed against communion with idolators, and against contact with persecutors. Every one who was not a Jew was an enemy. Whatever an enemy did was to be avoided. Any course was considered preferable to that which might lead to imitation of external manners and habits. " Custom of the heathens " was a cry as vehement among Jews as " no Popery " was among Englishmen. It was the pride of the Israelites in those days, that in every-day life, they were as distinct from those among whom they dwelt as in their religious observances. And it was a just and honest pride ; how could they care to cultivate acquaintance with languages whose harshest terms were considered too mild for them, with people whose highest aim was to plunder those whom their cruelty had compelled to hoard. Forced into ghettos, their very isolation became their protection ; it was better, in the malaria and miasma of their overcrowded quarters that they fell into the hands of their God, than out of the poison that they fell into the hands of their enemies.

But time has pulled down the barriers which ignorance and intolerance raised. Every day sees the Jew progressing towards social equality. His vernacular has now an endearing term even for him ; his neighbour, of another creed, does not spit in his face, or cross himself because a Jew passes his door. The yellow badge and the gaberdine are things of the past. With these changes other changes have become necessary. Some of the original institutes of rabbinism are as obsolete as would

be the fanaticism of Peter the Hermit, or the feudalism of William of Normandy. Let there be no misunderstanding of the idea here enunciated. The religion of Moses is not attacked, for no system can be more pure or more perfect ; the ceremonies of Moses, as expounded in these reflections, are not attacked, because they have been shown to have a high significance in preserving our nationality, and in maintaining our religious existence. That religion and those ceremonies, like other works of the Eternal, are for all time ; any innovation of mortal origin must fail to supersede them permanently. But as well as Judaism has an historical future, so also has it historical duties ; and these are, progress and conformity with the requirements of the times. He who does not advance, retrogrades ; in life there is no standing still. What suited admirably the exposition of Judaism before the world of 1100, is by no means adapted to represent it in the nineteenth century. While there was every reason to cause the Jew of that day to avoid even the most trivial habit that could remind him of his persecutors, there is every reason now why he should conform to those habits which he sees to be productive of comfort to those with whom he is on an equality. What was once a pride would now be a disgrace. As well as the Jewish gentleman adopts the dress and manners of his fellow-countrymen of other denominations, so should he adopt the other customs which experience has shown to have a beneficial effect on social welfare and social improvement. Say that confirmations have been found to give youths a more impressive love for their religion, why should not Judaism adopt confirmation ? Say that sermons in the vernacular have proved most efficacious in awakening pious sentiments and devotional feelings, why should not such sermons become an integral part of Divine service ? Say that more refined notions of morality have taught us, that to pray to Heaven "to avenge before our

eyes the blood of thy servants which has been shed," is a desecration worthy only of the age of the crusades, why should we not expunge such prayer from our liturgy? Say that the false logic of controversial rabbins, which has found its way into the service for the "night to be observed," has failed in convincing thinking men, why should it not be replaced by some Psalm or other Biblical passage bearing on the glories of the exodus? Needs Judaism in its integrity, to suffer because of such trifling alterations? Would a boy be less Barmitzvah because he voluntarily announced his determination to adhere to precepts which it had been previously ascertained he understood? Would Divine service be less calculated to draw our souls to God, if it were purified of poetical mysteries few can penetrate, and still fewer appreciate, and if, in their place, were substituted something that would come more home to the heart and to the intellect? Would our religion be less our distinction before mankind because we forbear to invoke Divine vengeance on fanatic cruelty perpetrated ages since? Would the "night to be observed" be less dear to us, if we devoted it to studying the truths of revelation, and the duties rendered incumbent by the event which the Passover celebrates? There can be but one answer to these questions.

Ah! but, says the rabbinical system of to-day, it is impossible to alter what men so much wiser ordained. Time-hallowed customs must not be broken. Innovation is always dangerous, because it is impossible to say where it will cease. If every age is to set up its own standard, there will be nothing left in time whereby the future may show its likeness to the past, &c., &c. True, quite true. Now look at the alternative. The present rabbinical authority being thus entirely set aside by the rabbins themselves, who have been content with executive functions, and have endeavoured to set the same seal of eternity on the mortal legislation of their predecessors

that should be claimed only for the legislation of Sinai, men have grown to claim some share of authority for themselves. It has been impossible to prevent this. The most fervent orthodoxy has been unable to resist some alterations rendered imperative by change of times and circumstances; that same most fervent orthodoxy must blush for the manner in which many things that it has retained are still expounded by some of our community. And these things are just the sort of external form which means so little for us, and tells so much against us, which degrades Judaism into a system of practices, and altogether ignores principles. In the zeal with which orthodoxy has clung to the shell it has lost the kernel. It has tenaciously adhered to a past which has nothing but age to recommend it to respect, and it has lost its hold on those great doctrines which make our faith so simple, so ennobling, so engrossing. Ask it what it has inculcated on the subject of prophecy, responsibility, a Messiah, reward and punishment hereafter, the resurrection, and it will tell you that it has taught so little that scarcely units in hundreds have any fixed ideas on these subjects. It has cared so little for them, that it has even left our youths without a recognised catechism or text-book from which they may acquire information for themselves.

But, besides all this, orthodoxy is the virtue of the few. The mass are only moderately religious. They love the dependence which yokes them to God, and they revere the traditions which come to them sanctified by the oral explanation of Moses and his successors; but they are thinking, reasoning men. They cannot rest satisfied with the dictum which tells them that the Eternal designed revelation to coerce man's intellect into instinct, and that blind obedience is the only faith that they need to cultivate. They ask a higher vocation, a nobler connection with Heaven. They demand that

the religion which Moses gave, so pure and so consonant with the best human faculties, be maintained in its pristine integrity; that it be stripped of all those representative practices which were born of persecution and darkness, and which should have died when persecution and darkness no longer lived to give them birth; that whatever has grown like a fungus on the dispensation of Sinai be torn from it. They say, and they are right, a merciful Creator gave us a religion which he designed for the happiness of man throughout all ages and generations; that religion is not a temporary religion adaptable to circumstances; it is permanent, it is eternal, because its object, human happiness, depends now, and ever will depend, on those great principles of morality which God first taught to our ancestors. But, they continue, we find in the system to day called Judaism, much which we cannot respect, some things that we cannot understand, some things that even excite our disgust. Take these away, they say to the rabbins, to whom they naturally look for assistance; we know that these excrescences are not natural to our sacred faith, we know that they are the offspring of bygone opinions and times; in their stead give us Mosaism as Moses taught it, and we shall be both happier men and better Jews.

The rabbins answer, that they have no power to act, and the mass, too enlightened to be priestridden, and too religious inherently to mock themselves with the thing held up to their regard, begin by degrees to act for themselves. But they begin without concert, without any fixed principles. They desire to break off a parasite; in the struggle, they too often tear away a part of the trunk into which it has insinuated itself. One pulls in one direction, one rends in another; deprived of all guidance, left to the imperfections of defective education or the licence of caprice, men become half infidels whose desire at setting out was to be only more sincere believers.

They continue to call themselves Jews, they are really what convenience or concomitant circumstances make them. The great spiritual bond which should unite Israel all over the world is severed. For prayer, some adopt the vernacular instead of the sacred language of Scripture; some uncover the head in synagogue; some associate male and female worshippers together; some introduce an organ; some defer the Sabbath and celebrate the first day of the week instead. In short, and herein consists the resemblance between the present and the days in the wilderness: "every man does whatsoever seems right in his own eyes." There is no consistency because there is no principle of action.

Now this was exactly the state of things against which our great legislator designed to guard when he uttered the words with which these reflections were introduced. Of all antagonists to social and religious progress, none is so formidable as anarchy. When barbarism first emerges from its degradation to be guided into the future by the torch of civilization, law, legislative and executive, is the majesty before which it bows. It voluntarily imposes on itself restraints and fetters, in order that liberty may be more precious because rights are more respected. In the wilderness, Israelites led a semi-barbarous life; in Canaan, assuming their place among nations, they were to fall into the civilized path on which nations tread to their development. Therefore, said the greatest lawgiver that the world has ever produced: "Ye shall not do after all the things which we do here this day, every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes." *He* knew the effect of that individualisation which converts a people into fragments, as wide-spread as the wind-driven spray; why will not the spiritual leaders of to-day gather the same knowledge? Are they not allowing the substance to glide away on the waters of deception while they grasp at an empty shadow? Were it not better to sacrifice the human fancies

of an obsolete date to the human fancies of progress, than to hold them and lose eternal certainties? The wisest politicians give way when opposition ceases to be respectable. The greatest leaders prefer to guide the mass when they can no longer successfully struggle against it, because they know that it is better discretion lead than madness. To assert that there is any thing in Judaism incompatible with the highest refinement, with any change that human combinations for human happiness can devise, is to assert that the divine legislation has lost the eternal character impressed on it by a merciful Creator. Orthodoxy would be the last to admit this presumption. Why will it not then assume its legitimate function, and, under the direction of recognised spiritual leaders, so purify the system of Judaism as at present expounded, that we give to our descendants a disembodied spirit endowed with everlasting existence, instead of what we now have, a spirit so surrounded with corporeality that the majority see only what is mortal and visible, and ignore what is eternal and invisible? *

* These observations have been unfortunately both misunderstood and misrepresented. The author neither has, nor ever had, any desire to advocate what are popularly termed "Reform" doctrines. On the contrary, he is strictly conservative. He would assign to orthodox ecclesiastics their legitimate place, which is to lead, and not to be left behind, to direct religious movements, and not to permit them to be the sport of unqualified or interested laymen. But he would preserve only principles, and scriptural ceremonies, which are the exponents of principles, because *they* alone are eternal. Forms of more recent introduction which have lost their significance, through age or change of circumstances, he does not respect. The careful reader will observe that all the suggested innovations are put hypothetically, and are not sought to be enforced. How much something is needed to elevate Judaism, no one can know better than the author, whose long connection with thousands of the humble and more ignorant of his coreligionists, has enabled him to learn the existence of opinions and practices for which certainly religion is no warrant, but which contribute, more than any thing else, to foster narrowmindedness, and to render the Jew what he was never intended to be, an individual suspecting others, and suspected by them.

שפטים

DEUTERONOMY: CHAPTER XVI, VERSE 18.

THE world still clings to many fictions with an ardour worthy of a love for truths. Some of these fictions gratify the vanity of their believers; some excite their awe. Some owe their good repute to the veneration generally felt for what is old; some to the admiration always awakened for what is new. In some cases they are preferred to the recognised facts which should have superseded them, because they are more imaginative and poetical; just as the romance of history is preferred to its plain, matter-of-fact narrative. Who does not love the mythic glories which shed a halo round the head of Homer, better than the more probable suggestion that the poems which bear his name are the work of many brains? Who that has studied the old heroic tales of Greece and of Rome does not regret the researches that has proved them fables? The stern virtue of Lycurgus; the polished refinement of Solon; the unflinching valour of Aristodemus, or Aristomenes; the god-like origin of the founder of the empress city; the mysterious communion of Numa; the savage grandeur of the fierce Achilles; the amiable fickleness of the pious Æneas, are still niched in many a heart, although they have been long driven from the head. Who would not, if he could, rather believe that Camillus arrived just at the critical moment at which he was wanted, than that Rome first sought the forbearance of her transalpine invaders and then attacked them, encumbered with plunder and weakened by excesses?

Who that has hung over the pages of romaunt, reading of the troubadours and knights-errant of the chivalrous ages, has not loved the highly-coloured pictures, which he knew were not pictures of real life? The hour too late at Roncasvalle and the ill-fated Roland; the gage of

Blanche of Castile and the devotion of her *preux chevalier*; Richard of the Lion Heart and the generous Saladin; are some of the still cherished memories which common-sense fails to banish, because man has a tendency for beauty at the expense of utility.

We are so accustomed to speak of the crusades as wars undertaken to rescue Jerusalem from the hands of the infidels, that we forget the impropriety of the offensive epithet, as applied to Mahometans, in its universal application. It may be quite right for Christianity so to designate those who do not subscribe to its doctrines, because Christianity admits of no salvation beyond the pale of its particular church, and even denies it to any but its own peculiar form. Judaism knows of no infidels but those who altogether refuse to believe in God. To Judaism, Mahometans, as worshippers of the Eternal, are not only believers, but as much entitled to hope for mercy as Jews themselves. And yet the fable lives and flourishes because we are creatures of imitation, and are more prone to adopt a name that others use than to find a correct one ourselves.

But of all the fictions before which men voluntarily bow, not one is so wide-spread as that which claims a new and a higher morality for Christianity. It is asserted that the doctrine of the evangelists and their master was requisite to complete and perfect the doctrine of Moses. It is even maintained that the revelation of Sinai was in part superseded by the later lessons promulgated by Peter and Paul. A dispassionate inquiry will show that romance has far more than reality to do with this claim, which is another of the vanities that men create for their own gratification.

At the time when the founder of Christianity gave the faint outline of that system, which was subsequently so filled up that he would not have recognised his original design, there existed but two so-called religions in the

world. Of these, the one was Judaism, the other that monstrous absurdity called the Pantheism of Rome. The former was then in its decline as a national religion. Its professors, distracted by intestine factions, had their humanity torn from them by the hatred of partizanship. Unable or unwilling to preserve harmony within, they were more unable to maintain appearances from without. What their neighbours knew of them was so little to the credit of their advantage in point of revelation, that it seemed as though idolatry had a better effect on character than God-worship. While among the Romans, luxury and cupidity still left enough of noble to produce an Augustus, a Macænas, a Horace; among the Jews, sectarianism and bigotry had converted men into tigers, and priests into something worse. Meanwhile, Christianity was toiling over deserts, hiding in caves, or suffering in cities. Its professors, animated by the usual zeal of neophytes, and, above all things, desirous of propagating the doctrines which they felt to be so much more lofty than the superstitions of Rome, were examples of what the moral support of conscience could do for a good cause. They who toiled in deserts preferred their privations and sufferings to the refinement and effeminacy of towns. They who hid in caves sought darkness and solitude as a refuge from the glitter and confusion of a pleasure-loving crowd. They who suffered in cities displayed a calmness and joy in the agonies of death, which made them objects of envy to their persecutors. These saw revived the old heroism of a Curtius and a Fabricius, and while they tortured, they could not but admire. If there was any character, therefore, at this time, which evoked respect, it was that of the Christian. The Jew was shunned for his intolerance, his infidelity, his crimes. The Roman was scorned for his voluptuous enervation, his ignorant adhesion to the degrading mummeries of the heathen mythology. The Jew was no longer the representative

of the divine faith of Abraham, the sublime meekness of Moses, the trustful valour of David ; virtue seemed to have died from his nature, and all that was left was brutal.

The Roman, no longer nerved by the stern morality of his ancestors, had lost all that elevated him above the barbarians whom he affected to despise, and having nothing heavenly on which to fall back, there was no chance of his recovering from principle what he had lost in practice.

Can we wonder that Christianity, persecuted by the Romans as infidelity, and hated by the Jews as apostacy, should have withdrawn into itself, and, seeing in its professors qualities for which it vainly looked in its enemies, should have grown partly to think those qualities the inherent result of its teaching, and partly to persuade others to think so, to enhance its claims for adoption. If it did not inculcate a new morality, it did introduce a morality which was altogether new in the then existing corruption. The fiction was so slight that it was adopted as genuine, and once adopted, it was cherished as fondly as such children usually are.

When times changed, and Christianity became the dominant power, there was a new motive for retaining the claim which it assumed to have established. Instead of being the persecuted, it was now the persecutor ; repaying with interest the bitterness of idolators, with compound interest the hatred of Jews. In the struggle through which it had passed, priestcraft had done so much for its preservation, that gratitude required an acknowledgment. This was made by the admission of priestcraft into its bosom, and thenceforward Christianity became a compound of what it had borrowed from the old truths of revelation, and of what it had received from the new interpretations of men. If it had gained nothing in virtue, it had lost nothing in assumption. Priestcraft

claimed for it earthly infallibility, the fiction of its new morality claimed the sole right to heaven. The former looked down with contempt on all that refused its prescriptions; the latter justified its persecutions by the end which it pretended to achieve. Meanwhile, in Europe at least, a giant civilisation crushed a giant idolatry, and Judaism was left alone to bear the brunt of a contest, none the less sanguinary because Christians now fought in millions while Jews resisted in scores. All recollections of an elder brotherhood, all respect for a vitality which had survived so many death-blows, all memories which gratitude or affection might have lent to soften pride, were sedulously laid aside in the strife between a creed which fell in prosperity and a creed which only rose in adversity. For history tells too plainly for doubt to deny, that what Christianity gained in power it lost in purity, what Judaism lost in position it gained in a return to its old faith.

And still the fiction gained ground and flourished; again, too, with seeming justice. The Jews still presented to the world, which *would* not look within, the same spectacle that they had presented when the world *could* only see from without. Then the cankerworm had been generated in the core, and had eaten its way to the surface; now the blight had fallen on the cuticle, and had, as was supposed, penetrated into the heart. In both cases, rottenness was the result. Jews had been cruel, vindictive, fanatic; they were bitter, obstinate, grovelling. But they who so pronounced forgot that, while in Palestine unfaithfulness had produced one result, in Europe persecution had produced the other. For it is doubtful whether at any time Judaism was more zealously observed, and produced more noble instances of virtue, than at the period when Jews and infidels were impiously classed in the same category, and when, in the Christian, who boasted of his charity, the very name of Jew stirred pas-

sions that blasted all kindly feelings. At this era the Jews really afforded the spectacle that the first Christians had afforded. Driven from the abodes of civilisation, they still did not degenerate into barbarism; shut out from all honourable communion, they did not lose that love for the intellectual and the ideal which can exist only in the refined; deprived of all chance of displaying external philanthropy and resignation, they atoned by fraternal affection and friendly sympathy, than which greater were never known, and by the self-denial and submission with which they sacrificed home, wealth, and life, to the God of their ancestors.

And still the old fiction flourished. Jews *dared* not expose its fallacy, for already the murmurs of despair had been construed into the clamour of rebellion, and what new torture might they not expect if they entered into controversy. Christians *would* not expose its fallacy, because much of their influence, and all their respectability while they were persecutors, depended on its reception as a truth. And even more recently, when active vigour has ceased to make Jewish life a constant martyrdom, indifference on one side and pertinacity on the other have contributed to the maintenance of the erroneous assumption. Satisfied with the better worldly fate which has been permitted them, Jews have been too happy in the consciousness of the treasures of Sinaitic revelation to care much what others asserted. They have studied the portion which has given rise to these reflections, and they have studied other portions like it. Therein they have seen the basis of the most perfect system of morality that the world has ever known. They have learned charity without selfishness, temperance without asceticism, humility without obstinacy, resignation without sullenness. They have acquired justice without the subtleties of law, jurisprudence without the complications of statute, equity, or canon. They have obtained industry without

avarice, mental cultivation without pride, intellectual superiority without rationalism. They have gathered wealth without forgetting the divine source of all blessings. They have borne poverty without murmuring at the inscrutable decrees of Providence. They have known that honesty is the negative virtue of the many, that honour is the positive merit of the few. They have garnered in their heart's core a faith in eternal mercy which no misfortune could shake, which no allurement could alienate; and ever, when desolation has sat on their hearths, there has arisen, from the ashes of all they have held dear, the phoenix hope, bearing a new life into a trustful future.

And still they have held their peace when Christianity has blazoned its fiction; because their natural doctrine is non-interference. But when they who pretend to interpret the relationship in which Jews stand to their fellow-countrymen of other creeds, assert that Jews are aliens by birth and by morality; when, with the gravity of legislators and the dignity of statesmen, they promulgate the monstrous assumption that God himself has violated his own injunction, "Thou shalt neither add thereto nor diminish therefrom," which declared the Mosaic dispensation perfect; and when, acting on such interpretation, they would keep alive the old spirit of intolerance and persecution, then it would be criminal in Jews any longer to maintain silence. They cannot permit their past to be covered with obloquy in order that their future may be steeped in shame. They declare emphatically, that they are not aliens by birth, for that all their temporal hopes are allied with the homes of their adoption, with the land of their childhood and age; that, if they do look forward to a restoration, they know that all mankind are to assist at it; that to isolate them for this hope would be to isolate all believers in God, for that all believe in the future regeneration of man, with which the return to Palestine

is intimately connected. They declare emphatically that they are not aliens in morality, for that all that Christianity has taught to its professors was but the reflex of what Moses inculcated from Sinai, and in proof of this they point to his precepts and their application. They can bear any taunt which is directed against their individuality, because as men they claim no peculiar righteousness; but they repudiate the sneer levelled at their faith, because now, as ever, they cannot believe that God gave them a doctrine which wanted any thing to render men happy through religion and virtue; they cannot believe that a merciful Creator instituted a system which gave men tendencies opposed to right and honesty, and allowed it to remain uncorrected for fifteen hundred years. They are willing to allow that Christianity was necessary as the means of introducing God-worship to a world plunged in idolatry; that its spirituality was necessary as the stepping-stone to its morality, but there they stop. They cannot allow that which would declare the Bible—recognised by Christians as well as by Jews—to be a record of facts based on incomplete notions of morality, to be a record of principles avowedly unfit for the end which they everywhere pretend to subserve.

This is an age of investigation. Every day some ancient theory is being pulled down. Science has destroyed many fictions, common-sense has taken the veil from many more. Old monarchies, founded on the right divine of kings to govern wrong, have given place to governments in which the happiness of the people is the first consideration. Birth has ceased to be the only claim to public employment, while patronage has ceased to be the only power to bestow. Men no longer inhale fevers as their fathers did, because they chose to let things alone; they endeavour to trace physical ills to their sources, and they enjoy life the better for their perseverance. Chemistry is ventilating our homes, purifying our food, removing the corruption

that grew from our garbage and our graveyards ; medicine is arresting diseases once believed to be incurable, and has not yet become satisfied with what it has done ; philosophy is joining the extremes of the world with new bonds of civilisation and friendship, and is still searching for new discoveries. Can we not apply some such powers to the dissemination of those greatest and most essential of all truths, religious truths ? They would teach us that all God-worship which is honest is alike productive of morality, because it aspires to imitate its divine source ; that to seek to set man against man by assumption of a higher virtue, is destructive of the object aimed at, by encouraging vanity and self-confidence on the one hand, jealousy and distrust on the other ; that all systems of faith are best expounded by the best practices ; that charity means something more than deeds of love only to those who think like ourselves ; that universal happiness is not to be attained by trampling on what others respect ; that to thrust conversion down men's throats is not the shortest way to bring belief to their hearts ; and, above all, that to insult what a thousand generations have looked up to as divine, because history and conviction have proved that any thing less than divine must have perished, is neither a proof of superior wisdom, nor a sign of superior morality.

כִּי תֵצֵא

DEUTERONOMY: CHAPTER XXI., VERSE 10.

AMONGST the institutions which tend most to raise societies from barbarism to civilisation, none are more efficacious than those which give to women their proper place in the scale of creation. When God formed woman as the "help-meet" for man, he designed her exact position in her name. She was not to be the slave to a tyrant, but the companion of an equal ; she was not to be the

tool of caprice, but the partner alike of joys and of sorrows. When, subsequently, the Eternal made known to our first parents the inherent consequences of good and evil, such as they had disobeyed and impiously aspired to know them, he again pointed out woman's relationship to man. She was to be the mother of his children, and therefore not only was she to be entitled to respect as his connecting link with futurity, but she was to claim his love as the means to that felicity which he was to know in possessing descendants. But her desire was to be to her husband, and he was to rule over her. In thus declaring her dependence, Providence, which is all mercy, at once committed her to the guardianship of all that should be chivalrous and noble in man's nature; for while it is not mean to oppose an equal, it is ever low to crush or even to slight an inferior.

Wherever this decree of Heaven on woman's behalf has been disregarded, there either barbarism or but an inferior civilisation prevails. The negro and the red man, who devote their energies to the chase, to war, and to the scalping-knife, leave to woman the drudgery and labour which they think beneath themselves. Thus the men, unsoftened by intercommunion with beings naturally more gentle, retain all the brutality of savages, and the women, debased to the level of slaves, and deprived of the moral support of man's higher faculties, degenerate into mere animals.

The Mahomedan shuts up woman in harems, and debars her from all social intercourse with the other sex. He refuses to admit her into his circle on earth, and denies her, wanting a soul, a participation in heaven. And what is the result? He drones through existence the slave to a sensuality which has all the mean passion of the brute; she trifles through life without even the maternal tenderness of the tiger. His divan is the scene of stolid indifference; her chamber is the abode of petty

rivalry and small jealousy. He seeks her as a necessary evil ; she ministers to pleasures which she dares not aspire to share. Thus, society is composed of two distinct elements, which may intermix but which never combine ; and civilisation ever progresses in proportion to the perfection with which its atoms combine : it halts when they only mingle.

In the feudal days of western Europe, when men gave all their thoughts to the tilt-yard and the battle-field, and left women to the solitude of their bowers, history has little to tell but of bloodshed and horror, of oppression and resistance. Men did not throw off their armour till the iron had eaten into their souls to indurate them ; and when they did appear in gentler guise it was only to give additional liberty to their drunken revelry. They knew of no moderation ; they either raged like carnivora in the mad passion for prey, or they wallowed like swine in the slough of sensual enjoyment. Women were sometimes sickened by the frequency of warfare, which gave back their sons and their husbands mangled corpses or maimed invalids, and were sometimes hardened by horrors too common to excite emotion. In the former case, they needed the comfort which it should be their peculiar province to bestow ; in the latter, they lost the characteristic of mercy which renders them so lovely. Every way society suffered ; and, if chivalry did nothing else to deserve well of modern times, it at least paved the way for a better civilisation when it devoted its energies to the service of " lady fair," and when it rendered even the god of battles less gaunt by decorating him with the colours of its mistress.

In respect to the treatment of women, Judaism, although taking its rise in the East, is remarkably distinguished. Nor can we wonder at this when we recollect its Divine origin. Already, in the earliest times, God had dignified women by his special regard. Sarah, Rebekah, and

Miriam were all so signalised. Rebekah "went to inquire of God." Miriam is emphatically designated a prophetess. Later, Deborah ruled Canaan with judicial functions; Hannah was privileged to invoke and to receive peculiar interposition. To be a mother in Israel was to be a matron honoured in the love of a husband and happy in the duty of children. If women were not permitted to take any active part in the public offices of religion, as in the sacrifice, or the festival gatherings, she had her share assigned to her in the domestic supervision necessary to the proper observance of the dietary laws, of the Sabbath, of the weaving of garments.* If she did not occupy the prominent position to which some women now attain, she did exercise that home influence which is so powerful for good or for evil. She was alike removed from the degradation of the household drudge, from the indignity of being the victim to caprice, or the slave to passion. The Holy Law, ever so careful to provide for human happiness, which is bound up in human progress, is full of enactments having reference to the rights of woman and to her claims to forbearance and kindness. Her privileges as a wife are frequently enforced, her purity as a daughter is strenuously recommended. As a wife she is to be faithful, as a daughter she is to be virtuous. If she forget her conjugal duty, she is to become an outcast, branded of heaven and earth; if she abandon the beauty of her virgin honour, she becomes "an abomination to the Eternal."

And these early precautions on woman's behalf have always been recognised in Jewish life. In the darkest days of persecution, when bigotry and cruelty contracted Judaism as in a vice, they could not press out of it the fidelity of its women, the purity of its daughters. Degradation, so fertile of evil, never generated female dishonour

* In accordance with the command: "Thou shalt not wear a garment of two kinds, as of woollen and linen together."

in Israel. Ignorance, so ready to raise accusations, never dared assign the stigma of female dishonour to the people to which it had done so much to provoke to it. And thus, while tyranny reigned without, domestic happiness prevailed at home. When the Jewish husband fled from the taunts of the fanatic, or the insults of the oppressor, he was sure to find comfort on the hearth which was lighted by the fire of conjugal love. If the Jewish youth was constrained to check the worldly ambition natural to his age, the earthly hopes proper to his years, he had at least the solace that his image lived in some faithful heart, to which neither his ambition nor his hopes could give any thing more precious than his affection.

Among the worldly appliances which aided in the preservation of Judaism, when all else was wrecked in the sea of barbarism, this influence of woman may be considered as most important. Woman was the one haven from which adverse winds could not detain the otherwise friendless Jew. When every other resource failed, she still remained firm. Wherefore, when brighter days shone, the gratitude which she awakened by her faithfulness in adversity was not diminished by the growth of ties from without. Her tendrils had taken deep root in the heart of her husband and sons, and no less worthy love could supplant them. She had clung to them in trouble, she had given them her sympathy in sorrow, and in the day of their pride they did not cast her off. Nor did she deserve less honourable treatment. As her virtue and her faith had lent to degradation almost its only charm, so to prosperity her virtue and her faith lent its brightest ornament. She had sustained manly fortitude and encouraged it to tenderness and respect; in return, manly fortitude copied her domestic honour, and rendered home the abode of earth's most sacred feelings. She had shown through every change of fortune her firm adhesion to the command: "There shall be none impure

among the daughters of Israel:" he learned from her example to shew a like adherence to the command: "There shall be none impure among the sons of Israel."

Thus, domestic vice was banished from Judaism. Men did not take upon themselves the duties of matrimony without a full sense of their importance; women did not become wives without determining to deserve the honour of the title. Drunkenness and gambling, therefore, the two meretricious syrens that woo so many husbands to destruction, were all but unknown. Desertion, which renders men desperate and women worse, was scarcely heard of. Jews, in mingling on equal terms with their fellow-citizens, imbibed many of the customs which fashion or taste render common, but infidelity in marriage was not of the number, nor was the lewd shamelessness that panders to lawless passion. There may have been, there were, exceptions; but they were exceptions, falling in spite of their religion, and not in consequence of it. Divorce was the event of an age, hearts grieving for an erring daughter were almost miracles. Let us hope that no darker shadows are about to fall on Jewish homes.

There can be no doubt that a love for dress and pleasure is developing itself very rapidly among some classes of our community. To some extent this is not only pardonable, but even commendable. It is natural that they who are immured during six days in darkened rooms and close alleys should seek the open air on the seventh day. It is natural that they who bow in rags beneath the yoke of hard labour, should spend some portion of their earnings in dress, when they desire to throw off not only the weight of toil but its badge also. But "extremes meet;" there is but one step between virtue and vice. Dress and pleasure, like other passions, exercise an engrossing influence, especially upon those whose indifferently cultivated minds have few intellectual resources. The man of nerve who enjoys the excitement

of strong drinks, is wise if he takes the pledge of total abstinence rather than slip into inebriety. The young person who feels the love for show and amusement growing to be absorbing, would be wise to abjure altogether what may have commenced harmlessly but must end injuriously. As the delicate optic nerve suffers from the glare of too much light, so the delicate moral temperament suffers from the glitter of too much pleasure. Elderly and staid fathers and mothers, happy in their domesticity, do not frequent the resorts of the gaudily attired, joy-seeking crowd. Young people are thus left to themselves. They have not the support which the presence of seniors always gives; and even the steadiest object derives additional steadiness from support. They give the rein to laughter, which quickly slips the restraining curb, and soon many an eye dances when a cheek ought to blush, many a word passes as a joke which should burn the throat of its utterer. True, enough of the old characteristics of our race remain to prevent real crime; but should this satisfy us? Is our holy religion, so elevating and so beautiful, to give us nothing but negative virtue? Shall we believe that we are conforming to the ways of God by simply abstaining from positive vice? Ah! no; let us take higher ground. Already the world has learned that we have deserved an honourable name for our private morality, let us feel equally sure that in future we deserve that name among ourselves. How can our young men hope to become exemplary fathers if, on the threshold of their manhood, they adopt a levity of manner not excusable in children? How can our maidens hope to become "mothers in Israel" if they lose that innate sensitiveness which shrinks from contamination; if, inured to coarse manners, they become hardened to a coarse habit of thought? The remedy for evil is ever in our own hands. In the pages of Holy Writ we find wise precepts to guide, bright models to direct us. Let our

young men study these precepts till "there be none impure among the sons of Israel;" let our maidens copy these models till "there be none impure among the daughters of Israel."

כי תבוא

DEUTERONOMY: CHAPTER XXVI.

WHAT varied emotions are excited by the contemplation of this portion. How vividly does the inspired lawgiver depict the results of virtue! How gloomily does he shadow the consequences of vice! With the strict justice of the stern moralist he will allow of no middle course. Who is not good is bad. Who does not deserve the blessing of heaven, merits its curse. Who cannot look up to the Eternal and say: "I have not passed from thy commandments, nor have I forgotten them," must prepare to listen to the anathema from Mount Ebal. With the uncompromising piety of the true religionist, Moses claims entire and perfect obedience for "all the precepts." Not one is to be slighted. Man is not to presume to measure the importance of ordinances by any standard of his own, but he is to regard all alike as the emanation of Divine will. He is to bow to supreme wisdom, convincing himself by faith, if by no more rational means, that conformity is his highest aim. And here again the legislator shows how well he knows the worth of consistency. To admit human right to set a value on divine institutions, is to introduce the law of expediency, always so subversive of principles. Every one will assume to disregard what he conceives not to be essential, till dissent will be as extensive as dissenters are numerous. As society only flourishes in proportion to the uniformity of its government, as individuals only prosper in proportion to the uniformity of their conduct, so religion only binds when it is a system from which

there cannot be any deviation. If we look into the forms of non-Israelites, we shall see how want of consistency has multiplied sects, till it is scarcely possible to distinguish the many shades of difference, till it is difficult to meet two believers who believe exactly alike. And what is the result? Men can find excuses for almost any crime; they can scarcely admit of pardon for what they consider want of faith,—that is want of their faith. Thus, intolerance grows into a giant which ought to shrink into a pigmy. Thus, the seeds of hatred are sown broadcast, while the seeds of love spring up only in corners. Thus, persecution stalks abroad like a tyrant instead of being bound a captive in the dark caverns of ignorance and idolatry. If we refer to the history of our own nation, we shall find its blackest page rendered most black by the fierce internal dissensions which raged between the two sects struggling for mastery. Everywhere, the annals of time tell the same tale; and wisely, therefore, Moses sought to prevent the evils of anarchy, by demanding at the hands of his flock conformity which admitted of no doubt, obedience which admitted of no aberration. Later, the rabbins aimed at the same consistency; and if their efforts in modern days have not been crowned with success, they have at least the merit of good intentions. But it was scarcely possible that their legislation could prove more efficacious than the legislation of Sinai, which they desired to preserve and explain. The original had failed, despite its divinity; it was not to be expected that their interpretation, often disputed among themselves, and often the result of external circumstances, could prevail, when, according to the plan adopted by their successors, no authority was left to alter what time had rendered obsolete, or change of circumstances improper.

But perhaps the most interesting reflections suggested by the portion before us, are those which grow out of the

prophetic warnings of Moses. These promise earthly prosperity and heavenly support for religious consistency : “ And it shall come to pass, if thou attentively hearken to the voice of the Eternal thy God, to observe and to perform *all* the commands which I command thee this day, that the Eternal shall set thee high above all the nations of the earth, and all these blessings shall come upon thee and overtake thee.” They denounce worldly misfortunes and divine vengeance for disobedience and inconsistency : “ And it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken to the voice of the Eternal thy God, to observe and to do all his commands and his statutes which I command thee this day, that all these curses shall come upon thee and overtake thee.”

If there be any particular principle inherent to all true religion, it is the principle of responsibility. To suppose that God at any time directly interferes with human actions, or with their consequences to man, is to suppose man no longer a free agent. Controlled by the illimitable and irresistible power of the Eternal, he would of necessity cease to be master of his own destiny. He might safely plead his fate here to be the reward or punishment of his conduct here, and he would thus be justified in rebelling against punishment and reward hereafter. Even a mortal tribunal would admit the force of his plea ; much more so the divine Judge who is all mercy. But all our experience, every feeling of our nature, every aspiration of our souls, all point to another state of existence, in which, materiality being separated from the spirit, we shall be held accountable for the good or the bad which we have done or caused during life. To deprive us of this prospect would be at once to take away all merit for our virtues, all criminality for our vices. Conscience would no longer be needed as a monitor ; its approving voice would be but an empty imagination mocking the ears with unreal sounds of vanity ; its condemning reproof would be an

echo born of deceit. All the bright examples with which history abounds would be lies ; they who have blessed the world by their knowledge, their philanthropy, their piety ; they who have sacrificed every earthly hope, every earthly happiness, even life itself, because they believed in a futurity ; they who have endured misery with fortitude, and prosperity without pride ; all would alike cease to be of value because they would cease to be responsible. They who have shamed humanity by their ignorance, their cruelty, or their idolatry ; they who have crushed their fellow-creatures into slavery, or forced them into dungeons and torture ; they who have made power the means for multiplying misery, religion the excuse for horrors too horrible to contemplate ; all would be alike undeserving of execration, because God, it would be said, was the source of their conduct. We should be compelled to expunge from our memory Samuel, David, Solomon ; Newton, Davy, Harvey ; Abarbanel, and a thousand holier martyrs ; or, still more frightful, we should have to associate Haman and Alba with Mordecai and Maccabeus, Philip of Spain with Alfred of England, Robespierre and his blood-stained crew with the noble lady who now sways this happy country. Nay, further, while we should be ascribing no peculiar merit to God as the cause of all the good with which earth has been visited, we should be compelled to admit his attributes of long-suffering, gracious and merciful, and yet fasten on them all the anger, tyranny, and crime with which earth has been stained. Surely every sentient being would recoil from such a conclusion.

What then is the alternative ? A simple but a saving one. True, it will deprive persecutors of their excuse and tyrants of their palliation, but it will restore to the world the means of regaining the real path to virtue. It will instil remorse and terror into those who have pretended to find in the pages of Holy Writ a warrant for all the

atrocities which bigotry perpetrates and calls religion. Men will no longer be able to justify the intolerance with which they have treated Jews and Judaism, by branding them in the name of God as outcasts and aliens ; but, instead, responsibility will teach mercy, volition will instil philanthropy, and the world will be blessed with concord where it has hitherto been cursed with war.

The alternative is, to admit to the utmost extent the doctrine of free-agency, and to regard what is called prophecy not as the fiat of the Eternal to which man *must* inevitably bow, but as the announcement, through divine prescience, of the infallible consequences to which man will *voluntarily* conduct himself by means entirely within his own control. Viewed in this light, Holy Writ will no longer be chargeable with anathemas or sentences of punishment. Its predictions, like its precepts, will be simple admonitions. Its precepts will point out the conduct most conducive to virtue and happiness ; its predictions will make known the results of obedience or disobedience. But its precepts will be binding only on those who voluntarily perform them, its predictions will be accomplished only through human agency. Both will emanate from that supreme intelligence which created all things, and which, having impressed on its works certain fixed principles, knows how to guide man in accordance with those principles. Nor is it difficult to believe that the growth of inherent physical results from moral agencies is one of the doctrines on which divine teaching is founded. Man may not always be able to trace the connection between cause and effect, but to assume that God can do so, is only to ascribe wisdom in proportion to his power. Thus, a positive command—"Thou shalt love the Eternal thy God"—will be accepted, because men have faith in the mercy which reconciled devotion to the Creator with happiness to the created. A negative command—"Thou shalt not steal"—will be accepted, because men have faith

in the prescience which rendered dishonesty, discovered or undiscovered, incompatible with human well-being. The promise of blessings—prosperity and position among nations, will be regarded as the declaration, that such are the ends to which voluntary obedience to God and spontaneous rectitude with men must lead. The denunciation of curses—adversity and degradation among men, will be regarded as pointing out that such are the ends to which self-willed crime and obstinate pride always tend.

Reading in the portion before us the blessing and the curse announced by Moses, we can understand them only in the way here propounded. While as Jews we hold ourselves responsible for our rejection of that line of conduct which would have been the means of our happiness, and for our voluntary persistence in those vices which led to our downfall, we none the less hold those equally responsible who contributed to our overthrow, and who have rendered miserable our dispersion. Nebuchadnezzar and Titus may have been instruments of divine vengeance, but their respective conquests are none the less parts of the policy which Babylon and Rome always pursued. The spirit which treated Jews like wild beasts in England, France, Germany, Italy, and Spain, may have been obedient to the divine behest that there should be no rest for Jewish foot, but it was voluntarily so, and will be held accountable for its persecution. Men have always been most ready in framing excuses for conduct which they can only believe to be reprehensible because they do excuse it. We cannot be surprised, therefore, that the detestation in which Jews have been held, and the cruelty of which they have been the victims, should have found palliatives in those who hated and in those who hunted. To pretend to have a warrant in the express commands of God was too tempting to be rejected. Hence, when any bigot more intolerant than his fellows would fan the old flame of animosity, when any trifler with human existence and human

happiness, would by some wholesale butchery overstep the bounds of ordinary murder, we are sure to hear reference to the denunciations of Moses and the subsequent prophets, and to listen to justification founded thereon. Moralists of all creeds, no less than Jews, appreciate such allusions and such apologies at their proper worth. They regard them as the mask behind which vice ever seeks to hide its deformity; nor do they think that any amount of argument or sophistry on the part of man can throw off a responsibility pronounced irrevocable by God.

נצבים וילך

DEUTERONOMY: CHAPTER XXIX., VERSE 9.

“NEITHER with you only do I make this covenant and this oath; but with him that standeth here this day with us before the Lord our God, and also with him that is not here with us this day.”

In these terms, among others, was permanency engraven on Judaism. The inspired lawgiver, conscious that through him the Eternal was making a revelation which was to be final in respect to its capability for securing human happiness, desired to impress on his legislation that characteristic which should stamp its eternal origin, and declare it suited to all times. He knew that in this do the laws of man differ from the laws of God; those are circumscribed, commensurate with the little wisdom, the selfishness, the narrow-mindedness, out of which they grow; these are infinite in their grasp, unbounded as the omniscience which gave them birth, all merciful, all just, all perfect. Those are a succession of changes, one age demolishing what a previous age has set up, in order that a future generation may destroy the labours of the present. These are constant and unvarying, allied to time as closely as time is allied to eternity. Those are as often the

result of prejudice as of judgment, frequently failing of their effect, even in the persons of those who make them. These are based in the great principles of right and universal good, and are equally inalienable.

Moses knew also that permanence is foreign to man's nature, and, in mortal things, strange to his experience. Society presents a surface like the surface of the ocean ; myriads of beings, like drops, whirl and struggle, advance and recede, without rest, without apparent destination. And in this constant motion is the life which preserves. Deprive ocean of this characteristic and the whole earth would breed corruption ; take it away from society and man would cease to know hope or fear, to dread retrogression, to seek improvement. But even as the ocean moves within fixed bounds, so should society revolve within determined principles. Were the waters not coerced, their very mobility would destroy the world ; if society be not restrained, law would become tyranny, and from the elements of happiness would be formed anarchy.

Some truth like this Moses desired to inculcate in the words above quoted. The Israelites were about being launched into the community of nations. They were to take with them human passions and human faculties ; they were to contribute their share to the supply of those wants by which nature has declared that man cannot live independently of his fellow. They were no longer to dwell in the isolation which had marked their sojourn in the wilderness. The visible presence of the Eternal was to be removed ; no successor to Moses was to be able to invoke and receive, at all hours, the special interposition of Heaven. The period of their helplessness and infancy being over, parental care was no more to guard them with an eye constantly open, a care never slumbering. They were to try their manhood without the unwearied supervision which had hitherto guarded them. But, ere the

last bond of restraint is removed, the faithful exponent of God's will recapitulates all the mercies and all the benefits which have blessed the past, and appeals to them as incitements to grateful recollection in the future. He dwells on the conditions attached to a continuance of Divine favour, and expatiates on the object which these conditions are designed to subserve.

“ See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil.”

He does not himself immediately deduce the inference, but it is obvious that Israel is not to submit the laws of the Eternal to the general fate of man's possessions. As Israel is to be one of the families of the earth, and yet to be a peculiar family, so God's revelation is to be a mortal holding, and yet not subject to mortal contingencies. Israelites are to go forth into the world, and are to participate in its wants and desires, in so far as they are worldly, but beyond that they are not to proceed. They are to carry on the fullest intercommunication; to discharge all the duties which mutual well-being demands; to advance with the mass in the pursuit of knowledge and civilisation; but they are not to copy the multitude in giving mutability to religion, any more than they are to copy the abominations of the people whom they are to exterminate before they can possess Canaan.

Let the word religion, however, be understood as Moses himself defined it. In this age of controversy, when men so often impale principles on points of form, it is not possible to be too particular. Happily, too, the portion before us supplies in precise terms what is wanted.

“ For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldst say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it and do it. Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldst say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring

it to us, that we may hear it and do it. But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it."

Mystery and spiritualism (as men attempt to force them on religion) are thus declared alien to Judaism. The Written Law, with its integral explanation, the Oral Law, is the doctrine of Moses; all else is foreign, and therefore not essential. Chaldæa may have added its cabalistic lore; persecution may have rendered exclusion politic; dispersion and the consequent desire to guard, may have raised particular fences; but Judaism is not to be confounded with these adjuncts. They may or they may not be attached, according as circumstances pronounce them advantageous or disadvantageous. The most venerable orthodoxy cannot claim more, the most levelling heterodoxy should be content to ask no less. If, therefore, any age or any body of men can be proved to have given to Judaism a colouring, beneficial or even inevitable at the time, but by no means beneficial or inevitable now, the very words of Moses are a warrant for its removal.

But we must be firm to principles. Judaism is not to be made to adapt itself to the ever changing views of caprice, it is not to be confounded with those other forms of belief which originated when men were ignorant of God. To compel Judaism to adapt itself to caprice, would be to deviate from the text with which these reflections are headed, and would, therefore, be to deprive it of one of its most essential characteristics. To confound Judaism with those other forms of belief, would be to permit priestcraft to plot for the preservation of a dominion, based on popular blindness on the one side and on hierarchical tyranny on the other side. The principles of Judaism are few and simple. If the existence of a Supreme Intelligence be conceded, and the necessity for a revelation of its attributes be not denied, there is nothing about which even scepticism can cavil. Free-will, responsibility, the

immortality of the soul, reward and punishment hereafter, are common to Judaism with Christianity and Mahometanism. The unity of God, his undivided majesty, his all-powerful supervision, his long-suffering mercy, shine with unclouded beauty in the grand teachings of Sinai and the wilderness.

- But Judaism diverges in two directions.

It narrows, for its peculiar professors, into a belief in the Mosaic dispensation, and in its eternal character as a revelation. It claims faith in the other inspired writers of the Bible, as the successors chosen by Heaven to make known the consequences of sin and the rewards of virtue, and as necessary links between God and man, when a special providence was still visible on earth. It demands perpetual observation of certain ceremonies, not as mere forms, but as representatives of internal convictions, and of spiritual aspirations for a communion with the Divine. It enforces uniformity in this observation, as the only safeguard against that corruption which always grows from what is mortal. It keeps Jews separate only as religionists, and bids them, in all secular matters, cooperate with their fellow-creatures, without distinction of creed.

It widens, for all mankind, into the design of raising perishable mortality to imitate a perfect Creator. It awakens universal love and universal charity. It inculcates as a duty the necessity for regarding all men as brothers, not merely those who adopt its tenets, but even unbelievers, as the children of one God. In its doctrine of a Messiah and a restoration of the seed of Abraham to Canaan, it points out the improbability of the human race and the share which Heaven proposes to itself in human regeneration. If it declines to recognise vicarious atonement and the superior value of faith alone without works, it does so because not only does it find no warrant for such principles in the successive revelations through Moses

and the prophets, but it finds a wiser and a higher morality in believing man to be the only means to his own salvation, and his deeds the only medium for his acceptance or rejection by the Supreme Judge. If it refuses to accept the mysteries with which spiritualism has sought to envelop the plain facts of Scripture, it does so because Scripture, in the words above quoted, so ordains. If, for example, it regards the sacrifice of Isaac as a simple event, requiring no typical explanation to render it significant, it raises faith in God to the level on which God himself placed it when he counted it as righteousness. If it reads the prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and others, in their evident connection with Jewish history, and gives to them the only interpretation which the sacred language allows, it is steadily pursuing the behest of Moses not to "go up to heaven," not to "go beyond the sea." If it acknowledges no teaching which supersedes the law of Moses, if it continues steadfastly to observe the "feasts of the Lord" in their literality, and to practise the Abrahamic covenant in its integrity, again it adopts the simple commands of the Eternal, and leaves to priestcraft and controversy the mysteries of a symbolical paschal lamb and an uncircumcised heart.

Judaism remains firmly on earth; it does "not go up to heaven," it does "not go beyond the sea." It grasps in one bond of universal sympathy all creation. It has peculiar duties for its followers, and the peculiar vocation of preserving for the benefit of mankind the great truths of revelation, but it claims no peculiar privileges. It admits the inherent right of every man to worship God after his own fashion, and it is thus the champion of liberty of conscience. It asks of the members of other creeds only the observance of the traditional Noahic precepts, because history and experience have shown them to be the basis of all morality, and these observed, it is content to leave the soul free to soar to heaven through any

medium that its wing can cleave. It does not seek to proselytize, because it has no object to gain in making converts. It does not strive to make others accept its saving grace, and failing this, to thrust it into their unwilling hearts, because it believes that all God-worship is equally calculated to elevate, to improve, to redeem from sin.

And still, although Jews, and with them Judaism, have penetrated into almost every corner of the civilised globe; although there is scarcely any society which does not count Jews among its members, there is no people, there is no religion which is so little known or so little understood by others. Prejudice has stood with a flaming sword to prevent that free intercommunication without which friendship cannot be cemented. From the dark ages of ignorant superstition, of intolerance, of blood-stained persecution, errors have come down like heirlooms even to the present generation. Education which has enlightened all else, has left this one corner dark. Men, whose intellect has embraced the vast extent of science, whose genius has dazzled others and ennobled themselves, have been mere infants in their ideas of Jews and Judaism. Men, whose judgment has guided states through political convulsions, or whose prudence has averted national danger, who have dared to act as reason and justice have taught even where interest or policy may have pointed in a different direction, have stumbled like blind men against Jews and Judaism. Errors, like manors, have become real property, to be handed down with titles and transmitted by entail. Some have been willing to enact over again the dark deeds of the first crusaders. Some have had all the will, but have revolted against the horror, and so have called in refinement to kill without offending decency. Some have pretended to find in Moses and the prophets a warrant for any thing but mercy or brotherly love. Because Holy Writ, in

cautioning Israelites against the consequences of sin, declared that they *would* be the scorn of mankind, mankind have willed that they *should* be. As though any act were not voluntary, any being not responsible. Meanwhile, Jews have held their peace; they have not sought to outroot the hatred of caste which has made them its victims, because they have felt that while they might cut off one head from the hydra, they had no fire wherewith to prevent the growth of a hundred other heads. Silently and steadfastly, like finger-posts pointing the right road, they have directed their eyes to the Bible, and, in the spirit of the portion before us, have hoped to be judged by it, without mystery, without spiritualism. They have held up the Law of Moses and the words of the prophets in their literal meaning, and have wished these to be the standard by which they should be measured. They have felt that all the accusations which bigotry or fanaticism has raised against them would there be refuted; that by adherence to the direct text of Scripture, without symbolizing or typifying, not only would Judaism be best understood, but religion generally be better estimated. And they feel so still, notwithstanding the conflicting opinions on the best manner of preserving Judaism true to the past, and yet not at variance with the present, notwithstanding the endeavours which they are making for an outward recognition of rights. For what changes soever Jews may desire, at least they desire none essentially religious. They are still anxious to maintain the Mosaic dispensation in its perfect integrity. They may have differences chiefly upon points of form or unimportant matters of detail, some obsolete and no longer subservient to their original design, some incompatible with the more enlarged sphere of action to which a wiser policy is calling men of all creeds; but on all essential principles there exists no diversity, for still every zealous Israelite acknowledges his heirship in the possession which the Eternal conferred

with the words: "Neither with you only do I make this covenant and this oath, but with him that standeth here this day with us before the Lord our God, and also with him that is not here with us this day."

 דְּאוּרֵי

DEUTERONOMY: CHAPTER XXXI.

ON the confines of eternity human nature frequently seems to undergo a complete revolution. Whereas, in life, the constant struggle between the animal and the spiritual but too often terminates in favour of the more ignoble wrestler, in death, the soul ever gains the ascendant, and borrows from heaven in proportion as it looses itself from earth. Whether visions of the future "cast their shadow before," or whether all worldly hope, and therefore all agitation, being lost, serenity lends a beauty which is known only to the majesty of content, it were difficult to decide; but there is certainly no spectacle more sublime than that presented by the gentle departure from existence of a being resigned to Almighty will. Even a beast of the field, ignorant of an hereafter, quietly awaiting the stroke of death, excites no common emotion. A man, in the full possession of his faculties, and who, knowing something of futurity, can confidently go into the presence of his God, is more dignified in his shattered remains of humanity than a king in the pride of his power. The strength that is gone from the body enters into the soul, and all that is ethereal acquires a brightness before unknown. On to the wan and wrinkled face of age, marked by a thousand passions, creeps the long-forgotten expression of childlike innocence; charms sit on the brow which but now was haggard; in the eye beams a holy calm, never previously beheld. Then is it, too, that the tongue, hitherto indulging in the vain, and often empty, verbiage of society, bursts into language which elevates while it harrows the

hearers, and which with the voice of infancy, teaches truths which before thunder had failed to inculcate. Abandoned indeed must be the individual who can bear unmoved the reflections suggested by these death-bed changes, who is not penetrated by the holy realities there presented to his mind.

History, ever so suggestive to those who reason on its facts, and who are not content with merely learning them, affords a host of instances illustrative of the dying scenes or dying acts of men, to whose end some God-like attributes have given undying existence. Who can read the story of Jacob's death without a tear? How beautifully calm is the piety with which the aged patriarch—whose years had been "few and evil," and had not approached to the years of his ancestors—resigns his soul to its Divine giver! What a type of his fate is the peace which reigns around him in his last moments, as compared with the troubled activity of his past life! as though Heaven thereby declared that in its rest is the compensation for all the misfortunes that beset humanity.

The glorious poet, warrior, and king, who sat second on the throne of Israel, affords many an example worthy our imitation. His psalms dwell in our hearts, his patriotism lives in our memories. We turn with admiring pity to his prayer: "Let me fall now into the hands of the Eternal;" for we see as much greatness in his humility as in the forbearance which induced him to spare the life of the persecutor Saul. But, of all the recollections that he has left, none is so sacred as that which cherishes his last song, when, at the end of a perilous career, he at length found rest from his enemies.

Who has not loved to believe in the mythic story of which Lycurgus is the hero? How great are the self-denial, the stern justice, the incorruptible simplicity of the man! We bow to the force of genius which, in that primitive age, gave birth to a legislation so pure, and so

adapted to its end ; and, while we pity the faith which could inculcate the propriety of a voluntary death, we cannot refuse our admiration to the motive which exacted an oath that it became impossible to break without sacrilege. The refusal of the crown was only right ; the pardon of Alexander was only merciful ; the suicide was as noble in its self-abnegation as it was terrible in its superstitious darkness.

Solon, whose wisdom saved one king from death, and another from barbarity ; who gave to the most polished city of antiquity a constitution which is still remarkable for the knowledge it displayed of human character, never did any act half so worthy of respect as that which prompted him to go into exile to die, that he might not see his fellow-countrymen submit to a dishonourable tyranny.

Who that has read the story of Henry the Second's eldest son, remembers his rebellions or his follies ? the affecting sentiments evoked by his penitence and his humiliation wipe away every recollection, save of his agonizing grief and his self-elected place of death.

What a picture do the death-beds of Louis the Sixth and Louis the Saint, of France, present. The former would scarcely live in history but for the dying charge with which he committed his crown and his power into the hands of his son. The latter teaches us to respect the mistaken piety and zeal which induced him to forget the great interests of his subjects, in what he conceived to be the holier duty of attempting to extirpate a belief opposed to his own. When, plague-stricken on the arid sands of Africa, he yielded to the uncontrollable fate of mortality, his calmness, amid the noisy grief of his mail-clad warriors, sheds a halo round the religious phrenzy which was bringing him to a premature grave in a strange land, and we admire, though we would not imitate, the faith that could give such devotion.

But of all the tales which time has recorded of human dignity in the hour of human suffering, where is the recital that can compare with that given by Moses of his own final proceedings? Distinguished from all other men as the faithful servant of the Eternal, he is as highly distinguished by the characteristics which rendered him worthy of his vocation, and the choice of his Divine Master. The fidelity with which he represented God, and the testimony which history and science have borne to the truth of his revelation, are warrants for the sincerity with which he depicts himself. We accept his own character at his own hands with as much trust as though he were speaking of another. The honesty with which he has laid bare the feelings into which passion or indiscretion carried him, is a warrant for the integrity of his whole work. And that work! The first and the grandest of all productions of the human mind. Other authors may have excelled Moses in the profundity of science, but his history stands unrivalled for its impartiality, its simplicity, its vigour. What poem contains greater beauties than the magnificent song at the Red Sea? What apostrophe or invocation does not fall tamely on the ears when compared with that in the portion before us? Its imagery is at once natural and sublime. There is no straining after effect; no superfluity of words to cloud meaning, or veil the want of it. Every phrase is terse and pointed, and the beauty of the whole is augmented by the reflection that it is the address of a dying man. Noble unselfishness! With the vista of eternity before him; with the consciousness that, good though he has been, he has mortal weaknesses and mortal sins for which to account; with the dread which the uncertain always produces close before him, the dying legislator has no thought for himself or his own future. His whole life has been a peace-offering; he has not to make his peace at life's close. With the full knowledge of the

exact moment of his death, he has none of the wavering which should be consistent with that knowledge. He has set himself the task of repeating to his flock the various precepts and statutes which are to guide them to happiness and salvation, and he fulfils that task as firmly as he did the first behest of his God. He is never once interrupted by thoughts of his approaching fate ; he never dwells on the bourne to which he is approaching, except to bow submissively to the will of the Eternal. He can pray for every sinner but himself. Even the most dazzling hopes for his posterity, hopes not problematic because mortal, but certain because Divine, cannot attract him into one moment's forgetfulness of the people which he has loved and guided, but which have seduced him into the one momentary aberration that is to cost him so dear. Picture a righteous man, of ordinary mould, toiling and toiling to attain the goal of his desires. Say he has travelled the uphill path of virtue with unshaken firmness. He has withstood every temptation to ill, every seduction to pleasure. He has spent a long and zealous life in the narrow path of duty, and has avoided the broad highway of gratification. Where others *did* fall, he maintained his position ; where others *might* have fallen, he went triumphantly onwards. Picture all this, and say that, at the very last moment of existence, he is precipitated into the abyss of the vicious, not because he fails on his own behalf, but because, jealous for the power of his Creator, he only censures too hastily others who have not followed his leading. And then, to know and appreciate Moses, the greatest and yet the humblest of men, peruse his last appeal, and learn how he differs from all that *your* nature knows of self-love and self-aggrandisement.

His last precept is repeated. There remains only to find a peroration worthy his task. The Israelites have been reared into a nation amid the wild grandeur of nature ; earth and heaven have been the solitary witnesses

of their progress, of the sins of one generation and the training of another. To earth and heaven, the eternal witnesses that Divine mercy to Noah pronounced unceasing, the dying legislator appeals: "Hear, O ye heavens, and I will speak, and let the earth hearken to the words of my mouth." The Israelites are about to become an agricultural people, to depend on the favourable aspect of the seasons, on the light showers of spring and the heavier decomposing rains of autumn. Moses invokes them in the name of those providential sources of abundance: "My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain on the tender herb, and as the showers on the grass." With the true genius of inspiration, he dwells on the benefits already conferred on his charge; and with the intention of awakening a feeling of gratitude that had not existed in those redeemed from Egypt, he reminds them alike of the mercy and the wrath of the Eternal: "But Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked Then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his Salvation And when the Eternal saw it, he abhorred them, because of the provoking of his sons and of his daughters." Nothing, in short, is omitted in the eloquent conclusion of the Deuteronomy that human judgment can deem necessary to secure obedience and fidelity; and proportionate to our admiration of the faithful servant is our regret that his invocation should have fallen on ears that did not appreciate the beauty of his language, on minds that did not value the honesty of his purpose. The sacred volume tells us but too soon how perversely our ancestors fell away from the lessons given amid so many confirming circumstances, taught with so much exemplary piety; and, on reading this portion in the synagogue, we reflect with increased seriousness on the task which religion and duty bid us perform.

We feel that, great as has been the anger of the Eternal, and the punishment which he has inflicted, greater still was the provocation he received, and still greater was the mercy which forbore so long. We feel that, while every man is judged by his own actions, as a people we have the same right to atone for the misdeeds of some of our ancestors, that we have to appeal for goodness on behalf of the righteousness of others. To us the "Binding of Isaac" and the "Lamentations" are equally important. If we rejoice with the heartiness of mortals on our festivals, we repent with the fervour of sinners on our "awful days." We know that, while individual efforts sometimes succeed in effecting change in individual character, national traits remain unaltered for a hundred generations; and, knowing this, we bow to the conviction that nothing but the unanimous return of Israel to the ways of the Eternal can at all change Israel's destiny. But this very idea renders all true believers more anxious for their own conduct, because, in addition to the conscientious satisfaction which they derive from observing the Divine laws, they know that example is the best of teachers, and that the regeneration of the mass must eventually depend on the use of the good to guide the bad by the power of precept, and the still more irresistible power of practice. Therefore, during the days especially appointed by God for reconciliation and atonement, all Jews, ordinarily pious, become more pious, because of the considerations suggested by the season, and because they see, in the solemnity with which even scoffers bow to the awe inspired by Kippur, an opportunity for awakening love for the Eternal through fear of *his* vengeance and respect for *their* fidelity. The ordinarily careless, who make religion secondary to self, or subservient to interest, find themselves overwhelmed with the dread which the penitential days, they know not why, inspire. Like men stunned by some sudden visitation of death, they are

recalled at once to the nothingness of life. Like parents who have forgotten heaven in affection for a favourite child, and whose hearts have been riven, as with lightning, by its decease, their very grief proves a balm by the wounds which it cures in their souls. A compensation of nature, that when the body suffers the mind soars. Recalled into the bosom of their brethren, they no longer seek to sever themselves from the community. Seeing some so fervent, they become fervent too; there is no stranger by to sneer them from their peculiar observances, to laugh them out of their propriety, and so, for once at least, they are Jews in feeling and conduct; and nationality blooms, if only for a few fleeting hours. When these hours shall grow into years we shall properly appreciate the invocation of our Divine Legislator, we shall fear the "awful days," but we shall not be frightened by them. And when these hours shall grow into years, our fellow-citizens of other creeds shall learn to respect us, despite their prejudice, and because of our religion, for then even hatred shall fail to find an accusation to blur the fair fame of Israel, to impugn the perfection of the Law of Sinai.

THE APPOINTED TIMES OF THE ETERNAL.

I.—PASSOVER.

IT was not by accident that the Feast of Passover was made to be celebrated in the early spring. The birthday of a nation was appropriately fixed in the youth of the year, and it thus came crowned, as it were, with a garland of the new green leaves. It is naturally a joyous season. The smiles of the ascending sun disperse the clouds of dreary winter and melt the icy fetters which have been imposed on earth. Vegetation awakes from its torpor, and puts forth its millions of bright shoots. Animals, wooed by the softened gales, and no longer terrified by howling blasts chilled with eternal snows, come from their coverts, and whisper a thousand sweet sounds to gladden the scene. Man, enabled more effectually to fulfil the industrial vocation of his being, rushes with eager anxiety to win the earth to his pleasure, and hails as harbingers of hope the signs of her innate fertility. It is indeed a radiant period for all created things. But to the Israelite, the advent of spring, and with it, of the Passover, is peculiarly grateful. It suggests to him a comparison between the fate of his people and of the earth. As winter bound the earth with chains of frost, restrained all her powers and bared her of all her beauty; so Egypt imposed the bonds of slavery on Israel, curbed his energies, and deprived him of all the loveliness of the patriarchal faith. As, spontaneously, earth could not overthrow the dominion of winter, but must remain

for ever rigid and prostrate, save that the sun of deliverance shone from heaven ; so, unaided, Israel could never have shaken off the yoke of Egypt, but must have continued in eternal bondage, save that the light of his Redeemer penetrated into his prison, and led him to liberty and religion. As the earth, released from restraint, would develop her resources in exuberant luxuriousness, and would yield indiscriminately useful fruits and noxious weeds, but that man's higher faculties coerce her fruitfulness to beneficial ends ; so Israel, freed from slavery might have run riot in the excess of his joy, might have confounded licence with licentiousness, might have abused what he should only use, but that an Intelligence, Supreme and Omniscient, directed his pleasure to a legitimate purpose, and sanctified it by Divine association.

To the Israelite, then, the season of the Passover has more than ordinary interest. Irrespective of sharing the universal gratitude, he is impressed with sentiments all his own. Amidst the song of praise that rises to heaven from the millions of earth, his voice is heard hymning mercy exercised on his behalf only. Among the myriads of human beings who, through countless ages, have trodden the road to eternity, he finds himself alone singled out as the object of a declared special Providence. And in what a cause ! Not for the individual merits of the suffering labourers " in hard bondage," not for the infliction of vengeance on the tyrannic oppressors ; but for the vindication of the sacred rights of conscience, for the maintenance of the inalienable principle of religious liberty. Since the slavery of Egypt, man has invented a thousand ways for violating religious rights ; but, in Egypt, might first proclaimed its will to persecute, man first announced his determination to oppress his fellow-creatures of a different faith, and justified his oppression on the score of policy ; in Egypt, God first declared himself the champion of the holy cause involved, He first showed that when all human

means failed to right the wronged, He could interfere to avenge the cries of martyred innocents : "The Lord shall fight for you : ye shall only hold your peace."

Since then, wild beasts have fed on Jewish flesh, the block and the axe have been dyed with Jewish blood ; living Jewish victims have been impaled quivering in unutterable agony, the rack and the wheel have croaked a hoarse echo to groans wrung from Jewish heart-strings ; many a charred Jewish corpse has been blown in ashes from the smouldering stake, many a Jewish limb has gladdened the grasp of an infuriated zealot ; Jewish maidens have been dishonoured before the eyes of their expiring mothers ; Jewish youths have been maimed in the presence of their dying sires ; Jewish spirits have been degraded to the dust, and almost all that was human has been crushed out of them ; every thing that extortion and avarice could extract from Jewish coffers has been exacted even at the price of mutilation and torture ; to Jewish possession has been left little but the dear faith which upheld Jews in sorrow, and comforted them in misfortune ; and yet, as year followed year and brought no external consolation ; as season succeeded season and showed no diminution of hatred and oppression ; as era closed on era and proved but too well that, while refinement and civilization softened all else, the fate of the Jew knew no change, yet in these depths the Jew has hailed the advent of Passover as a proof that, Providence having once pronounced sacred the rights of conscience, all man's efforts must prove ineffectual to prevent the ultimate recognition of an inviolable principle.

Beautiful Passover : flower of the young spring ! thou bearest in thy cup the essence of true happiness—eternal hope ! What though calumny, ever anxious to justify its hate, has invented sanguinary charges as a plea for persecution ; we, who take thee to our bosoms, know that the only blood with which thou hast been dyed, has been the

harmless life-stream of the paschal lamb. We know how long that blood has ceased to consecrate thy coming, but we know, too, that we dare not substitute any sacrifice for that commanded of God in thine honour. Thou art the production of a merciful Creator ; thou teachest charity and love : with thee in our homes, how could we pollute the face of nature with inhuman deeds ; how could we utter words of universal affection, and falsify them by acts universally detested ? Thou art a perennial blossom of eternal bounty, proving how constant and enduring is the Divine care ; how then, could we, whose mission it has been to preserve and spread the knowledge of that bounty and care, whose privilege it has been to diffuse the great truths of revelation, of religion, of morality—how could we desecrate thee, and pollute our sacred trust by imbruing our hands in crime ? If we have not repudiated the accusation, it has been because its very falsehood has condemned it to the silent indignation of scorn.

And now that we breathe a milder atmosphere, now that we enjoy a more genial climate, now that the sun of toleration warms us to vigorous existence, now, O Pass-over, we love thee still more dearly, because we hail our present boons as a type of the good to come. True, the milder atmosphere bears to our ears sounds no longer all reproach ; true, it reverberates not wholly with slanders affecting all we love ; true, the more genial climate engenders fruits that do not turn to gall in our mouths ; true, the sun of toleration beams within our dwellings ; but in the air there still lingers a faint echo of past grief ; amid the pleasant fruits there still lurks one bitter apple ; before the sun there still looms one darkening cloud. Still we are not free ; still the trumpet voice of truth, which proclaimed Passover an eternal ordinance in celebration of the rights of conscience, has not penetrated into the hearts of all mankind. Still, in some countries, Judaism bows beneath a heavy yoke ; lighter it may be

than the yoke of old, but not less abrasive. Still, in some countries, Judaism suffers under exceptional laws, which press on its industry, fetter its energies, coerce its genius. Still, even in this fair land, the bulwark of freedom, the champion of liberty, even here we ask for *equality*, and we obtain only *toleration*. Toleration! are we not British-born subjects? Have we not the same temporal hopes, the same temporal fears, as other Britons? Is not the triumph of our native country, our triumph; her shame, our shame? Do we not cheerfully bear our part in all public burdens? Do we not contribute our share in promoting the general weal by our wealth, our zeal, our talent, our commercial, social, and civilizing influence? And for this are we to receive only toleration? Men tolerate what is beneath them; they tolerate what they have too much forbearance to prosecute or to punish, and by their toleration they assume their superiority. But in what are Jews beneath their Christian fellow-countrymen? In what are these superior to Jews? On their own acknowledgment, in nothing save in that might which numbers give to rule as might wills. They claim some exclusive rights for their Christianity; but is exclusion ever a right except on broad moral grounds? Is it even honourable to maintain a pretended right which hangs rather on chance than on justice? We bar our doors against the midnight robber, but is it proper to keep up the bar when a neighbour claims the duties of hospitality? We dam up the flood which might inundate our lands, but is it expedient to extend the dyke to prevent the stream from fertilizing adjoining fields? We exclude from communion with us the dishonest, the untruthful, the immoral, but should we condemn to their society one accidentally placed in juxtaposition with them, and thus brand him in the eyes of the world as their willing associate? There surely is no principle in this. There surely can be no Christianity in making a sacrifice

to the God of all mankind at the expense of another's feelings. There surely can be no true religion in insisting on inequality in the eyes of that Providence—

“Who sees with equal eye as God of all,
A hero perish, or a sparrow fall.”

No; even as the Jews have promulgated among men the eternal truths of revelation; even as the Passover has circulated among Jews the assurance of the sacred character of the rights of conscience, so ultimately Jews shall receive the equality which they deserve, and shall command respect as a right where they now obtain only toleration as a privilege. As charity is twice blessed, blessing him who gives and him who receives, so persecution, in what form soever it represents itself, is doubly cursed; it curses him who suffers and him who inflicts; the former it degrades into a coward and a slave, converting a victim into a martyr; the latter it degrades into a tyrant and a taskmaster, converting power into oppression, and humanity into crime. But great changes are of slow growth. Man is essentially imitative; use suspends even the powers of nature. The fakcer deprives his muscles of their motive agency by a superstitious determination to keep a limb in one fixed position. What is called a free constitution, therefore, being a great human fabric, and having been originated when men's ideas of right were something like “what is mine is mine, and what is thine is mine also,” must of necessity partake of the characteristics among which it was conceived. Time and true enlightenment, knowledge and genuine religion, can alone effect the requisite alterations. In the good old days, men built prisons for malefactors whom they had suffered to fall into crime, by not leading them into virtue; now, they erect schools to train useful, industrious and self-supporting citizens, as a wiser and more civilized alternative. Then, the criminal code, like that of Draco, was a never satiated

axe, still drinking the blood of victims, still greedy for more ; now, a life only demands the atonement of a life, and men live to sin less. Then, power was the privilege of the few for the degradation of the many ; now, power is the right of the many for the distinction of the few. Then, demands for justice were clamour, and opposition was faction ; now, agitation moves the most deeply rooted prejudice, and abuse, bound in red tape, is disappearing before popular opinion. And these things happen because the principles of creation are inalienable, because all rights are founded on truth and justice, which are as much the property of universal mankind as any other of the "corner stones" in which the world was established. And so go we Jews to the celebration of our Passover, in the full assurance, that the great cause represented by our first festival must ultimately triumph. Let us commemorate our deliverance from Egypt as a fact of the past, but also as a type for the future. Let us look on the Passover as a "sign for ever," that all wrongs which men inflict on men shall end ; that slavery, no matter how disguised, is antagonistic to Divine laws, and must therefore cease ; that oppression is always a wrong, and therefore cannot endure ; that even as the phantom ignorance vanishes before the illuminating rays of education, so the ghosts raised by bigotry and intolerance shall at last disappear before the common sense of enlightenment, to be laid in a place "where they shall not be remembered, nor remarked, nor ever more come to mind ;" for "Thou, O Lord, wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the grace to Abraham, as thou hast sworn to our ancestors from the earliest days."

II.—THE FEAST OF WEEKS.

IN describing the festivals, an attempt has already been made to show their design in respect to the promotion of social and political welfare. The Passover has also been described as the celebration of the delivery of conscience from wrong, of mind from thralldom. But man consists of three distinct parts: he has mind which requires cultivation, heart and morals which demand formation, a body which needs exercise and recreation. The necessary training of the mind, the heart, and the body, is called education. In worldly affairs the school and experience give all that is demanded of education, in spiritual affairs the great teacher is religion. The Eternal, having determined to choose a people from among peoples, and to make the objects of his choice the representatives before the world of the connection between Heaven and earth, at the same time determined that it was imperative to educate his charge so as to render them worthy before him of their high vocation, and acceptable before the world as examples of trust and fidelity. To effect his object, he gave them a religion, simple in its principles, sublime in its truths, grand in its elevating influence. He attached to that religion a system of morals so perfect, that, as has been often proved, man becomes good and happy in proportion as he conforms to its doctrines. There was also joined a code of institutions of a ceremonial nature, not obligatory on mankind in general, but binding only on the chosen nation as the external evidence of their belief and obedience. Of these ceremonial institutions the festivals form an important part; that assigned to the Passover having been already discussed, let us proceed to investigate the peculiar claims of the Pentecost or Feast of Weeks.

The patriarchal ancestors of the Israelites were dis-

tinguished rather for their qualities of heart than for intellectual superiority. When Jacob and his sons went down into Egypt, they carried with them much that was valuable in principle and practice, but they also bore thither most of the ordinary passions that influence mankind. Slavery stretched its baneful rule over their minds, and these, coerced beneath a control so fatal, at once lost that power of direction which is their peculiar province. The hearts of the Israelites, thus left unrestrained by mental sway, naturally degenerated into mere animal organs, and their conduct probably was that of other men in a similar condition. Some proof of this is afforded in the record, "And they did not hearken to Moses, from anguish of spirit and from hard labour." The dignity of intellect was so debased that it could not at once rise to its legitimate function of acknowledging God. The triumphant deliverance achieved for them, the magnificent wages which the selfish fears of their late oppressors permitted them at length to claim and to receive; the signal and utter ruin of the apparently invincible enemy in the depths of the Red Sea; all these successes may have had the tendency to gratify the revengeful feelings of ill-regulated hearts, and to impress them with a certain joy in the downfall of those they hated. The proneness which the emancipated showed, even on entering the wilderness, to murmur at the slightest obstacle to their enjoyment, proves that gratitude for past favours had only rendered them more exacting—a certain sign of badly cultivated feelings. Hence it may fairly be inferred that on leaving Egypt not only were the minds of the Israelites in a degraded condition, but that their hearts also were demoralized and debased.

The miraculous deliverance had been accomplished not so much to relieve their bodies from chains, as to free their minds from fetters more adamantine. By that deliverance, the Almighty designed to consecrate the mind of

man to eternal liberty, and on the festival of its commemoration he stamped perpetual ordinances to carry down to the remotest ages the great principle of liberty of conscience. As has been shown, the season of the year was most appropriate to the celebration of the first national holiday, so that external influences might combine with obedience to render the festival a period of holy joy. But mind alone is a dangerous guide. Of subtle nature, it has a tendency to soar and to defy those natural laws by which matter is attracted. Like the agents termed imponderables, we recognise it rather by what it does than by what it is. Hence, men who rest entirely on the powers of mind become rationalists or atheists, or they disguise a little of both under a show of pure deism. Such men are never happy, because they are never good. Denying the great truths of revelation, and admitting of no standard above that created by their own reason, they have nothing but what is mortal on which to build up a structure of morality. If, therefore, they raise such a structure, it must inevitably stand on a hollow foundation; the materials which compose it are borrowed from a quarry of perishable earth, and the first storm overthrows it. Alone, therefore, the festival of Passover might have proved of pernicious tendency. Men are so prone to mistake cause and effect, that the Israelites might have seen in their Passover only the tribute paid to the superiority of mind, the homage laid on the altar of reason, and they might have grown to regard mind and reason as the representatives of God. They would thus have set an example of that most fascinating of all idolatries, which has since become the fashion with philosophers and freethinkers. The design of Heaven in the selection of Israel would have been frustrated, and the education of men through religious teaching would thus have failed, because the training would have cultivated only the mind, and would have ignored the heart and the

body. This evil result was prevented by the institution of Pentecost as the festival of the heart and morals, of Tabernacles as that of the body.

The Israelites, redeemed from Egypt, were allowed a few days to taste the sweets of their newly-acquired liberty, and a few more to permit the intoxication natural to their excited feelings to subside, and then, lest their sweets might poison through over indulgence, lest intoxication too long indulged in, like opium-eating, might prove a pernicious necessity, it pleased Providence to design the exact limits within which mortal tastes were, for man's happiness, to confine themselves. And to two millions of people there was presented the grandest spectacle that the earth ever knew. From the double-peaked mountain, where formerly the faithful shepherd had fed his flock, amidst thunders and lightnings and the terrible bray of trumpets, there issued the dread voice of the Eternal himself, designing to commune with living men that they might learn his ways and be wise. Again, external objects, ever so impressive on the senses, were called in to lend solemnity to the communication. Miraculous clouds and fire dazzled the eyes, on the ears grew the mysterious voice, before the body stood the restraining boundaries, and amid all, as though to comfort the chosen seed amid the convulsions which surrounded them, came the grateful assurance, "I am the Eternal thy God who brought thee out of the land of Egypt." Well might the people exclaim—"We will do, we will hear." Well might they reverse the ordinary course of reason which thinks first and acts afterwards; here they had only to obey the first promptings of their hearts, and these taught them that in dealing with the Eternal, of wisdom so great, of mercy so abundant, obedience to behest was the first requirement, and reason but of secondary import. They felt that the Being, who for them had effected such miracles, whose power had been displayed in circumstances so

awful, might by chance be above their comprehension. Already by intuition they appreciated the dictum, "Your thoughts are not my thoughts," and, yielding to a first honest impulse, they confidently reposed on the wisdom and mercy which had so much benefited them. They were well repaid for this trust, for there came from the mouth of God those eternal principles of morality contained in his commandments, which stand forward as the bulwarks of morality, as the ramparts to defend man from vice and to save him from misery.

Again did the season of the year prove a useful adjunct. The heart and the morals display themselves in deeds which are the fruit of thought. And so, as Passover, the feast of thought, was fixed in the early spring, Pentecost, the feast of deeds, was placed in the early summer. Already the first ripe fruits gladdened by their promise of future plenty; already a golden hue began to glitter on the waving corn, a purple bloom to blush upon the clustering grape; and as these spoke of the bounteous acts of nature, and of nature's God, so did they bid man imitate those bounteous acts, and give like promise of a future plenty. In that blessed land, "flowing with milk and honey," who could witness the glowing face of the productive earth without a feeling of admiration and love for the cause of her beauty? Who could journey as the Israelites did, through fair tracts of country teeming with a rich abundance, without pouring out his soul in gratitude to the Divine source of all blessings?

— The cheerful summer scene—

When nature glitters in her gladdest sheen;
When gentle breezes echo joyous notes,
Proclaiming Heaven's praise from myriad throats;
When perfumed flowers graceful homage nod,
Yielding their grateful incense up to God;
When spangled streamlets murmur soft delights,
Whose rippling sound to cooling shade invites;

When new-mown hay lies fragrant in the sun,
While labour sports—its healthful toiling done ;
When golden corn-waves crown the fertile vale,
And plenty's promise wafts the southern gale ;
As all the gay-deck'd landscape seems to dance,
And thick convective currents upward glance.

Such a scene must indeed have awakened the heart to holiest feelings, must have prompted it to adore God, to respect its fellow, and so to act as to render itself no unworthy object on the bright face of creation. And thus, the second of the festivals contributed its share to Heaven's system of education, training the heart and morals to a proper sense of right.

But, it may be asked, why was not the same precaution that had been adopted on the Passover taken also here? Why was leaven, exciting leaven, not forbidden? Why was not the stimulant to passion altogether removed? The reason is not wanting. Passover was the feast of mind celebrated through the body; Pentecost was the feast of morality celebrated through the mind. Passover lasted a whole week, Pentecost only a day. Now, as has been shown, the mind alone is a bad director, and when it yields itself to discover pleasures for the body, it becomes altogether depraved even when it aspires to superiority. The Epicureans were instances of this; their doctrine was worthy of revelation, their practice unworthy of idolatry. To allow the mind to run riot during the length of the Passover, was to permit corruption to fasten on the body and to make bad deeds the exponents of bad thoughts. On the Passover, therefore, the body, cooled by abstinence, was a safe companion, and the additional trouble imposed by the national gathering was another shield to guard from temptation. On Pentecost, the moral feelings ruled: the heart was swayed by love and gratitude, and, as a natural conclusion, it prompted the mind to high thoughts and lofty aspirations. The

function of love is to ennoble, and when the object is a perfect Creator, the desire to be worthy of his affection must elevate man above himself. There was no need therefore to withhold stimulants ; for, except the celebration of the festival were altogether alienated from its original purpose, there was no danger of the body's leading the mind astray, when the heart felt impelled to render itself sensible of the treasures of whose possession that feast was the anniversary. Men might run into debauchery on a birthday ; they would scarcely do so on a day dedicated to their moral regeneration. And so, leaven was permitted, but additional offerings and another national assembly lent their aid to occupy the festival profitably and piously. And now, in our dispersion, we celebrate this glorious commemoration, not with the four cups of wine that accompany the Passover service, but by lengthened recitations, prolonged through the night, of psalms and thanksgiving, of Holy Writ and commentaries thereon. We thus give to the festival a character entirely its own. The anniversary of the giving of the law is celebrated in the delightful truths of the Bible ; the heart, mindful of the lessons so mercifully bestowed on it on Pentecost, gives itself up to a special recital of them, so that they may be more deeply impressed upon it ; thus the pleasures of the body become secondary to the nobler emotions of the mind, awakened to thoughts of eternity by the doctrines among which it soars.

III.—THE AWFUL DAYS: NEW YEAR AND KIPPUR.

JUDAISM is not a religion of the synagogue only ; it associates itself with every phase of life. Its morality colours moral relations, as in the command, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself ;" political relations, as in the commands which ordain respect for constituted

authorities ; commercial relations, as in the commands affecting pledges and the lending of money without interest. Its ceremonies permeate domestic and public proceedings, and everywhere bid the Jew recollect that he is called on to perform certain duties, less because he takes pleasure in their performance, than because in them he acknowledges, and causes others to recognise, his peculiar vocation as one of the descendants of Abraham. In Canaan, some of the highest national interests were promoted by divine laws, some of the most important national advantages were protected by divine institutions. In the dispersion, Jews adhere faithfully to the prescriptions with which God and their dependence on him are especially allied, because though they have ceased historically to be a nation, they desire to preserve their spirituality as a people. In Canaan, "the Appointed Times of the Eternal" subserved the temporal and religious welfare of the Israelites, by rallying them round the tabernacle to cement alike the ties of friendship with man and the ties of obedience to Heaven. In the dispersion, those same "holy convocations" still preserve their characteristic ; they bring Jews together who seldom meet at other periods, and for the moment, at least, they concentrate all diverging views to a focus in the presence of the one Father of mankind.

Who that has frequented the synagogue, has not noticed the unusual attendance on the festivals ? While the Sabbath, though one of the most sacred of divine institutions, claims but a small proportion of worshippers, crowds assemble to celebrate the Passover. And this cannot be because Jews design to show that they regard the festival with more honour than they regard the Sabbath, for greater licence is permitted on the former than on the latter. It must arise partly from the constant recurrence of the Sabbath, which is treated with all the indifference of familiarity, partly from the national

recollections which the Appointed Times awaken, and partly from that innate feeling of brotherhood which lingers in the bosom of all Israelites, how diffused soever their aims in life, how confused soever their ideas of religion, how suffused soever their eyes with the waters of worldly ambition. On the Sabbath, only the pious and the observer of ceremonies unite; but on the festival, even the rationalist and the scoffer at ceremonies enter the sacred precincts, and Judaism benefits from the strange commixture, because it still possesses influence sufficient to claim all its professors, though at long intervals.

But, of all the Appointed Times, none engross the attention of Israelites so powerfully as "the awful days"—the first ten days of the month Tishri, that is, from the New Year to Kippur. Nor can we wonder at this; the holy voice of revelation has pronounced in favour of their solemnity, the scarcely less attractive voice of tradition has told its tale in their honour. The fear that is inspired by the majesty of the Eternal, and the love that grows from veneration for what our ancestors revered, combine to render these days peculiarly holy days. The inspired teachings of Sinai gave them to the soul just as the memory of even older times gave them to the heart; and thus the individual who desires to tread only on the very confines of Judaism at other times, on the New Year and on Kippur enters into its sanctuary; nay, many who altogether stray from the fold, secretly and in awe bow before the dread Day of Atonement.

And first as to revelation. Scripture in numerous places points out Tishri as the commencement of the year; the Pentateuch alludes to it in speaking of the release of the jubilee; Ezekiel distinctly mentions it by name. This alone would render the first day of Tishri important, for there is always something solemn in the passage from epoch to epoch, and men would regard the birth of a new era in time as they might regard their own birthday.

But the New Year has other claims. Among the Appointed Times of the Eternal it is especially distinguished from the first day of other months as a day of "strict rest," as "a day of shouting." On other months it was sufficient to proclaim the appearance of the new moon; in Tishri the rest and the shouting were to call attention to something more. Let us endeavour to harmonize this idea with the ideas already enunciated in the reflections on Passover and Pentecost.

The religion confided by the Eternal to Israel is essentially constituted to promote human happiness through virtue and piety. There is not one noble emotion that can arise in a cultivated mind, that is not hallowed in the teachings of Moses. Charity, philanthropy, love, the desire to benefit mankind, are all raised in dignity by associating them with veneration for God. While, however, the nobler part of man is thus elevated, care is taken to permit those comforts, without which life would be one constant struggle between the desires and self-denial, without which the genial submission of faith would degenerate into the harsh slavery of asceticism. The festivals of the Eternal are for this particular purpose: "And thou shalt rejoice before the Eternal thy God" is of constant occurrence in their regard. But man is prone to degeneracy; for the purpose of securing universal liberty it is necessary to impose individual restraints; for the purpose of preventing joy from becoming sensuality it is necessary to add that it is to be "before the Eternal." Thus the gladness of the Passover was confined within holy limits, by the withdrawal of all stimulants in food and drink. Thus the gladness of the day of the first-fruits was modified by allying it with the intellectuality of the decalogue. Man was allowed, nay, he was even encouraged, to relax from the steadiness becoming to business habits, but he was to remember that he was still in the presence of the Eternal, and was to restrict himself accordingly.

But, despite all the checks imposed for salutary purposes by Heaven, human nature has a tendency to go astray. In the exuberance of joy, even the best intentions sometimes fail to coerce the loosened feelings. In the hurry of worldly pursuits, even the wisest resolutions sometimes produce the most blameable actions. Into the rivalry which induces men to enter on their several careers of life, jealousy infuses so much bitterness, that judgment is poisoned, and bad passions are excited, till the landmarks which separate right from wrong are either lost to view or altogether obliterated. Some men sin through ignorance, some deliberately, but in all cases something more is necessary to the production of religion than the elevation of principles already high, than the restraint of joy already natural. This something the wisdom of the Eternal has not failed to provide. It is found in the institution of Kippur and in the preparations which led to it. Sacrifices and confession of error afforded means for the expression of contrition on ordinary occasions, but as man might lose respect for these means through familiarity (as in the case of the Sabbath), an extraordinary occasion was deemed essential to arrest by its rarity, to awe by its solemnity.

Nature proceeds by scarcely perceptible gradations; there is no sudden leap; from link to link in the great chain of creation the progress is so small that the successive changes are all but indefinable. In religion, which is to guide and assist nature, the same gradation occurs. Judaism, which differed so much from the idolatry then prevailing, yet retained many of the ceremonies and practices of surrounding paganism; it refined and hallowed them by making them a part of God-worship, but it did not repudiate what Israel had seen, and to which it was accustomed, lest the sudden alteration should produce a convulsion. Judaism did more; even within its own pale it followed closely the same law. Thus, already on the tenth day of Nisan, steps were taken for inaugurating

the Passover, and the forbidden leaven was to be entirely removed before the evening of the fourteenth. The counting of the Omer was a preparation for the feast of Pentecost. In the same way the "day of shouting" was to be introductory to Kippur, and the intermediate days were to partake of the solemn character of the period to which they belonged.

Our ideas of Providence are so grand, that we often lose ourselves in their immensity; and yet they are all so consistent with the gentlest feelings of our nature, that we can imagine nothing too mild or too merciful. Fear and love, dread and adoration, blend so harmoniously, that we can scarcely define where the one begins, where the other ends. But of all the sentiments with which the Eternal inspires us, none is more sacred than that which tells us that he is open to our repentance. This sentiment is so congenial to our nature. We know our own fallibility and the perfection of God; we know our own proneness to regard others with suspicion, with jealousy, with revenge, and we also know the long-suffering kindness of God; we feel how little we bear with the weakness or crimes of others, and how patiently he permits volition to rush into doubt or defiance; and knowing and feeling thus, we acknowledge in those silent hours of self-examination which even the busiest sometimes snatch from the shame that would blush before the world, that we want repentance. We acknowledge the grace which has declared that there is ever an open hand to receive the penitent, because, without that grace, the truths which sickness, or sorrow, or death, forces upon us, would terrify even the vanity that envelops itself in indifference, the sin that surrounds itself with unbelief. And we bow to this principle the more reverently, because it exists nowhere else but with God, and is therefore foreign to all our experience. What human authority can we approach with supplication for pardon, with the cer-

tainty that, if our contrition be sincere, we shall not be unforgiven? How much of our success may not depend on the accidents of caprice, of temper, of health? How often will the glib volubility of ready but empty words prevail, where the broken utterance of real grief will fail? And for human well-being it is well that it is so. Social advantage demands that there must be an inexorable tribunal which shall not admit the pleadings of sorrow. The majesty of law must be inviolable to secure permanence for order, security for progress. So frail are our powers of judgment, that we must accept facts or what seem to be facts, and reject opinions. Precedent also has strong influence; the lenience extended to one could not in similar circumstances be reasonably refused to another, and thus the sword of justice would lose its edge, while wrong would remove with its plausible tongue what had been done with its guilty hands. But for spiritual well-being how beautiful is the dispensation which gives to prayer a benignant hearing and a merciful consideration! If heaven's judgment were stern as earth's, who could stand in the presence of God and not tremble? If the culprit, who abuses his powers here and suffers here, were doomed also irrevocably to suffer hereafter, where would be the consoling words that hallow the last hour of even the vilest, where the atoning tears wrung from the contrite heart and borne by the angel of pity to the throne of grace, there to wash away the traces of sin in the waters of repentance? Take away the hope that atonement is open to man, and he loses half his dependence on God; add to that hope the knowledge that compassion has declared itself peculiarly disposed to pardon at one particular season, and where is the man so callous that would not avail himself of the opportunity thus presented? And God has so declared on Kippur: "For on that day shall an expiation be made for you, to purify you from all your sins; before the Eternal shall you be purified."

The design of the "awful days" is thus apparent. Kippur was not to burst suddenly on men, overtaking them, like an earthquake, in the full career of their pleasures or their guilt, but it was to come upon them through the preparation of the nine previous days, even as the "Holy of Holies" was approached through the court or vestibule.* And there was something sublime in placing this dread period of reconciliation in the month Tishri, the month of the harvest-home. Of all seasons, that is the one most likely to inspire man with pride, which surrounds him with the fruits of his industry. Prosperity, which should be the cause for gratitude, is certainly not the best teacher of thankfulness. The very blessings which should bind more closely to heaven frequently only more widely estrange. To arrest the cup on its way to the lip, and in the very act of drinking to instil moderation, is a task which only the Omnipotent could successfully achieve. The feast of the harvest-home (of which more anon) was fixed for the fifteenth of Tishri. It was the festival when nature rendered joy legitimate; religion, therefore, could only sanction what nature required, just as it sanctioned marriage, the love for parents, &c. But between the actual time of the ingathering and the celebration of it, intervened the days appointed by God for expiation and reconciliation. Men were thus bidden to pause on the very threshold of their happiness, and, ere they plunged into pleasure, they were taught to return with more than usual devotion to the Source of their abundance. Thus, while precautions were taken to prevent the joy of the Tabernacle from becoming unrighteous, those very precautions were of a character so solemn and so elevating, that their influence was extended over every individual of the community. God announced that on

* The later institution of the days of Selichoth (penitence), prior to the New Year, is evidently an adaptation of the principle sanctioned by divine legislation.

Kippur (through the introductory days) he was disposed to listen to repentance ; who then could refuse to repent ? His ineffable mercy, always so large, was by him declared then to be more than usually tender ; who could resist appealing to that of which conscience told him he stood so much in need ? The wilful sinner cowered before the express threat of divine vengeance against whomsoever should violate the sanctity of the "Sabbath of strict rest ;" the sinner "through ignorance" gladly availed himself of the door for pardon so generously opened to him. The religionist, who had little but the weakness inherent to humanity to expiate, still joyfully afflicted his soul, (by fasting,) as a voluntary token of his delight in the law of the Eternal. To him the "awful days" were only so, because they brought him more intimately into connection with the mysterious grandeur of heaven, because it was proper to him "to worship with trembling." The sceptic, who spent the rest of the year in worldly pursuits, and never gave a thought to his Creator, dared not continue in his hollowness on Kippur. To him the holiness of the Day of Atonement formed as it were a safety valve to prevent him from annihilating himself. He fasted in real awe, because he feared to face the dread Being whose presence he only sought when compelled ; and his repentance was for the time sincere, because he recognised in the institution of Kippur a visible token of revelation, of the constant association of God in the affairs of man, and of the continual desire of perfection that mortality should aspire to imitate its goodness and its loving kindness.

Tradition also, as has been said, lent its aid to sanctify the New Year. On that day, God promised to our great ancestor Abraham the child through whom the mission of the patriarch was to be borne to posterity. On that day, "the Eternal visited Sarah as he had promised," and she bare a son whose birth had been foretold "at that season

in another year." On that day the father, whose faith had already been counted to him as righteousness, performed the crowning act of that faith by voluntarily offering to sacrifice his loved and "only son" at the command of God. With that day, therefore, was connected the possession of the blessing which was to be the future heritage of Israel: "By myself have I sworn, is the declaration of the Eternal, that because thou hast done this thing, and hast not kept back thy son, thine only one; that I will greatly bless thee, and I will exceedingly multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies, and all the nations of the earth shall bless themselves through thy seed, because thou hast hearkened to my voice." Can we wonder that "the binding of Isaac" forms so prominent a feature in the liturgy of the "awful days," or that in appealing to heaven for pardon through the merits of our ancestors, we should recur to the highest merit attributed to them?

Tradition also refers to the New Year the creation of the world. Whether this originated in the belief that God had appointed the New Year on the anniversary of the birth of time, or in the inference that the period of the same universal abundance that had been visible at the creation was the one most proper to celebrate the recurrence of that abundance, or in the verbal history which forms the household words of every family and every people, the Scriptures give no means for determining. But it is certain that some of the solemnity of the day is owing to the association of ideas thus raised, for, in the additional service, three times is the prayer repeated, "On this day the earth was conceived."

But of all the titles by which the New Year claims our veneration, none is more dread than its name "the day of judgment." This lends to it an importance befitting its precursorship to Kippur. "On the New Year is

written, and on the fast of Kippur is sealed" the destiny of all living things, says the voice of tradition. In what manner soever this idea grew to be a part of Judaism, and an integral part, the inference is by no means unnatural. The Eternal had himself declared the awful days to be the period for man's return to rectitude, for his atonement by sincere repentance for the past, and faithful promises for the future; what period then, if any were selected by God, would be more appropriate for dealing with man, than that in which he brings forward the summary of his past deeds, recounts his failings and confesses his crimes; in which, while passing across the threshold of time from one year to another, he resolves to leave what he has done, and adopt what he should do? Religion and conviction alike tell us that man is judged by his actions and by the thoughts which prompt them. We know also, although man is permitted the most unbounded use of his free will, and although there is not any positive proof of divine active interference in mortal concerns, that every thing is ordained by Providence, and that there is neither chance nor fate. What are called the accidents of life are as much the work of God as the sun and moon; what is called the lot of life is the result of voluntary action only foreknown to almighty prescience. When, therefore, we speak of "the day of judgment," we mean that we ourselves on that day determine our own future by the sincerity of our desire to return to righteousness or by its inanity. "He who knoweth the thoughts in the heart of man, who understandeth all their works," does not make us amenable to an inevitable destiny; but he places in our hands the choice of "life and good" of "death and evil." Conscious of the weakness of our nature, aware of the errors or sins into which we have been hurried, and but too keenly certain that although our present frame of mind be virtuous, and our contrition sincere, passion or temptation may again sway us as it has already swayed

us, we naturally tremble before the throne of judgment, even though it be a mercy-seat. Daily we see death taking away the young and the loved; daily we see those whom we deem good overwhelmed with misfortune; in a thousand ways trouble lights on the path of man and bars his progress. When we place our repentance before God, we deprecate the severity we may have deserved, and we pray that these griefs may not come to us. But we deprecate in doubt, we pray in awe; and even when we most confide in the long-suffering mercy of the Eternal, we most distrust our right to ask it. Therefore is it that the New Year and Kippur are so deeply impressed on our hearts. We feel that we are judged every day, but that on those days when we ourselves recal our conduct before God, we have more reason to expect a final sentence. Who can entertain this idea without that mysterious dread which always shrouds the unknown? And who that has listened to the invocation of Israelite to Israelite, "Mayest thou be inscribed for a happy year," and to the final invocations so fervently addressed to heaven at the close of Kippur, can doubt that every individual who utters those invocations does so with a fervour unknown at other seasons, a fervour which revelation and tradition both contribute to deepen.

IV.—TABERNACLE.

KIPPUR and its solemnities are over. The pious have given to it their hearts, the wicked their fears, and on the ears of all the shrill blast of the shophar has fallen with appalling sound. The pious have dreaded the sentence which the inscrutable ways of Providence may have deemed necessary; the wicked have been afraid of the decree which their own perverseness has rendered inevitable. But the close of the fast has been a relief, and

human nature, true to its destiny, has rushed with bounding elasticity to the approaching gladness of the Tabernacle holidays.

Turning from the awe-inspiring ceremonies which dignified the service of the day of Atonement, our ancestors prepared to celebrate the feast of the harvest-home with feelings of joy rendered doubly grateful by contrast. They saw their granaries teeming with the produce of an abundant harvest ; their storehouses were loaded with the rich produce of the orchard, the olive-press and the wine-press. It was natural that they should exult in the fruits of their industry. Religion directed that exultation to God. Already, on the day after Kippur, crowds might be seen turning their faces towards the place chosen by the Eternal for the three annual gatherings. Every one bore some tribute to the shrine of God, alike as the sign of his prosperity and the symbol of their gratitude. It had been wisely ordained that the offering presented by each individual should be "according to his capacity." This afforded a certain test whereby to determine to what extent each would carry his self-sacrifice. The truly charitable, who desired that his expression of thankfulness should be commensurate with his sense of dependence and his appreciation of Divine blessing, took, with lavish hand, the best that he had, in order that he might strive to part with something worthy of the object he had in view. The ostentatious, anxious to stand well in the eyes of his neighbours, gave more than his means warranted. The niggard, afraid to excite observation, gave more than his parsimony cared. All had so recently bowed beneath the weight of conscious shortcomings, and had so willingly believed that "repentance, prayer, and charity," were efficacious in restoring mortals to the Divine favour, that none now stayed to measure with nice distinction the exact amount which was to represent their standard before the world, and their respect for Heaven.

And so Israel prepared to celebrate "the feast of the harvest-home at the decline of the year." Passover had inaugurated the green ears, and Pentecost the first fruits; Tabernacle was to hallow the ingathering. But as, on Passover and Pentecost, the wisdom of mercy had deigned to guard men from forgetting, in the exuberance of their joy, that they were to rejoice before the Eternal, so on Tabernacle, the more dangerous period of abundance, equal care was necessary. Nor was it wanting. The hopes which the national birthday in the spring might have rendered wholly material, received a spiritual direction through the coercion of animal appetites by the absence of leaven. The visions, already in process of realization at the festival of the early summer, were raised from earthly to heavenly subjects by association with the immortal truths of the decalogue and the law. The realities which brought the autumn celebration down to a merely mortal level, were elevated by the solemn rites that inaugurated Tishri, by the aspect that nature presented at that particular season, by the peculiar ordinations for the fast itself, and by the sacred day which was to terminate the "holy convocations."

The solemn rites of the awful days had left their impress on the minds of men; and although, with the natural elasticity of humanity, they were but too ready to shake off their despondency and soar to happier thoughts, still there was that about them which forbade too much elation, and sobered joy by reflections for the future.* The Israelites journeyed to the "place which the Eternal chose," amid scenes but too suggestive of the fate which is inevitable to all created things. Earth, recently so rich with

* Again, as at Passover and Pentecost, the season lent its peculiar influence. The circumstances by which men were surrounded, contributed to sanctify the feast of the ingathering, and to elevate it from mere corporeal considerations. Just as spring spoke to the mind, and summer to the heart, so autumn addressed the body.

the abundance of vegetation, lay stripped of her possessions, and as it were exhausted ; a true type of the end of all human greatness. Brown corn-fields no longer waved a graceful homage ; luscious fruits no longer weighed down the branches with their golden burden ; perfumed grapes no more tempted to luxurious refreshment ; the dark-leaved olive no more gladdened the eye of passion. In their stead, the naked soil everywhere presented the same sombre hue of dying mould, and this very monotony saddened. Bare trees stood like gaunt skeletons by the way, while their leaves lay decomposing beneath them, sodden by the rains of autumn. It was as though, by some stern decree of Providence, sires had survived their children, remaining withered and nude, while those to whom they had given birth had perished in their fresh beauty. Youth rotting at the feet of age, made youth pause in its heedless career, and bade age think on its duties and responsibilities. If there was plenty in the storehouse at home, there was absolute nothingness in the void around ; men thence learned the mutability of worldly hopes. If they were travelling to the rallying point which was the fulcrum that propped their nationality, their road lay through the dreary waste of their individual greed. It was as though they had robbed the fields of all their treasures, and were now leaving them to perish in their misery. But for the social intercourse that grew by the way, sadness, and not joy, would have been the characteristic of the Tabernacle.

All were converging to one centre. From Dan to Beer-sheba, the thousands of Israel turned with unanimous accord to the abiding place of the Divine presence. As they approached their goal, the straggling troops gradually closed into a serried mass. Friend grasped the hand of friend ; genial conversation enlivened ; a comparison of respective produce gave excitement. And so they arrived at their destination. Then arose new duties. Like a vast army, the nation had to construct itself temporary homes. " In

tents shall ye dwell seven days, because in tents I caused the children of Israel to dwell, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt." And thus Divine wisdom tempered personal joy through national recollections. The festival was not to be without its leavened food, because it was only natural that the abundance of the harvest should be celebrated from the best and the richest that that harvest had yielded. It was not the anniversary of the rights of conscience, when the supremacy conceded to mind might render men ashamed to degenerate into animals merely corporeal. It was the feast of the ingathering, and joy was to reign—not despotically, as a tyrant, but wisely, as a constitutional ruler. And these were the laws which guided. The comforts of home were to be exchanged for the inconveniences of the temporary tent. Instead of the warmth of a well-built house, there was the exposure of a loosely constructed hut. Even in the midst of banqueting or the quiet of slumber, men were exposed to the already chilling blasts of autumn, to the already soaking rains of the season. Women were absent from the festivities, and men thus driven to provide and contrive for their own domestic wants, were as inconsistent and as blundering as, under such circumstances, they always are. In short, pleasure was so modified that even indulgence had more than its usual inconveniences. Depraved indeed must have been the individual who could have plunged into the abandonment of intemperate luxury, despite the obstacles which barred him from his desire for self-indulgence.

But, in addition to the checks imposed by the dwelling in tents, religion also stepped in to assist in promoting "joy before the Eternal." The tents were not to be of the ordinary kind. They were to be constructed of boughs, they were to be lined and covered with evergreens. Thus, even in their abodes, Israelites saw in the naked branches the remains of the past, in the evergreens the hopes for the future; while above all, through their roofs

of foliage, the visible orbs of heaven told of the majesty and power of their Divine Creator. Moreover, according to the rescript of the law : " And ye shall take you on the first day, the fruit of the tree hadar, and branches of palm trees, and a bough of the tree aboth, and willows of the brook ; and ye shall rejoice before the Eternal your God seven days : " thoughts of high and holy import were specially awakened by the peculiar service of the festival. The perfumed fruit and the still green portion of the *luleb* spoke of life and its joys. The leafless branches and the lowly willows were types of death and its terrors, and of the vanity of all human aspirations. Irrespectively, therefore, of the serious reflections that usually accompany the worship of God, the rites of Tabernacle suggested ideas that could not fail to unfit men for that excess of enjoyment in which it would be inappropriate to indulge " before the Eternal." And thus again we bow to the Divine wisdom which knew how to reconcile pleasure with religion, the wants of the body with the requirements of the mind. We recognise in the ordinations of Tabernacle merciful precautions, similar in spirit to those which distinguished Passover and Pentecost, and we admire, while we vainly strive to imitate, the mercy which originated means so adapted to their end—the promotion of human happiness.

The specially social object of the festivals was subserved by none more effectually than by the Tabernacle. It has already been shown that by the three annual gatherings nationality was preserved, and that they formed a species of agricultural exhibition of produce and live stock, wherein prizes were not wanting to excite emulation. At the Tabernacle, when the harvest had brought every thing to maturity, the competition would naturally be greater, particularly as the large additional sacrifices for each day of the festival created a greater demand for choice animals, flour, and oil, and thus afforded a more

copious supply. Farmers, flushed with success, would with pride expatiate on the means by which that success had been achieved. One would communicate valuable information on feeding cattle, another on some choice article of husbandry, and thus means would be afforded for the circulation of that knowledge without which people would degenerate into little better than barbarians.

For in Canaan, where every man dwelt on his own patrimonial inheritance, society would have been broken into infinitesimal pieces, but for some measure calculated to promote universal intermixture. Men would have grown up with interests exclusively individual; families would have married within their own pale, to their own destruction; and thus not only would nationality not have existed, but the population would gradually have decreased to a few scattered tribes. In modern times (when the majority of men are not tied to any particular locality), industry, skill, or enterprise, which cannot find a legitimate field of operation at home, travels to a more favourable arena, and takes with it the nerve and the genius calculated to promote the general well-being. In our own country, the manufacturing and the agricultural districts mutually contribute, by this spirit of adventure, to each other's advantage. In the western continents generally, civilisation has progressed principally by the fusion of races, because men have thus carried out the great law of nature, that all mankind are brothers. The great drawback to improvement among the Chinese has been the isolation in which a jealous and impolitic spirit has kept them. Now this damaging influence would necessarily prevail much more powerfully among Israelites, because they were prevented by religious feelings, and by the special command of heaven, from intermingling with the surrounding people. There was, therefore, in their festival gatherings the very lifespring of their existence as a nation. By means of these meetings the hardy moun-

taineers of the north and centre were brought into connection with the less hardy dwellers in the valleys of Judah ; the healthy inhabitants of the sea-coast carried their strength into the more arid homesteads of the interior. This constant intercommunication kept up the energies and other physical qualifications of the race ; with how much success may be inferred from the otherwise inexplicable fact, that eighteen subsequent centuries of isolation and persecution among men have not been able to crush the vitality of the Israelites, who still stand pre-eminent among the best specimens of the Caucasian family. In the festivals of the Eternal, therefore, we recognise one more proof of the care which divine wisdom displayed in guiding man's volition to beneficial aims. We perceive how the laws of Judaism subserve the great principles of nature, and how true to the end of creation is the career based on those laws. And with these feelings, selfish yet devotional—selfish, because they bid us consider our own happiness as bound up in our obedience ; devotional, because they attach us more firmly to the divine Being who has exercised so much mercy on our behalf—we hail the feast of the harvest-home with the conviction that wisely spoke the legislator when he “announced the Appointed Times of the Eternal to the children of Israel.”

V.—THE EIGHTH DAY OF SOLEMN ASSEMBLY AND THE REJOICING OF THE LAW.

MEN naturally arrange themselves into two great classes, according as they yield to the influences of the mind or to those of the body. To the former all holy days would be solemn, even in the midst of joy ; their contemplative characters could not be brought into closer contact with the Divinity without borrowing something of high and sacred from the communion. They would never be likely

to forget that they were bidden to rejoice "before the Eternal." The latter would accept days of rest in a spirit totally different. Plunged during the greater part of their time in ignoble pursuits, thirsting for pleasure or panting for gain ; now toiling for the evanescent honours of fame ; now sacrificing every hope of an hereafter for the more attractive, because more ready, possessions of earth ; they would regard a cessation from their ordinary labour as an opportunity for indulgence which it would be criminal to lose. The hurry of their careers would be gladly exchanged, at intervals, for the calmness of domestic enjoyment, if only as a means of acquiring, through rest, renewed energies for further exertions. To these, the Appointed Times of the Eternal would bring no ennobling aspirations, because, chained by all-powerful habit to earth, they would be incapable of soaring towards heaven ; because, devoted at all seasons to thoughts of self, they would find in leisure only a new opportunity for gratification.

But of all the festivals, the feast of the harvest-home would most forcibly impress both those in whom mind prevails and those abandoned to the body. The former, made more deeply sensible of the responsibility and nothingness of man by the reflections of the "awful days," would find decaying nature responsive to the echoes already in their hearts. Their mental eye would see the same prospect for humanity that vegetation presented to the corporeal eye. In the death of the year they would behold a type of the fate of all living creatures. They would rejoice ; for, in addition to the innate and irresistible joy produced by abundance, they would yield themselves to pleasurable emotions because the Eternal had so commanded ; but they would rejoice seriously, and without any of that exuberance which leads to intoxication. For them the ingathering would have no dangers. How different would be the effect of Tabernacle on those aban-

doned to the body—the majority of mankind. These would rush into voluptuous enjoyment with all the fire of their natures fanned into a conflagration by the breath of what they would call religion. Bidden to be glad, they would only too willingly obey. They would have regarded the Passover as the feast of conscience, rendered innocent by its sacred origin ; they would have considered the Pentecost as the feast of mind, too noble to be debased by sensuality ; the Tabernacle they would view as the feast of the body, and in the plenty about them they would see too many adjuncts to permit conscience to whisper admonition, mind to assert supremacy. Terrified by the momentary lull of the “awful days,” they would be too eager to throw off the yoke of fear and bind themselves in garlands. Even the precautions so wisely ordained by Divine wisdom as peculiar to the festival, would fail to restrain them within those limits which are “before the Eternal.”

To all, therefore, the Tabernacle, alone, would be imperfect. Something further was needed to prevent the serious from falling into sadness, to restrain the worldling from rushing into sin. And here the voice of religion mingled with the voice of tradition to produce the harmonious result desired. The Eternal said, “In tents shall ye abide seven days ; but the eighth day shall be to you a day of solemn assembly.” Tradition, which preserves the future by recollections of the past, sanctified that eighth day by prayers for rain, and added a ninth day, devoted to the inestimable law which makes Israel the peculiar people of God. Let us endeavour to analyze the effects of these institutions on men.

The pious, whose joy before the Eternal might, for the reasons already stated, be tinged with melancholy, would find, in the day of solemn assembly, the antidote for their sorrow. True, nature was failing ; true, death sat brooding over the remains of beauty, and winter was coming to

consume what death had spared ; but, in the prayers for rain, there breathed anticipations for the future, which spoke of comfort and enjoined hope. Although decay had set its seal on the present, it was not annihilation. Men were calling on God for rain ; they were looking forward to the coming spring, when earth should again assume her mantle of loveliness, as, with renewed life and vigour, she presented her producè to hail the feast of the "green ears." This reflection would effectually banish despair from the minds of the contemplative. Through the darkness which veiled the decline of the year they would behold the light of future joys. Even as they viewed the existence here as preparatory to the existence hereafter, and as they knew it to be necessary to pass through the portals of death to effect the transit from time to eternity, so they would regard the eighth day of solemn assembly and its ceremonies as the initiatory rites of a new era. Their minds, ever aspiring to communion with the Divine, would rise above the desolation of earthly things, because of the sublime future to which that desolation pointed. And thus to them might reasonably be addressed the exhortation, "And ye shall rejoice on your festival."

The worldly, who might be too willing to take the curb from passion, and to give the rein to desire, would pause before the knowledge that the licence of the Tabernacle was to terminate in the sanctity of the eighth day of solemn assembly. Mounted on the fiery courser of sensuality, just freed from the trammels of Kippur, they would be disposed to hurry with impetuous pace into the plain of pleasure ; maddened with the excitement of their headlong career, they would bound over all the impediments which blocked their way ; but before them would rise in awful grandeur the heights of God's own appointment, and, even when they would rush most swiftly, they would be checked by the impossibility

of surmounting these divinely set hills. Brought to reflection, they would become sensible that the blessings which surrounded them through the abundance of harvest could not endure for ever; that wants and comforts would gradually absorb the contents of granaries and storehouses, and that, but for a renewal of the mercy which had produced their plenty, the coming year might be a period of famine and misery. In the prayers for rain, therefore, they would find a certain moderator for criminal excess of joy. In the true spirit of their worldliness, they might be tempted to rely on their skill and experience, but they would resist the temptation because of all the results of human industry none are so entirely beyond human control as the fruits of agriculture, those fruits whose ingathering they were then celebrating, and for a future supply of which they were invoking the indispensable aid of Heaven. They would inevitably ask themselves how they should dare supplicate for Divine assistance, in the sending of fertilizing showers, if they abused the favours already vouchsafed; and these fears for the future would prove salutary, by rendering the present a season of true gladness "before the Eternal," by hallowing in their hearts the exhortation, "And ye shall rejoice on your festival."

The Rejoicing of the Law has also peculiar effects. God has commanded that his law be always in Israel's mouth. God is eternal; he has neither beginning nor end. The law, which is his visible representative on earth, must, as far as is practicable, be endowed with his characteristics. Israel does so endow it by the creed: "I believe with a perfect faith that this law will never be changed;" and by completing the circle of its perusal on this ninth day of the festival. Read four times weekly in the synagogue, read additionally on every holiday, studied at home at all hours, it is finished and begun at almost the same moment. Scarcely does the voice of

Israel proclaim its termination ere it utters aloud its commencement. The echoes of both sounds reverberate in God's holiest shrine on earth—the pure heart—at the same time. Who can listen to the sublime blessing of Moses, the man of God, and to the no less sublime history of creation, without feeling overwhelmed with a sense of the grandeur to which mortality can rise, of the mercy to which mortality is indebted? Who can reflect on the death of the faithful servant—so sad and yet so blessed, so judged, and yet so resigned—without the inward prayer, “May my end be like his?” Who can contemplate the power and majesty which called the boundless universe out of chaos, and bade harmony supersede confusion, without the secret invocation, “Show me, O Lord, thy ways; teach me thy commandments?”

Daily, the good and the worthless pass away into the silence of the grave, and affection but too often loves to blazon the tomb of the departed with a host of attributes that exist only in the hearts of the survivors. Yearly, too, some saddened survivor finds consolation for his sorrowful recollections in the adornment of the last resting-place of a valued friend or relative. But the marble which tells of imaginary virtues, and the evergreen which tells of undying memories, alike yield to the destructive hand of time. Like all that is mortal, decay and forgetfulness at length cover them for ever, and new associations grow to replace, and in turn to be displaced. “Not so, my servant, Moses,” said the Eternal. No monument of perishable earth rose to his honour; no garlands decked his bier. In their stead, the law which he had taught and the revelation of which he had been the medium, were stamped with the Divine seal of eternity, and his memory was thus perpetuated for ever and ever. No need that Israel observe the anniversary of his death, as Israel, with filial veneration preserves the parental “year-time,” for the Eternal, in shrouding from mortal eyes the

place of his burial, desired to shroud from mortal minds the ceremonies therewith connected. Therefore, we do not recite the last verses of the Pentateuch at each return of the day which they describe; therefore, we do not mourn over the event they relate. But as in life Moses was different from all other men, so in death is he likewise different. We rejoice where, for a less worthy object, we might mourn; we celebrate a festival where, in another case, we might observe a solemn assembly. We do more; we consecrate our ordinary dead with things of earth; we hallow Moses, as becomes his mission, with things of heaven. The law was destined to regenerate the spiritual part of man; we give to the ninth day a character worthy of the Divine object of the law, and we thus elevate it above corruption. As, at Pentecost, joy cannot degenerate into excess, because it originates in too noble a cause.

And thus, although the observances of the Rejoicing rest only on the authority of tradition, we associate them so closely with revelation that they become no less sacred. And, the more effectually to do this, we call to our aid an idea connected with the Sabbath, and we admit within the hallowed circle of the feast of reason all who claim the right to reason. The Sabbath is termed the bride of God; we hail the Pentateuch as the bride of Israel, and gladly does the bridegroom of the law "rejoice before the Eternal." On the awful days, when memory pours its stores into the lap of conscience, the reflections awakened are too solemn for anything less solid than the maturity of age. The thoughtlessness of youth is not consistent with that dread period, and in the ceremonies then observed we avoid permitting youth unnecessarily to partake. But on the day of the Rejoicing such exclusion is not needed. The law is for youth no less than for manhood: "Train up a youth in the way in which he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."

Therefore, in the ceremonies of the Rejoicing, young and old alike participate, and even children are occasionally not shut out. And so bow we to the institutions which include within their pale the extremes of life, and lead them both to eternity; bow we to the wisdom which in mercy gave us "Appointed Times," that we might therein ally social progress with religious welfare, temporal comfort with spiritual happiness; bow we to the Holy Law whose ordinances penetrate into the very core of our existence, and which, as it is our "wisdom and understanding in the sight of nations," so be it the most sacred possession "in the eyes of all Israel."

READER—you have read that a sire once bequeathed to his children a piece of land, with the information that it contained, somewhere beneath its surface, an immense treasure. You have read that his children laboured and laboured to discover the hidden riches, but that, save in the abundant harvest to which their labour conduced, they found nothing. You have read that, wise in their generation, they regarded the certainty which they had gained as more precious than the uncertainty which had been promised by their sire, and that, when it came to their turn to hand down the field to their posterity, they held out the same hope that they had received. Thus, untold ages passed, and still the happiness of present abundance was all that came to the heirs, although each lived in anticipation of some undiscovered blessing. Reader, I have participated in that inheritance, I have toiled for the promised guerdon. I have laboured, in so far as my strength has allowed, to acquire the harvest of glorious truths which our law and our religion—the heirlooms of our race—are able to produce. I know that they also contain a treasure—perfection in the eyes of God

and man ; and if, in conformity with the common lot, I have failed to discover that treasure, at least, like my predecessors, I have acquired the content which always accompanies honest exertions. I have placed the result before you in the spirit which bids men hold their possessions as stewards for the universal good. And so—
Farewell.

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THE END.

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