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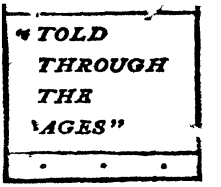

STORIES FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT

TOLD THROUGH THE AGES

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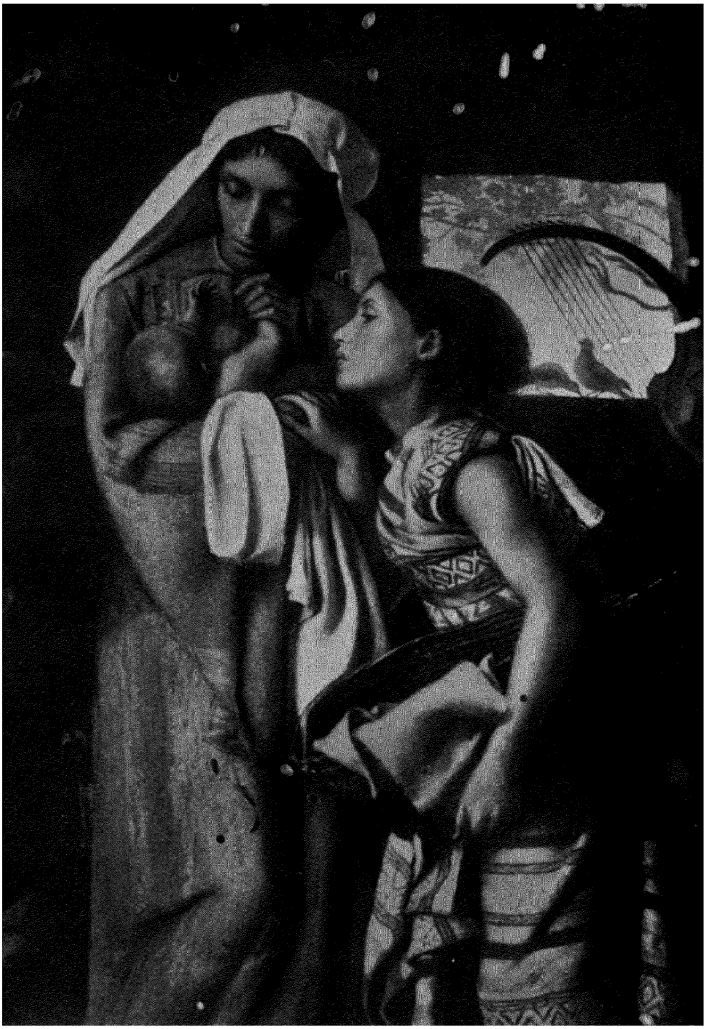

'The Mother of Moses'
Simeon Solomon
By permission of Mr. Frederick Hollyer

STORIES FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT

RETOLD

BY

S. PLATT

FORMERLY LECTURER AT THE CAMBRIDGE TRAINING COLLEGE

If our intellect and imagination have been formed by the Greeks, have we not in similar fashion drawn our moral and emotional training from Hebrew thought? . . . It is surely good that our youth, during the formative period, should have displayed to them a people dominated by an utter passion for righteousness, a people whom ideas of purity, of infinite good, of universal order, of faith in the irresistible downfall of all moral evil, moved to a poetic passion as fervid, and speech as musical as when Sappho sang of love or Æschylus thundered his deep notes of destiny.—DR RD MOULTON.

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PREFACE

IN the following pages I have tried to tell the beautiful Old Testament story faithfully, directly, and simply, so that children may read it for themselves.

I have therefore only omitted what would not be of interest to children, and, wherever possible, the narrative has been given in the words of the Bible itself.

Two things have seemed to me of the highest importance —first, that the story should be told *without comment;* and second, that it should be told *in chronological order.* It is impossible to comment without prejudicing the child-mind in favour of one's own religious opinions, and this would be quite outside the scope of the present volume. Let the children read the stories here for themselves, with unprejudiced minds. Also let the stories be read in their order, so that the children may have a clear idea of the development of the whole history, and not merely of parts or scraps of it. This will conduce to clearness of mind when later on they read the Bible for themselves.

The historical part of the Old Testament alone has been treated, ending with the return of the captives under Ezra and Nehemiah, and the rebuilding of the Temple and walls of Jerusalem. The two stories of the captivity—the Story of Esther and the Story of the Prophet Daniel—have been included, and the Story of Jonah comes in its own place in the History.

The exquisite poetry of the Bible must be read as it stands, if one would not altogether mar its beauty, and several Psalms which fall naturally into their places in the narrative have been included.

With the future child-readers of this book continually before my mind, I shall have failed altogether in my aim if I have at all detracted from the simplicity of the Bible narrative. In all the Bible stories, the vivid simplicity of the telling is most striking. Take, for instance, the wonderful account of the death of the son born to David and Bathsheba (II Samuel XII, 15-22). Stories such as these, complete in themselves, have been given exactly, or almost exactly, as they stand in the Bible.

The Bible is an intensely human book. In the Old Testament we are brought into contact with a race, living under eastern skies, in a period remote from our own, and yet in all they say and do we feel strongly our kinship with this ancient people. Their struggles then are ours to-day. We see their moral laws growing out of their strivings and necessities; with them religion exists because of right living —religion is conduct, a necessity of their national well-being. In the Bible, too, we are brought into touch with Oriental passion and imagery; we are warmed as with the eastern sun.

It would be a grievous mistake if the moral instruction we give our children should cease to be based upon the Bible. Moral precepts are soulless and dead. You cannot make a child clean by putting up rules for cleanliness on the walls; you cannot make a child kind and obedient by moral precept, but you *can* tell him the story of the Good Samaritan, and let him feel how clearly the command to " go and do likewise " arises out of the circumstances.

We live in an age that takes nothing on trust; we are in danger of losing much of our faith and many of our ideals; we extol intellect, and forget that the emotional side of human nature has an even greater importance. And it is because of this that we cannot afford to do without the Bible as a source of inspiration towards right living and conduct.

Neither dare we deprive our children of that thrill of emotion which we ourselves still feel when we read or have read to us the great Book, for it is just the same thrill of emotion that marks the essential difference between religion and morality.

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STORIES FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT

CHAPTER I

THE STORY OF THE CREATION AND THE FLOOD

AT the very beginning of things God made the heavens and the earth.

The earth was without form and empty, and darkness lay over the great deep. But the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters, and God said, "Let there be light"; and light came out of the darkness. The light God called Day, and the darkness He called Night. God also gathered all the waters together to one place, so that the dry land appeared. The waters He called Seas and the dry land Earth, and He caused the Earth to bring forth herbs and grass and trees.

In Heaven God set great lights, the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night. He made the stars also. He commanded the seas to bring forth moving creatures. Beautiful winged birds He caused to fly over the waters, and He made beasts and cattle and creeping things on the earth. And God saw that it was good.

But as yet there were neither men nor women nor little laughing children on the earth, so God made a man in His

own image, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and set him to be ruler over the birds of the air and the beasts of the field. On the seventh day He rested from His work, and God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it.

Eastward in Eden the Lord God planted a garden, into which He put the man whom He had made. In this garden grew many trees, beautiful to look at, and good for food, and in its midst He planted the tree of life, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Four great rivers watered this lovely place, rivers that flowed through lands rich in gold and precious stones. And God said to the man: "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat; for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." And Adam, for that was the man's name, gave names to all the beasts and birds and living creatures, and he lived happily in the garden, and loved all the beautiful things that God had made—the air and the sunshine and the waving trees, the shining pebbly rivers, the birds that came at his call, the animals that nestled close to him and walked by his side unafraid.

But amidst all this beauty God saw that the man was lonely. He had no one of his own kind to speak to, no one of whom he could make a close companion.

So God made a woman, and sent her to live with Adam in the beautiful garden. And they loved each other and were happy. In those days all was good and pure; nothing did they know of sin. The sun shone, the birds sang, and in their hearts were gladness and peace—there was no quarrelling or evil-speaking, and they lived near to the Great Spirit—the God who had created them.

But soon all this was changed. Amongst the creatures in the garden was a cunning serpent, who one day came to the woman and whispered in her ear, "Hath God said ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" She answered that God had given them the fruit of every tree except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and that tree He had told them not even to touch, for if they touched it or ate its fruit they should surely die. But the serpent said they should not die, and that God knew that if they ate of the fruit of the tree they would know what was good and what was evil, and would be like God Himself. So the woman turned towards the tree, and saw that it was pleasant to look upon, and she stretched out her hand and took some of the fruit and ate it, and gave some to her husband, who also ate it.

In a moment they realized what a wicked thing they had done. They were sorry, and tried to hide themselves amongst the trees, and, for the first time feeling ashamed that they were naked, they sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves. Soon they heard God calling in the garden, "Adam, where art thou?" Then Adam and his wife left their hiding-place and came before God and told Him that they had heard His voice but that they had been ashamed and afraid to meet Him. And God knew at once what they had done, for never before had they been afraid to come and talk with Him. "Hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?" He asked. And Adam answered that his wife had given him of the fruit, and that he had eaten it. Then God turned to the woman, and she said, "The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat."

Terrible was the punishment that followed. Ever since that day, the Bible story tells us, the serpent has been

deprived of his former power, and has crawled upon the earth; ever since that day sorrow and sin have been in the world; ever since that day the earth has brought forth thorns and thistles, and man has had to till the ground with hard toil and sweating brow. Adam and Eve (for that was now the woman's name) were turned out of their beautiful home, and at the east of the garden God placed Angels and a flaming sword to guard the way to the tree of life.

To Adam and his wife were born two sons—Cain and Abel. Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground like his father.

Now Cain brought an offering to the Lord of the fruits of the earth, and Abel brought also an offering of the firstlings of his flock. And the Lord accepted the offering of Abel, but refused what Cain had brought, whereupon Cain was very angry, and, when he and Abel were alone in the field together, he rose up against his brother and slew him. Then the Lord spoke to Cain and said, " Where is Abel thy brother? " And Cain answered, " I know not; am I my brother's keeper?" Then God showed Cain that He could not be deceived, and He told him that for his sin he should henceforth be a wanderer over the face of the earth. And Cain said, " My punishment is greater than I can bear. Behold Thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from Thy face I shall be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass that every one that findeth me shall slay me." But God set a mark upon Cain, lest anyone who found him should kill him, and Cain went out from the presence of the Lord.

Adam died at the great age of 930 years. He had many sons and daughters, and lived to see many generations of their children. These descendants built cities, and had tents and cattle. One, named Jubal, was "the father of all such as handle the harp and organ"; some, like Tubal-Cain, were workers in brass and iron. Some lived to a very great age, like Methuselah, who was 969 years old when he died.

And so the world went on for some hundreds of years until the days of Noah, in whose lifetime happened the great event of which we shall now read.

Noah was a good and upright man, and he had three sons—Shem, Ham, and Japheth. In his days the people were so wicked that God began to regret that He had made man at all, and He determined that He would destroy all the living things on the face of the earth. But He was anxious to save Noah, who, amidst all the wickedness around him, had lived an upright and honourable life. So He told Noah that He intended to bring a great flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy every living thing, but that Noah and his wife and his three sons and their wives were to escape destruction. He told Noah to build an Ark of gopher wood three hundred cubits[1] long, fifty cubits broad, and thirty cubits high. It was to be made perfectly water-tight, with a window in it, and a door set in the side of it, and with lower, second, and third stories. Into this Ark Noah was to bring all his family, together with stores of food, and two of every kind of all living things, of fowl and cattle and creeping things, to keep them alive. Of clean beasts and fowls Noah was to bring seven into the Ark, and of unclean beasts two, male and female.

[1] A cubit is nearly two feet.

So Noah did as God told him, and went into the Ark, and after seven days God sent a great rain upon the earth, which lasted for forty days and forty nights. The waters increased until the high hills were covered, and everything died that moved upon the earth—both man and cattle and beast, and creeping things and fowls. But the Ark was borne higher and higher on the face of the waters, and Noah and all they that were with him in the Ark remained alive. For one hundred and fifty days the waters stayed on the earth, but at last God caused a wind to pass over the earth, and the rain ceased and the waters began to decrease. On the seventeenth day of the seventh month the Ark rested on the mountains of Ararat, and the waters decreased continually until, on the first day of the tenth month, the tops of the mountains were seen.

At the end of forty days Noah opened the window of the Ark and sent forth a raven, but the raven did not return, for he was a carrion-feeder, and found rest and food upon the surface of the waters. Again Noah opened the window and sent forth a dove, to see if the waters were going down. The dove flew round and round, but finding no tree on which she could perch, she returned to the Ark, and Noah opened the window and drew her in. Seven days passed, and again he sent out the dove, and in the evening she again returned. But this time she brought in her mouth an olive leaf plucked from a tree, and Noah knew then that the waters were subsiding. He waited another seven days, and again sent out the dove, and this time she returned no more. This was a sign to Noah that the waters no longer covered the trees, and soon they were able to open the window and see the dry land. God told Noah that now all who were within the Ark might go forth, and He promised

The End of the Deluge

G. Brion

By permission of Messrs. Braun, Clément et Cie

that never again would He destroy the earth by a flood. As sign that He would keep His promise, He said that He would set a rainbow in the clouds. " When I bring a cloud over the earth . . . the bow shall be seen in the cloud, and I will remember my covenant."

After the days of the flood the earth was of one language and one speech. But there were certain men who journeyed from the east and dwelt in the plain of Shinar. These men made bricks, and began to build a city and a tower whose top should reach to heaven.

But the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, and He confused their language, so that they did not understand each other's speech, and had to leave off building. Therefore the name of the place was called Babel, meaning " Confusion," because there the Lord confused the language of the earth.

CHAPTER II

THE FRIEND OF GOD

YEARS went by, and once more the earth was peopled by the descendants of Noah and his three sons. One of these was the patriarch Abraham. In those days men waited for God's word to guide them, so when God told Abraham to leave his own country and go with his wife Sara and his nephew Lot into the land of Canaan, he went without hesitation. There he and Lot became so rich and their cattle multiplied so fast that the land was scarcely large enough to hold them both, and they agreed to separate.

Abraham stayed in Canaan, and Lot went eastward to the plains of Jordan, where there was plenty of water for the cattle, and lived in a city of the plain called Sodom. Now God had promised Abraham that his descendants should be a great nation, yet to Abraham and Sara this seemed impossible, as they were no longer young, and yet had no child. But one day, as Abraham sat in his tent door in the heat of the day, three men came and stood near him. He fetched water to wash their feet, for they had come from far, and gave them meal-cakes and butter and milk and meat. When they had eaten, they asked for Sara, and were told that she was inside the tent. Then the men, who were really messengers sent from God, told Abraham that

he would have a son, a little boy to grow up in his household and call him father.

When they had given this message, they rose to depart, and while Abraham accompanied them on their way they told him that Sodom, the city where Lot lived, was to be destroyed by fire from heaven because of its wickedness, together with Gomorrah, another very wicked city. But Abraham pleaded with them and begged that if fifty good people were found there the cities might be spared. And they promised that if fifty good people were found, the cities should not be destroyed. But Abraham was not yet satisfied, and went on pleading until he got the promise that if even ten good people were found there the cities should be spared.

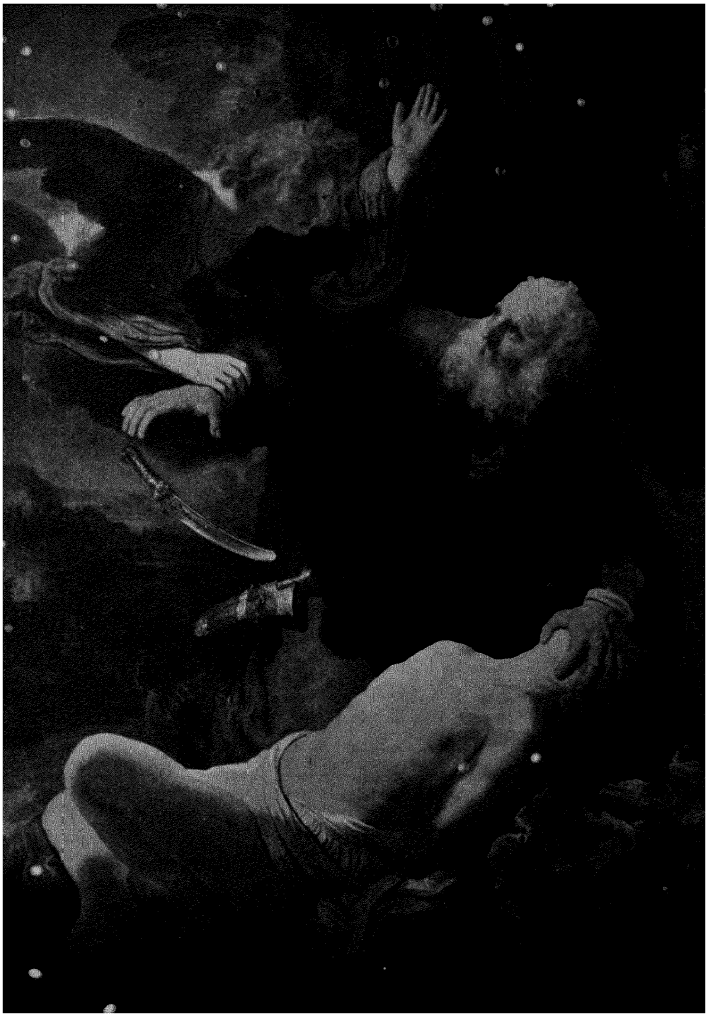
About the same time two angels went to Sodom to the abode of Lot to warn him to leave at once. He in turn told his sons-in-law of the calamity about to fall on them, but they would not listen to him. Lot himself was loth to leave his home, but in the morning the two angels hastened his departure, and did not rest until he and his wife and two daughters were safely outside the gates. They urged him to escape to the mountain, but he begged that he might be allowed to stay in the little city of Zoar, which was close at hand; and this request the angels granted. Lot's wife was even more unwilling than he was to leave Sodom, and as they journeyed on their way she looked back regretfully at the doomed city, and the Bible story tells us that for this she was turned into a pillar of salt.

Then God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah by fire, and all the people who lived there ; and Lot, afraid to stay in Zoar, lest that city also should be destroyed, found refuge in a cave in the mountains. In the morning, when Abraham

gazed across the plain towards Sodom and Gomorrah, he could see nothing but desolation and the smoke arising from the wreck of the two cities. Thus a second time had God sent destruction on the earth because of the sins of the people.

Now God did not forget His promise to Abraham that he should become a great nation and a blessing to the earth, and in due time the long-looked-for son was born, and was named Isaac. This event brought great joy to Abraham's household—and Abraham and Sara loved the lad who came to them in their old age.

There was already a little boy in Abraham's household—Ishmael, the son of Hagar, one of Sara's maids. Ishmael, who had been born and brought up in Abraham's house, was not quite willing to make friends with the little Isaac, the son of Sara. On the day when Isaac was weaned a great feast was made, and there was general rejoicing; but Ishmael stood apart from the rest, and mocked, and made fun of all that was being done for Isaac. At this Sara was very angry, and declared that he should no longer stay in the house, but that he and his mother must go away at once. So Abraham got up early in the morning and took bread and a bottle of water, and gave it to Hagar and sent her away. Hagar and her child wandered, they knew not whither. They lost their way, and soon the water and bread were gone, and nothing seemed left but death in the wilderness. Hagar could not bear to see her boy die, so she laid him down amongst the shrubs and she herself went a little way off and sat down and wept. But God, who knew all her story and had seen her sorrow, sent an angel to comfort her. "What aileth thee, Hagar?" said the angel, "fear not, but go and lift up the lad; he will yet do great



Abraham and Isaac

Rembrandt

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things and be the founder of a great nation." At this Hagar opened her eyes, and there before her was a well of water. So she filled the water bottle, and the lad drank greedily and recovered his strength. From that day all was well with Hagar and Ishmael. The lad grew up in the wilderness, and became a great archer, and God was with him.

Meanwhile Isaac too was growing up—the joy and delight of his father and mother. But God put a great trial and temptation before Abraham in order to prove his courage and steadfastness. He was to go into the land of Moriah to a mountain there, and offer up Isaac, his only son, as a sacrifice. But Abraham did not falter. Getting up early in the morning, he saddled his ass, got together the wood for the altar fire, took with him two young men and his beloved son Isaac, and went into the mountain as God had told him. Leaving the two young men and the ass at some distance off, he and Isaac went forward alone. " Father," said the lad, " behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? " And Abraham answered, "My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering." When they had reached the place of which God had told them, Abraham built the altar, laid the wood in order, bound his son, and was about to follow God's commands, when he heard a voice calling to him out of heaven, telling him not to touch the lad, for that now God was satisfied as to his faith and trust in Him. Then Abraham unbound his son, and looking round saw a ram in a thicket, which he caught and offered on the altar as a sacrifice to God. And God repeated His promise to Abraham that his descendants should be a great nation and a blessing to the whole earth.

Some years after these events Sara died, and was buried

in the cave of Machpelah. Isaac was now a young man, and Abraham was anxious that he should marry one of his own kindred, and not one of the women of Canaan, amongst whom they had come to live. So he called to him the oldest servant that he had, and told him to go back to the country in which they had lived before they came to Canaan, and find a wife for his son Isaac. He told his servant that God's angel would go before him to guide him and shew him what to do. So the servant took ten camels with him and went to Abraham's kindred in the city where dwelt Nahor, Abraham's brother. Outside the city was a well, to which at eventide the women came to draw water. Here the servant made his camels kneel down, and he prayed that God would send him good speed, and that the maiden to whom he should say, "Give me to drink," and who should answer, "Drink, and I will give thy camels also to drink," should be the right maiden to choose as a wife for Isaac.

Almost before he had finished his prayer, there came to the well a beautiful maiden, named Rebekah, the granddaughter of Nahor. When she had filled her pitcher at the well, the servant ran to her and asked if she would let him drink a little water. So she let down the pitcher from her shoulder and gave him drink, and emptying the pitcher into the camel's trough ran back again to the well and drew water for all the thirsty camels. Then Abraham's servant knew that God had heard his prayer, and he gave to Rebekah a golden ear-ring and two bracelets for her hands, and asked her whose daughter she was, and if there were room in her father's tents for him to lodge that night. Rebekah told him that she was Nahor's granddaughter and that he would be welcome at their abode, where he would find also plenty of food and bedding for the camels. The

maiden then ran on ahead to tell her people of the expected guest, and her brother Laban came out to meet him and welcome him to their home. But when they placed food before him, he refused to eat until he had told them on what errand he had come. He said that he was the servant of Abraham, who was a very rich man, with many flocks and herds, and that his master had sent him to find a wife for his son Isaac. He told them also how God had answered his prayer at the well and wonderfully directed him to his master's kinsfolk, and that now he wished to know if they were willing to let Rebekah go back with him. Rebekah's father and brother, believing that it was the will of God that she should go, gave their consent at once, and the servant brought out the jewels and garments that he had brought with him from his master, and gave them to her and to her mother and brother. That night there was a feast, and all were merry, but when morning broke, the maiden took leave of her kindred, and, together with her maids, she departed with the servant of Abraham and his caravan.

At eventide, as Isaac was meditating in the fields, he saw the camels approaching in the distance. Rebekah had also seen Isaac, and being told who he was, she threw a veil over her face, and getting down from her camel, went to meet him. So Rebekah became his wife, and their love for each other comforted Isaac after his mother's death. Some time after this Abraham also died, and Isaac and Ishmael, who had left Abraham's house so long ago, buried him by his wife Sara in the cave of Machpelah. God had chosen him to be the head of a great nation, and had prospered him in all that he undertook. His faith and trust in God were great, and he was called "The friend of God."

CHAPTER III

THE TWO BROTHERS

TO Isaac and Rebekah were born two sons. The years passed and these two children became men: Esau, was a cunning hunter, a man of the field, while Jacob, was a plain man, dwelling in tents.

Jacob, the " plain man," was beloved of his mother, but Isaac loved Esau, who brought him venison from his day's hunting. One day it happened that Esau came back from the field faint and hungry, and demanded food from his brother, who had been making a pottage of lentils. But Jacob said he would not give him the soup until Esau promised to sell him his birthright (that is to say, the advantages that fell to him as eldest son). Esau, being nearly dead with fatigue and hunger, was ready to agree to anything, so he sold his birthright for the mess of pottage. Neither was this the only time that Jacob got the better of his elder brother. Isaac had grown old, and his sight was failing, and he begged Esau to take his weapons and go out to the field and fetch him some venison as of old, that he might bless him before he died. Now Rebekah heard this, and determined that her beloved Jacob should have the blessing. So, while Esau went to the field to hunt for venison she called Jacob to her, and told him to fetch two kids that she might make a savoury dish for Isaac. " Thou shalt bring

it to thy father," she said, " that he may eat, and that he may bless thee before his death."

But Jacob said, " Behold, Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man; my father, peradventure, will feel me, and I shall seem to him as a deceiver; and I shall bring a curse upon me, and not a blessing."

But Rebekah said, "Upon me be thy curse, my son; only obey my voice and go fetch me them." So he brought the kids to his mother, and Rebekah prepared a dish such as Isaac loved; and she took Esau's clothes and put them on Jacob, and put the skins of the kids on his hands and neck, and he brought the savoury food to his father. Then Isaac said, " Who art thou, my son? " And Jacob answered, " I am Esau, thy firstborn; I have done according as thou badest me; arise, I pray thee, sit and eat of my venison, that thy soul may bless me." Isaac wondered to find Esau back so soon, and when he felt his hands and neck and found that they were hairy, he was more puzzled still. The hands were Esau's but the voice was Jacob's. " Art thou my very son Esau? " he asked, and Jacob answered, " I am." So Isaac ate the venison and kissed his son and blessed him with the blessing of the firstborn. " The smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed; therefore God give thee of the dew of heaven and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine; let people serve thee and nations bow down to thee; be lord over thy brethren and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee: cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee."

Scarcely had Jacob left his father's presence when Esau returned, bringing with him also savoury venison. When Isaac asked who he was, Esau answered that he was his

first-born son, and the old man trembled very exceedingly. Great was Esau's distress when he heard that his brother had taken the blessing that rightly belonged to him. "Bless me, even me also, O my father," he cried, with an exceeding bitter cry. "Is he not rightly named 'Jacob'? for he hath supplanted me these two times; he took away my birthright; and, behold, now he hath taken away my blessing."

Then Isaac told how he had made Jacob lord over his brethren, and Esau wept bitterly, and begged that even one blessing should be given to him. So Isaac said, "Behold, thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth and of the dew of heaven from above; and by thy sword shalt thou live and shalt serve thy brother; and it shall come to pass when thou shalt have the dominion that thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck."

After these things, Esau hated Jacob, and determined to take his life. So bitter were the quarrels between the two brothers that both Isaac and Rebekah advised Jacob to go to his uncle Laban, and stay with him for awhile. So he departed for Haran, where his uncle lived. On his way God appeared to him in a dream, in which he saw a ladder set up from earth to heaven, and angels of God ascending and descending upon it. And God renewed the promises that He had made to Abraham, promising that all the land where Jacob then was should be his, and that He would guide him wheresoever he went. When Jacob awoke he knew that God had been with him in his dream, so he called the place Bethel—the house of God—and set up the stone on which his head had rested for a pillow, pouring oil upon it, and vowing that if God would indeed be with him and bring him back in peace, he would give Him the tenth part of all his possessions.

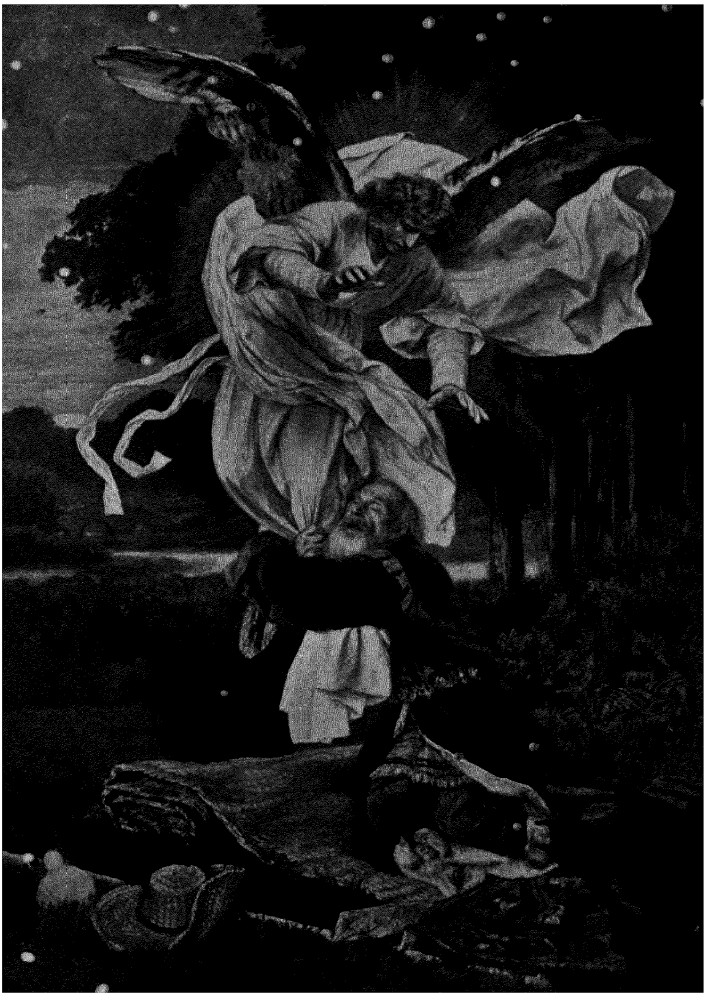
After this he journeyed on until he came to a well of water, where were gathered many flocks of sheep. The shepherds told Jacob that they came from Haran, that they knew Laban the son of Nahor, and that Rachel, the daughter of Laban, would presently come to water the sheep, after the stone should be rolled from the mouth of the well. Scarcely had they said this when Jacob saw Rachel coming with her father's sheep, so he hastened to roll away the stone for her and water the flock, and when he kissed her and told her that he was Rebekah's son, she ran and told her father, and Laban received him gladly into his house.

Here Jacob stayed for a month, at the end of which time Laban told him that he was willing to pay him a wage for any services he might render him. Now Laban had two daughters—Leah, the elder, the "tender-eyed"; and Rachel, the younger, who was beautiful to look upon. And Jacob loved Rachel, and told Laban that he was willing to work for seven years if at the end of that time he might have Rachel for his wife. To this Laban agreed, and the seven years soon passed away—indeed they seemed to Jacob but a few days, so great was his love for Rachel. A great feast was made for the marriage, and Laban brought the veiled bride to Jacob, but when the ceremony was over and the bride unveiled, Jacob discovered that not Rachel, but her elder sister Leah, had been given to him, and that Laban had deceived him. Laban excused himself for his treachery, and told Jacob that in their country it was not the custom to marry the younger sister before the elder, but if Jacob would serve another seven years he could then have Rachel also. In those days men had more than one wife. So Jacob served Laban another seven years, and at

the end of that time Rachel the beloved became his bride.

Still Jacob worked for Laban, but often did he long to go back to his own country. Yet Laban urged him to stay, and agreed to divide his cattle with him as his hire. From that day Jacob's cattle and herds increased, and he had many servants and camels and asses. But Laban's cattle were weak, and he began to be displeased with Jacob, and behaved so unkindly to him that Jacob departed secretly with Leah and Rachel and their sons, and all his belongings. When Laban heard that he had gone, he followed quickly after him, and upbraided him for going away thus secretly. But the quarrel was settled between them, and they made a compact together and raised a heap of stones, calling the place of their compact "Mizpah," which means "The Lord watch between me and thee when we are absent one from another." Laban promised that he would not pass over the heap of stones to do Jacob harm, and Jacob on his part made the same promise, after which Laban returned home and Jacob continued his journey. When he had passed Mahanaim he sent messengers to Esau to tell him that he was coming, and that he had with him many flocks and herds and much wealth.

But when the messengers returned, saying that Esau was approaching with four hundred men, Jacob was afraid and distressed, and thought that Esau meant harm to him. So he prayed to God to help him, and he chose from his flocks a valuable gift, which he sent ahead with his servants to please his brother. Then he sent his wives and sons over the brook in safety, and he himself was left alone In the night we are told that an angel came and wrestled with him, and told him that his name should be changed, and



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Jacob Wrestling with the Angel
Eduard von Gebhardt 18

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that he should henceforth be called Israel, "A prince of God."

The meeting of Esau and Jacob was after all a happy one. The brothers kissed each other and wept, and Esau was astonished at all the wealth that Jacob brought with him. Esau then returned to his own home, and Jacob journeyed on until he came to Mamre, in the land of Canaan, where he was in time to see his old father before he died. But on the way a great sorrow had befallen him, for Rachel had died, leaving behind her two sons—Joseph and Benjamin.

These two sons of Rachel lived then with their ten brothers and their father in the land of Canaan. Of what befel them there the next chapter shall tell.

CHAPTER IV

THE DREAMER OF DREAMS

JACOB, or Israel, as he was now to be called, loved Joseph more than all his children because he was the son of his old age and the son of Rachel. The lad was at this time seventeen years old, and kept the flocks with his brothers. Israel had made Joseph a coat of many colours, and his brothers hated him because his father was so fond of him. Their hatred was increased when they heard about two wonderful dreams that Joseph dreamed. He dreamed that his brothers and himself were binding sheaves in the field, and that his sheaf arose and stood upright, while the sheaves of his brothers bowed down before it; and he dreamed also that the sun and moon and eleven stars bowed down before him. The brothers took these dreams to mean that one day he would rule over them all; and even his father rebuked Joseph for telling the dreams.

Shortly afterwards, while the brothers of Joseph were keeping the flocks at Dothan, Israel sent him to see if all was well with them. When the brothers saw Joseph coming, they decided to kill him and throw him into a pit, and then tell their father that he had been torn to pieces by wild beasts. Reuben, however, pleaded for Joseph's life, so they threw him into the pit alive, first stripping off his coat of many colours. Presently there came a band of

Ishmaelites who were going down into Egypt, their camels carrying balm and spices. On Judah's advice, the brothers sold Joseph to these men for twenty pieces of silver, and the Ishmaelites took him to Egypt and sold him to Potiphar, the captain of Pharaoh's guard. Meanwhile the brothers killed a kid and dipped Joseph's coat in the blood, and took the coat home to their father, who mourned and wept for his son, thinking that evil beasts had torn him to pieces.

Now Joseph prospered in Egypt, and Potiphar in due time made him his trusted servant and overseer of his household. Potiphar's wife, however, an evil woman, so poisoned her husband's mind against Joseph that she succeeded in making him believe evil tales, and caused Joseph to be imprisoned. But even in prison God was with him, and the keeper of the prison found him so trustworthy that he gave him charge over the other prisoners, amongst whom were the chief butler and the chief baker of Pharaoh the king.

Now in those days people believed in dreams and visions, so when the chief butler told Joseph that he had had a dream, Joseph asked him to tell it to him, and explained to him what the dream meant. The butler said that he saw in his dream a vine with three branches, and that he took the grapes of the vine and pressed them into Pharaoh's cup, and gave the cup to Pharaoh. Joseph told him that in three days he would be released from prison and again become Pharaoh's butler. "But," added Joseph, "think on me when it shall be well with thee, and shew kindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house."

The chief baker dreamt that he had three white baskets on his head, and that in the uppermost one were all kinds

of bakemeats for Pharaoh, and that the birds ate the bakemeats out of the basket.

Joseph also explained this dream, which meant that in three days the chief baker would be hanged on a tree, and the birds would eat his flesh.

Both dreams turned out as Joseph had said, but the chief butler forgot his promise and forgot Joseph, who for two years longer remained in prison.

At the end of that time Pharaoh the king dreamt a dream, and when none of his wise men could tell him the meaning of it, the chief butler at last remembered the young Hebrew in the prison, who could interpret dreams. Pharaoh sent for him immediately, and told Joseph his dream. He had dreamt that he stood on the banks of a river, and that seven fat kine were feeding in a meadow, and that seven lean and ill-favoured kine came and ate up the seven fat kine, yet still remained lean and ill-favoured. Again he dreamt that seven full and good ears of corn grew on one stalk, and after them sprang up seven thin withered ears, which devoured the seven good ears.

Joseph explained that the two dreams were really one, and that in them God had shewn Pharaoh what He was about to do. There were to be seven years of great plenty in Egypt, and after them were to come seven years of grievous famine, and Joseph suggested that Pharaoh should choose a discreet man and set him over the land of Egypt, with officers under him, in order to store up sufficient food during the good years, that no one might want during the years of famine.

Pharaoh replied that he could find no one more discreet and wise than Joseph, and that he would make *him* ruler over all the land of Egypt; "only in the throne will I be

greater than thou." And Pharaoh gave Joseph a ring and a gold chain and fine garments, and made him ride in the second chariot, and gave him a princess to be his wife.

Then Joseph set about his task of storing up food in the cities, and during the seven plenteous years he gathered corn as the sand of the sea. Two sons were born to him during those years, and Joseph named them Manasseh and Ephraim.

Then upon all lands came the great famine. Only in the land of Egypt was there plenty of food. And Joseph opened the storehouses, and sold food to the Egyptians, and all the countries round sent to Joseph to buy corn.

Now Jacob heard that there was corn in Egypt, and sent his ten sons from Canaan to buy food, keeping Benjamin, the youngest, at home, in case some evil should befall him. When the brothers came into Egypt and bowed down before Pharaoh's powerful governor, Joseph knew them at once, but they did not recognize him as their brother.

He spoke roughly to them, and pretended to take them for spies, but they told him that they were true men, that they had come from Canaan, and had left their youngest brother at home. Joseph still pretended that he took them for spies, and put them in prison for three days. At the end of that time he said to them that if they would fetch their youngest brother, he would believe their words, but that they must leave Simeon as a hostage while they carried back food to Canaan.

Then Joseph ordered that their sacks should be filled with corn, and that each man's money should be put into his sack and provisions given them for the way. So they left Simeon in prison and departed. On the way one of them opened his sack to get food for his ass and saw the

money. Then they were frightened, and when, similarly, they found on their return home that each man's money had been returned, they were still more afraid. Their father, when he heard the story, refused to let Benjamin go. "Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me." Reuben offered his own two sons as sureties for Benjamin's life and safety, but Jacob still refused. Soon, however, all the food brought from Egypt was used up, and starvation again faced them, and Judah at last persuaded his father to let Benjamin go, saying that he would be responsible for his safe return. So they took with them a present of fruits and balm and honey, and took double money to pay for the corn.

When Joseph saw that they had brought Benjamin, he ordered a feast to be prepared, and his steward brought the brothers to Joseph's own house. This made them still more afraid. When Joseph came, they bowed themselves before him and offered their present, and he asked how their father was, and if this was their youngest brother. Scarcely could he restrain himself from weeping when he saw Benjamin, but still he kept them in ignorance as to who he really was. When the feast was over, he commanded the steward to fill the sacks with corn, to put each man's money again in the sacks, and to put his own silver cup into Benjamin's sack. At dawn the brothers departed, but when they were still but a little way beyond the city walls, Joseph sent his steward after them, and accused them of stealing his silver cup. The brothers were astonished and said such a thing could not be, and that if the cup should be found in any sack, the one to whom the sack belonged should die. When the cup was found in the sack of Benja-

min, great was their sorrow; and they returned at once to the city, and came before Joseph and bent themselves to the ground. Judah pleaded with Joseph, and told how he had promised to be surety for Benjamin, and that it would mean death to Jacob if he did not bring the lad back with him. He begged that he might himself be kept as a bondman and that Benjamin might return in safety.

Then Joseph could restrain himself no longer, but wept aloud, and told them that he was their brother Joseph, and that the Lord had prospered him in Egypt. And he kissed his brothers, and told them to go back to Canaan and fetch their father, so that he might live in plenty in Egypt during the five years of famine which were still to come.

When Pharaoh heard that Joseph's brothers had come, he was pleased, and told them to take wagons from Egypt and fetch their wives and children and their father from the land of Canaan. So Joseph gave them wagons, as Pharaoh commanded, and provisions for the way, and a change of raiment each, but to Benjamin he gave five changes of raiment and three hundred pieces of silver. He also sent gifts to his father. So the brothers went home and told Israel all that had happened, and that his son Joseph was alive and was governor over all the land of Egypt. It was long before the old man could believe such a wonderful story, but when he saw the wagons and gifts he thought it must really be true, and that he would see again his long-lost son.

So the journey from Canaan to Egypt was begun, and at Beersheba God appeared to Jacob and told him not to be afraid to go into Egypt, for that from him should spring a great nation. So they journeyed on, with their wives and

children and their cattle, and all their goods; and all the souls of the house of Jacob which came into Egypt were threescore and ten.

When they had come into the land of Goshen, Joseph came to meet them in his chariot, and he fell on his father's neck and wept, and Israel said to Joseph, "Now let me die, since I have seen thy face." This was his way of saying that he had reached the fullest happiness that life could give. Then Joseph took five of his brothers and went back to Pharaoh, and presented them to him, and told him that the others with their cattle and herds were in Goshen. Pharaoh received them kindly, and told them that they might all dwell in the land of Goshen. Joseph also presented his father to the king.

Now the famine was still raging in the land, and when the Egyptians had spent all their money in buying corn, Joseph gave them bread in exchange for their cattle and flocks. But when that year was ended and the people still starved, they came again to Joseph, saying that now only their bodies and their lands were left and that they would willingly be Pharaoh's servants and sell their lands for bread.

Thus Joseph bought the whole land of Egypt for Pharaoh, except the land of the priests, and he removed the people to the cities. Then he gave them seed with which to sow the land, and made a law that a fifth part should always belong to Pharaoh.

Israel lived in the country of Goshen for seventeen years and had great possessions. He was now 137 years old, and when he felt that he had not much longer to live, he sent for Joseph and made him promise to bury him in the cave of Machpelah in the land of Canaan. He also blessed Joseph's

two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, saying: "The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads." Manasseh was the elder of the two, but Jacob laid his right hand on the head of Ephraim and his left hand on that of Manasseh, and when Joseph wished him to place his right hand on the head of the first-born, he refused, saying that the younger brother should be greater than the elder. Thereafter Jacob blessed his own sons:

"*Reuben*, thou art my first-born, my might and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power: unstable as water, thou shalt not excel."

Simeon and *Levi* he chided for having given way to anger: "I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel."

"*Judah*, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise; thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies; thy father's children shall bow down before thee. Judah is a lion's whelp. The sceptre shall not depart from him, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come."

"*Zebulun* shall dwell at the haven of the sea."

"*Issachar* is a strong ass couching down between two burdens, and he saw that rest was good and the land that it was pleasant; and bowed his shoulder to bear, and became a servant under tribute."

"*Dan* shall judge his people. He shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path, that biteth the horse's heels, so that his rider shall fall backward."

"*Gad*. A troop shall overcome him, but he shall overcome at the last."

"*Asher*. His bread shall be fat, and he shall yield royal dainties."

"*Naphtali* is a hind let loose: he giveth goodly words."

"*Joseph* is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well, whose branches run over the wall. The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him: but his bow abode in strength, and the weapons of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob . . . the Almighty, who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under."

" *Benjamin* shall ravin as a wolf: in the morning he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil."

And Jacob died, and Joseph commanded the physicians to embalm his father's body, and he went in unto the household of Pharaoh and said: " My father made me swear that I should lay him by the side of his fathers in the land of Canaan; wherefore let me go, I pray thee, and bury my father, and I will come again."

And Pharaoh allowed Joseph to go, together with his brethren, and there went with them a great company with chariots and horsemen so that the people on the way said, " This is a grievous mourning to the Egyptians."

And they buried Jacob with great pomp and ceremony and mourning in the cave of Machpelah, where were buried Abraham and Sarah, with Isaac and Rebekah, and Jacob's wife Leah.

Joseph then returned to Egypt, and when his brethren saw that their father was dead they said, " Joseph will peradventure hate us, and will certainly requite us all the evil which we did unto him."

They sent therefore to Joseph and told him that Jacob had laid command upon them to ask pardon for the evil which they had done unto him in his youth. And Joseph's heart was touched, and he looked kindly upon his brothers and said:

"Fear not, I am not God that I should judge. Ye meant evil against me, but God turned it into good, and made it the means of saving many people alive." And Joseph comforted his brethren, and returned good unto them and their children all his days.

And Joseph lived in Egypt to the great age of one hundred and ten years, and he held his great grandchildren upon his knees. And he exacted an oath from his kindred that in due time they should carry his bones from out of the land of Egypt.

CHAPTER V

THE JOURNEYINGS OF THE ISRAELITES

Sound the loud timbrel
O'er Egypt's dark sea;
The Lord is triumphant,
His people are free.

AFTER the death of Joseph, the Israelites grew and multiplied exceedingly, until, in course of time, the Egyptians became afraid lest, in time of war, the Israelites should join their enemies and take the country of Egypt for themselves. So they set task-masters over them, and made their lives bitter with hard bondage.

Now there arose a king of Egypt, who knew not Joseph, and he commanded that every son born to the Israelites should be thrown into the river. One mother, who belonged to the tribe of Levi, tried to save her first-born son from the cruel tyrant. He was a goodly child, and for three months she hid him. When she could hide him no longer, she made an ark of bulrushes, daubed it with pitch, and put the child in it, laying him down amongst the reeds by the banks of the river, and setting his sister to watch and see what should become of him. Presently came Pharaoh's daughter, with her maidens. to bathe in the river; and when she saw the ark among the reeds, she sent a maid to fetch it, and finding the crying

Hebrew babe, she beheld it with pity. Then the sister, who was watching, asked if she should fetch a Hebrew woman to be the child's nurse, and, Pharaoh's daughter consenting, she fetched the child's own mother. Then the King's daughter said: "Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages." So the mother took her own child home and nursed him, and in due time, when he had grown, she took him to Pharaoh's daughter, to be brougnt up as her son. He was called Moses, which means "Drawn out," because he had been drawn out of the water.

When Moses became a man, he was grieved to see the burdens put upon the children of Israel, his kinsmen, and one day, seeing an Egyptian smite a Hebrew, his anger was so great that he killed the Egyptian and buried him in the sand. When Pharaoh heard of this, he sought to slay Moses, but Moses escaped into the land of Midian, and there in course of time he married Zipporah, one of the daughters of Jethro, Prince of Midian. One day, while keeping the flocks of Jethro in Horeb, he saw a strange sight—a bush which burned with fire and yet was not consumed.

When he drew nearer to find out the cause of this, God called to him out of the bush, and said, "I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And God told Moses that He had seen all the sorrows and afflictions of the Israelites and their ill-treatment at the hands of the cruel king, and that He intended to take them away out of the land of Egypt, and to bring them to a land flowing with milk and honey—the land of Canaan. He further said that He had chosen Moses to lead the Irsaelites out of Egypt, and that he was to gather together the elders of the people and go before

Pharaoh and ask permission to take a three days' journey into the wilderness to sacrifice to their God. Moses was told also that Pharaoh would refuse at first, and would not let the Israelites go until compelled by many afflictions.

Moses was not at all willing to become the leader of the people. He said nobody would believe that God had appeared to him and had spoken to him. So certain signs were given to him by which the people should know that God had indeed appeared to him. One of these was the sign of the rod. Moses was commanded to cast on the ground the rod which he had in his hand, and when he had done this it turned into a serpent. Moses fled, terrified, but God told him to seize the serpent by the tail, whereupon the serpent became again a rod in his hand.

But still Moses made excuses, and expressed unwillingness to go. He said that he was a man slow of speech and that he would not know what to say to the people. But God set all his doubts aside, and told him that He would be with him always, and would give him words to say and teach him what he should do, and that his brother Aaron, who could speak well, would go with him and help him.

Then Moses took his rod in his hand and went and fetched his wife and his sons, and returned to the land of Egypt. There he and Aaron gathered the elders of the people together and told them that God had seen their affliction and would help them. Together they went to the king and gave him their message, "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel—'Let My people go, that they may hold a feast unto Me in the wilderness.'" But Pharaoh answered, "I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go," and he ordered their task-masters to increase the work of the people. They were to make as many bricks as before, but no

straw was to be provided—they were to find the straw for themselves.

The Israelites were now accused of idleness, and their burdens were increased. Their case was sad indeed, and they upbraided Moses and Aaron for having brought these fresh troubles upon them. When Moses laid the matter before the Lord, he was told to go again to the Israelites and tell them that God would surely save them and bring them into the land which He had promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. But the Israelites, groaning under the bondage of the cruel king, would neither listen to Moses nor believe him. Then God commanded Moses to go again to Pharaoh, but Moses said that if the Israelites would not hearken to him he could not expect Pharaoh to listen. Then the Lord said that if Pharaoh asked for a sign they were to throw down Aaron's rod before him, and it would turn into a serpent.

Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh as God had told them, and Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh and before all his servants, and it turned into a serpent. The wise men and magicians then cast down their rods, and they also became serpents, but the rod of Aaron swallowed up all the other rods; yet still Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he refused to let the people go.

Wonderful things then happened in Egypt. The sign of the rod had failed, and, at Pharaoh's next refusal, God turned all the waters in the land of Egypt into blood. A plague of frogs was sent, the dust of the earth was changed into crawling insects, and flies swarmed in the houses, yet again and again Pharaoh " hardened his heart " and refused to let the people go. Then came grievous diseases, and all the cattle in Egypt died. The Egyptians were covered

with sores and smitten with pestilence, thunder and hail; fire ran along the ground, every tree was broken and the flax and barley destroyed. Only the children of Israel were unharmed by all these terrors. But as each new plague passed, Pharaoh's obstinacy returned. The land was now darkened by a terrible plague of destructive insects called locusts, which devoured the fruits and herbs that had not been destroyed by the hail. After the locusts came a thick darkness, which lasted for three days—only in the dwellings of the Israelites was there light. But the most terrible affliction of all was still to come, and from this also the Israelites were to be exempt. God told Moses and Aaron that in each family of the Israelites a lamb without blemish was to be killed in the evening. The blood of the lamb was to be sprinkled on the two sideposts and on the upper door-post of the houses, and the flesh of the lamb was to be roasted and eaten with unleavened bread and bitter herbs that same night. Nothing was to be kept till the morning; if any pieces remained over they were to be burned with fire. The Israelites were to eat the lamb in haste, with their loins girded, their shoes on their feet, and their staves in their hands. And God told Moses that on that same night he would pass through the land of Egypt and would slay all the first-born of the Egyptians, both man and beast, but that He would *pass over* the houses of the Israelites on which the blood was sprinkled.

No one was to leave his house that night, and for seven days unleavened bread only was to be eaten.

The children of Israel did what the Lord commanded them, and at midnight throughout the land there was an exceeding great cry, for the first-born in every Egyptian

"And there was a Great Cry in Egypt"
Arthur Hacker, A.R.A.

household was smitten, and there was not a house where there was not one dead.

And Pharaoh rose in the night, all his pride and obstinacy gone at last, and called Moses and Aaron, and told them to lead the people of Israel forth, and their flocks and herds, and to get away as hastily as might be. Then the children of Israel borrowed jewels and silver and gold and raiment from the Egyptians, and set forth from Egypt on the night of the Passover, and ever since that night the feast of the Passover has been yearly held by the descendants of the Israelites to commemorate the passing over of their houses by the Angel of Death.[1]

Then God led the children of Israel through the wilderness of the Red Sea, and they took with them the bones of Joseph, and encamped on the border of the wilderness. By day a pillar of cloud went before to guide them, and by night a pillar of fire.

But Pharaoh repented that he had let them go, and he pursued them with all the horses and chariots of Egypt, and with a great army, and he overtook them at night time as they encamped by the sea. When they saw the hosts of Pharaoh coming, the Israelites were afraid, and upbraided Moses, saying that they would far rather have remained in hard service in Egypt than die in the wilderness. But Moses answered, "The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace."

And the angel of God which went before the camp of Israel removed and went behind them; the pillar of cloud also went from before their face and stood between them and the Egyptians. And it gave light to the Israelites, but

[1] This feast is held by the Jews to-day at Easter.

it was darkness to the Egyptians, so that they did not come near all that night.

Then God told Moses to stretch forth his rod and divide the waters of the sea. This he did, and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and in the morning the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon dry ground; and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left. In the morning watch the Egyptians saw that their bond-servants were escaping, and they pursued and went after them in the midst of the sea. But God was with His people, and He troubled the Egyptians so that the wheels of their chariots stuck in the bed of the sea and they were seized with panic and turned to flee. And the Lord bade Moses stretch out his hand over the sea once more, and the waters returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh, so that there remained not so much as one of them.

We will sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea.

The Lord is our strength and song, and He is become our salvation.

The Lord is a man of war: the Lord is His name.

Pharaoh's chariot and his host hath He cast into the sea: his chosen captains also are drowned in the Red Sea.

The depths have covered them: they sank into the bottom as a stone.

Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power: thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy.

And in the greatness of Thine excellency Thou hast overthrown them that rose up against Thee; Thou sentest forth Thy wrath, which consumed them as stubble.

And with the blast of Thy nostrils the waters were gathered together, and the floods stood upright as an heap.

The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil: my lust shall be satisfied upon them: I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them.

Thou didst blow with Thy wind, the sea covered them; they sank as lead in the mighty waters.

Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?

Thou in Thy mercy hast led forth the people which Thou hast redeemed: Thou hast guided them in Thy strength unto Thy holy habitation.

Thy people shall hear and be afraid: sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestine.

Fear and dread shall fall upon them: by the greatness of Thine arm they shall be as still as a stone; till Thy people pass over, O Lord, till the people pass over which Thou hast purchased.

Thou shalt bring them in and plant them in the mountain of Thine inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which Thou hast made for Thee to dwell in, in the Sanctuary, O Lord, which Thy hands have established.

The Lord shall reign for ever and ever. For the horse of Pharaoh went in with his chariots and with his horsemen into the sea, and the Lord brought again the waters of the sea upon them: but the children of Israel went on dry land in the midst of the sea.

This song they sang, while Miriam the prophetess, Aaron's sister, and all the women danced, timbrel in hand.

After these things they wandered three days in the wilderness without water to drink, and when at last water was found at Marah, it was so bitter that they could not drink it. And again they murmured against Moses, but the Lord shewed him a tree which, when cast into the waters, made

them sweet, and presently they arrived at Elim, where were twelve wells of water and three score and ten palm trees.

It were long to tell in full of the wanderings of the Israelites in the wilderness. Forty years did they wander before they came to the Promised Land.

Often did they murmur against God and His servant Moses, and wish that they had never left the land of Egypt. Yet God fed them in the wilderness with quails and with manna sent from Heaven, and brought water for them out of the rocks when they thirsted. Always too, they rested on the seventh day—the Sabbath. On the sixth day a double portion of manna was gathered, so that no work might be done on the Sabbath.

When the people of Amalek fought against them, Moses appointed Joshua to choose out men to go and fight against them, while Moses with Aaron and Hur stood on the top of the hill to watch the battle. Moses held the rod of God in his hand, and when he held up his hand Israel prevailed, and when he let down his hand Amalek prevailed. But Moses' hands were heavy, and he sat on a great stone, and Aaron and Hur stood one on each side of him and held them up, and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. So Joshua overcame the Amalekites.

CHAPTER VI

MOSES THE LAWGIVER

TO MOSES in the wilderness came his father-in-law Jethro, bringing with him the wife and two sons of Moses. Now Jethro was struck by the multitude of questions that were brought by the people for settlement, and by the way in which Moses judged the people and explained to them the commandments of God. Jethro thought that this task was too great for one man's shoulders, so he suggested to Moses that though he might still be the teacher of the people and bring their "causes" unto God, yet it would be wiser to appoint able and good men —men of truth and hating covetousness—who might act as rulers of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, or of tens, and who might judge the people. This advice Moses acted upon, and appointed rulers accordingly, the difficult questions being still brought to him, and the easier matters being settled by these minor judges. Jethro then returned to his own land. When the Israelites had come to Mount Sinai, God called to Moses out of the mountain and told him to prepare the people, for that on the third day He would come down in the sight of them all. On the third day in the morning, there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud, so that all the people trembled.

The mountain smoked and quaked, and the people were forbidden to touch even the border of it on pain of death.

Then God, amid the thunders and lightnings, and noise of trumpets, and smoke and fire from out the mountain, gave the people the ten commandments, saying:

"I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

"Thou shalt have no other gods before Me.

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

"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain: for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain.

"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work. But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

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

"Thou shalt not kill.

"Thou shalt not commit adultery.

"Thou shalt not steal.

"Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

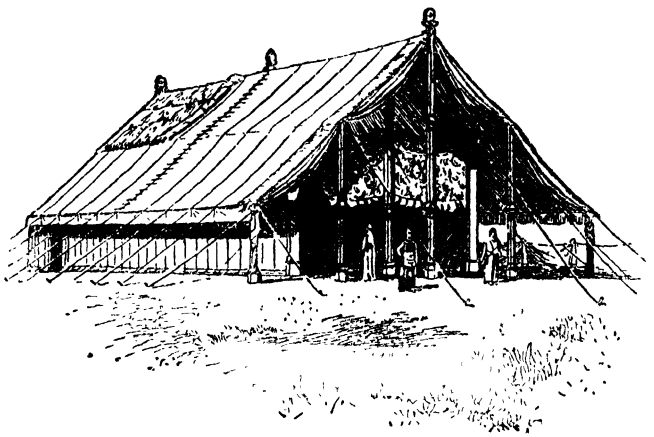
"Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbour's."

And the people stood afar off, terrified, and cried unto Moses, "Speak thou with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us lest we die."

So Moses drew near and talked with God; and God told him to tell the Israelites that they must not worship gods of gold and silver, as the Egyptians had done, and that they were to burn sacrifices on altars of earth or of unhewn stone. Other commands did God also lay upon the people, which are written in the Book of the Law. They were in all their dealings to consider other people's rights. If a man, for example, were to dig a pit and forget to cover it, and an ox or ass were to fall into it, the owner of the pit must make it good. No stranger was to be vexed or oppressed, the people being called upon to remember that they themselves had been strangers in the land of Egypt. The widow and the fatherless child were to be kindly treated. The first of the ripe fruits, the firstborn son, the first of the sheep and oxen, were to be given to God. Six days they were to work, and on the seventh rest; six years they were to till the ground and gather the fruits, but in the seventh the land was to rest, and the poor of the people were to gather their fill, leaving the rest for the beasts of the field. Three times a year feasts were to be held—the feast of the Passover the feast of the first fruits, and the feast of vine-

gathering. And God promised that He would send an angel to guide the Israelites into the Promised Land, and that if they obeyed Him and refused to worship strange gods, their enemies should be driven out little by little before them.

Then Moses wrote down all the words of the Lord, and read them to the people. He built also an altar under the



THE TABERNACLE

hill and twelve pillars for the twelve tribes of Israel, and offered sacrifices on the altar, and sprinkled part of the blood of the sacrifice upon the people as a token that the Lord had made a covenant with them.

Then Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of the people, went into the mountain to worship afar off. For six days a cloud covered the mountain, and on the seventh day God called to Moses out of the cloud. Then Moses went up the mountain into the midst of

the cloud, and he was in the mountain forty days and nights. During this time God told Moses that they must make a tabernacle, that is to say, a holy tent to worship God in; they could not build a permanent church or temple, as they were still wanderers. Each one was to bring an offering for this tabernacle, gold and silver and brass; blue and purple and scarlet and fine linen for the curtains and coverings; goats' hair and rams' skins dyed red, and badgers' skins for the covering of the roof; shittim wood, onyx stones, oils and spices. They were to make an ark of shittim wood overlaid with gold, and with four rings of gold and four staves to put into the rings, so that the ark could be carried before the people.

Above the ark was to be put a mercy seat of pure gold, at each end of which was to be placed a cherub of beaten gold. The faces of the cherubim were to look towards each other, and their wings were to stretch forth and cover the mercy seat. In the ark was to be placed the testimony of God to His people, and on the mercy seat from between the two cherubim God promised that He would commune with them.

The table for the shew-bread, or sacred bread laid upon the altar, and all the vessels of the tabernacle were to be of pure gold.

A veil, made of blue and purple and scarlet and fine twined linen, with cherubim embroidered upon it, was to be hung by golden hooks on four pillars of shittim wood overlaid with gold. The ark of testimony was to be brought within this veil, and the mercy seat to be placed upon it, the veil dividing the " holy place " from the " most holy." Aaron and his sons were to be set apart as priests, and holy

garments were to be made for them, one of which was called the ephod.

Two onyx stones were to be taken, and on them were to be graven the names of the twelve tribes of Israel, six names on each. These two stones were to be put upon the shoulders of the ephod, so that Aaron might bear the names of the people on his shoulders before the Lord. The ephod and breastplate were to be of gold and blue and scarlet and purple and fine twined linen, and on the breastplate were to be set four rows of precious stones—twelve stones in all—on each of which should be engraven the name of a tribe. The robe of the priest was to be of blue, embroidered on the hem with pomegranates of blue and purple and scarlet, with bells of gold between them.

On the forefront of the mitre was to be a plate of pure gold, on which was to be engraven, "Holiness to the Lord." On the altar of burnt offering a lamb was to be offered at morn and even. An altar of incense was also to be made of shittim wood overlaid with gold, with rings and staves, and on this altar Aaron was to burn incense, when he lighted the lamps at even. A laver of brass was also to stand ready with water, so that Aaron and his sons might wash before approaching the altar. And all these were to be anointed and sanctified with holy anointing oil made of myrrh and cinnamon and olive oil and other spices. On Aaron and his sons also was the oil to be poured that they might be set apart for their work as priests.

These "testimonies" were written by God on two tables of stone, and given to Moses.

Meanwhile the people at the foot of the mountain grew weary of waiting for the return of Moses, and they brought their golden ear-rings to Aaron and prevailed upon him to

make them the image of a calf in molten gold so that they might worship it. They made also an altar and offered up burnt offerings and said, " These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt."

When Moses came down from the mountain with the two stone tablets in his hand, and saw the people dancing and singing round the golden calf, he was exceedingly angry, and threw the tablets out of his hand, breaking them into pieces at the foot of the mountain. Then he burnt the calf with fire and ground it to powder, and having strewn the powder on the water, made the Israelites drink of it.

All those who had worshipped the calf he caused to be slain. The Lord also was very angry with the people, and refused at first to go with them to the land which He had promised. But with Moses the Lord spake face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend, and talked with him. Then Moses hewed two more tables of stone and went up again into the mountain, and the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, renewed the writing on the tables and His promises to the Israelites, warning Moses that in the lands through which they should pass they were to make no covenants with the people nor worship their gods, but only God the Lord.

Moses was there on the mountain with the Lord forty days and nights, and neither did eat bread nor drink water, and he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant and the ten commandments. When he came down from the mountain, his face shone so brightly that he had to put a veil over it before speaking to the people.

Then Moses delivered the commands of God to the

people, and they brought willing offerings for the building of the tabernacle, gold and silver and precious stones and spices and oils. The women also spun fine linen of blue and purple and scarlet, and the work of engraving, embroidering, and all other work for the tabernacle was handed over to Bezaleel of the tribe of Judah, and Aholiab of the tribe of Dan, who had been chosen by God for this service. So the tabernacle with its court, the ark and table and candlestick, and the altars of burnt offering and of incense, and the robes for the priests, were made and completed according as God had commanded Moses in the Mount. When the work was finished, the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle, and a cloud covered it. Throughout all the journeyings of the Israelites this cloud was over the tabernacle by day and fire was on it by night. The lifting of the cloud from the tabernacle was God's message to them that they might proceed on their journey; if the cloud were not lifted, they journeyed not.

The laws and ceremonies in connexion with the services of the tabernacle by the Levites are written in that book of the Bible named Leviticus, where we read also of the death of Nadab and Abihu, who were slain for offering strange fire upon the altar, and the appointment of Eleazar and Ithamar in their stead. In this book also we read again of the establishment of the " feasts of the Lord "—the seventh day or Sabbath, which was to be a day of rest—the feast of the Passover to be held on the fourteenth day of the first month at eventide, and lasting for seven days—the feast of Pentecost (the fiftieth day after), when the harvest was completed, it being enjoined that the gleanings of the fields should always be left for the poor.

The feast of Tabernacles was held when the fruits were

gathered in, and lasted for a week, from the fifteenth day of the seventh month, the Israelites dwelling for the time in booths made of thick boughs and willows, to remind them of their wanderings in the wilderness.

Every seventh year the land was to have a sabbath of rest, in which no fields were to be sown nor vineyards pruned, and every fiftieth year was a year of jubilee, in which liberty was to be proclaimed to all the inhabitants. The tenth day of the seventh month was the day of the great fast—the Day of Atonement.

While still at Sinai, the Lord commanded Moses and Aaron to number all in each tribe who were twenty years old and upwards and fit for war, and the number came to 603,550. Only the tribe of Levi, the priests, were not numbered. They were to encamp round the tabernacle and administer its services, to set it up and take it down according to the movements of the people. For the rest, every man was to pitch his camp by his own standard with the ensign of his father's house—on the east, towards the rising sun, the camp of Judah—next to him, Issachar and Zebulun On the south side was the camp of Reuben, with Simeon and Gad near by.

In the centre was the tabernacle with the camp of the Levites. On the west, the camps of Ephraim, Manasseh and Benjamin, and on the north the camp of Dan, with Asher and Naphtali.

God also told Moses to make two silver trumpets for calling the people together. At a blast from one trumpet only the heads of tribes were to assemble at the door of the tabernacle; but if each trumpet were blown, all the people were to come together. When an alarm was blown, the camps on the east were to move forward, followed, on the

second alarm, by those on the south. An alarm was also to be blown on going to war, while on days of gladness, or solemn days and beginnings of months, the trumpets were also to be blown.

After these details had been arranged, the children of Israel journeyed out of the wilderness of Sinai, the camp of Judah going first.

At Hazeroth Miriam and Aaron quarrelled with Moses, for which Miriam was struck by leprosy, and only healed when Moses had begged the Lord to restore her to health. For seven days she was shut outside the camp, after which the tribes again moved forward.

When they reached Paran, a search-party was sent out to view the land of Canaan, to see if the people were strong or weak, few or many, whether the land were good or bad, whether the inhabitants dwelt in tents or in cities and strongholds.

The men brought back a great cluster of grapes, borne between two on a staff, and they also brought pomegranates and figs. They told Moses that it was a land flowing with milk and honey, but that the people were strong and dwelt in walled cities; that giants also dwelt there, in whose sight they were as grasshoppers. In the south were the Amalekites; in the mountains dwelt the Hittites, the Jebusites and the Amorites, while the Canaanites dwelt by the sea and by the coast of Jordan. The Israelites were so depressed by the news brought by the search-party that they declared that they would rather have remained in Egypt, and that God had only brought them out that they might fall by the sword. They begged for a captain who would lead them back into Egypt. Then Joshua and Caleb, who had been amongst those who went to view the

land, spoke to the people and told them that they had God on their side, so there was no need to be afraid. But they were only the more enraged, and tried to stone the speakers. Then the Lord was angry with the people, and threatened to destroy them all, but Moses again pleaded for them, saying that the nations would think that God was not powerful enough to bring them into the promised land. Then God relented from His first anger, but declared that none of those who murmured should ever see the promised land, but that all who had been numbered, from twenty years old and upwards, except Joshua and Caleb, should perish in the wilderness, and that their children should only inherit the promised land after forty years' wandering in the wilderness—a year for every day spent in searching the land. The men also who brought the evil report of the land were to die by a plague.

When the people heard these things, they determined to go into the hilltop and strive with the enemy, in spite of the warning of Moses that God was not with them. But the ark of the covenant went not with them, and they were beaten back by the Amalekites and Canaanites.

There were other rebellions also—namely, that of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, who rebelled against the leadership of Moses, and declared that he had not fulfilled his promises to them. Against these men also the Lord sent forth His anger, causing the earth to open up and swallow them and all their belongings.

At Kadesh Miriam died, and at that place also the people murmured because there was no water. Then Moses, at God's command, struck the rock, and water gushed out. But the Lord was angry because of the continual murmuring of the people, and told Moses and Aaron that they

would not be permitted to lead the Israelites into the promised land.

From Kadesh they journeyed to Mount Hor, the King of Edom having refused their request that they might be allowed to pass through his territory. In Mount Hor Aaron died, and his place was taken by Eleazar, his son. At Hormah there was a great victory over the Canaanites, but on the journey from Mount Hor by way of the Red Sea, the people again murmured because there was no water. Their punishment was again a heavy one, for fiery serpents were sent amongst them which did them grievous harm. Then Moses prayed to God for them, and he was told to make a serpent of brass and set it on a pole, and that all who looked upon it should live. Onward then they journeyed, defeating Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, the king of Bashan, and taking their lands and cities, thus possessing the whole country east of Jordan. They then pitched their camp in Moab, on this side Jordan, by Jericho.

CHAPTER VII

THE LAST YEARS OF MOSES

NOW BALAK was king of the Moabites at that time—and when he saw that the Israelites were carrying all before them, he was afraid, and he joined with the Midianites in sending a message to Balaam the prophet, asking him to come and curse the Israelites, so that they might be defeated by the Moabites.

So the messenger came to Balaam, but God forbade him to go back with them, and to curse the people.

Again Balak sent a message to Balaam, promising him great honour if he would come. But Balaam answered, "If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God to do less or more." On again inquiring of the Lord, Balaam was told to go back with the messengers, but only to say the words which were given to him to say. So Balaam rose up in the morning and saddled his ass, and went with the princes of Moab. But as he was riding with his two servants, the angel of the Lord stood in his way with a drawn sword in his hand, and the ass saw the angel and turned aside. Then Balaam smote the ass, but she again turned aside, crushing Balaam's foot against a wall. Again Balaam smote her, but the angel stood in a narrow way, where there was no room to pass, and the

ass fell down under Balaam, and still again he smote her with his staff. Then the Lord caused the ass to speak and to chide Balaam for smiting her, and the prophet's eyes were opened, so that he saw the angel of the Lord in the way. Then Balaam said, " I knew not that thou stoodest in the way against me; now therefore if it displease thee I will get me back again." But the angel said, "Go with the men, but only the word that I shall speak unto thee, that shalt thou speak."

When Balaam came to Balak, the king asked him why he had not come at first, and Balaam told him that he had no power to say anything of himself and could only speak the words that God put in his mouth. Then Balak took Balaam up into the high places of Baal, so that he could see the utmost part of the people. And they built seven altars and offered sacrifices, and Balaam, having inquired of God, spake the following words: " Balak the king of Moab hath brought me from Aram, out of the mountains of the east, saying, ' Come, curse me Jacob, and come, defy me Israel.' How shall I curse whom God hath not cursed? or how shall I defy whom the Lord hath not defied? For from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him; lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations. Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his."

Then Balak said, " What hast thou done unto me? I took thee to curse mine enemies, and, behold, thou hast blessed them altogether." But Balaam again answered that he could only speak as God commanded him. Then Balak took him to another place from whence he could see only

part of the people, and again they raised altars and made sacrifices. Again Balaam inquired of the Lord, and when Balak asked, "What hath the Lord spoken?" he answered, "God is not a man that He should lie; neither the son of man that he should repent; hath He said and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken and shall He not make it good? Behold, I have received commandment to bless; and He hath blessed and I cannot reverse it."

Then Balak took Balaam to the top of Peor, and built seven altars there and offered sacrifice. And Balaam lifted up his eyes and saw Israel abiding in his tents, and the Spirit of God came upon him, and he cried, "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel! As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river's side, as the trees of lign aloes which the Lord hath planted, and as cedar trees beside the waters. He shall pour the water out of his buckets, and his seed shall be in many waters, and his King shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted. God brought him forth out of Egypt; he hath, as it were, the strength of an unicorn; he shall eat up the nations, his enemies, and shall break their bones and pierce them through with his arrows. He couched, he lay down as a lion, and as a great lion: who shall stir him up? Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee."

Then Balak was angry with the prophet because he had three times blessed the people, but Balaam reminded him that he had not wished to come, and that he had told the messengers that he could speak only what God wished him to speak. Then he told Balak what would happen in the future: "There shall come a star out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners

of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth. And Edom shall be a possession, Seir also shall be a possession for his enemies, and Israel shall do valiantly. Out of Jacob shall come he that shall have dominion, and shall destroy him that remaineth of the city."

After this Balaam returned to his home. These things happened at Shittim, and while the Israelites remained there, many of them began to worship Baal and the false gods of the Moabites. For this God sent a grievous plague amongst them, which was only stopped by the zeal of Phinehas, the son of Eleazar.

In the plains of Moab also the people were numbered. And the sum of the people from twenty years old and upwards was found to be 601,730, amongst whom the Promised Land was to be divided by lot. The families of the Levites were numbered separately, as they were set apart for the service of the tabernacle, and had no inheritance, but only cities to dwell in. But amongst those numbered was not one who had been numbered at Sinai, except Caleb and Joshua. All the rest had perished in the wilderness.

Then the Israelites warred against the Midianites and utterly overcame them, and took great spoil and booty.

Now the tribes of Reuben and Gad had a great number of cattle, and they begged Moses to let them stay on this side of Jordan in the land of Gilead, and not to go over Jordan with the others. But Moses was angry with them, and reminded them how all those who came out from Egypt had perished in the long wandering in the wilderness, and that a similar fate might befall them if they refused to go over. A compromise was, however, made, the tribes of Reuben and Gad promising that if they were allowed to

build folds for their cattle, and cities for their wives and children on this side of Jordan, the men would go over the river and fight with the others. So Moses gave to the tribes of Reuben and Gad and to half the tribe of Manasseh the land that had belonged to Sihon and Og, the kings of the Amorites and of Bashan. God then commanded that they should go over the river Jordan and conquer the inhabitants of the country, and take it for themselves, and that forty-eight cities should be given to the Levites to dwell in. Six of these cities were to be cities of refuge, to which the man-slayer who had killed anyone unintentionally might flee. The cities were to be provided by the tribes, those who had many possessions giving more, and those who had few giving less.

Three cities of refuge were to be on the east side of Jordan, namely, Bezer, in the country of the Reubenites; Ramoth in Gilead of the Gadites; and Golan, of the Manassites; and three in the land of Canaan; and they were to be not only for the children of Israel, but for the stranger and sojourner amongst them.

And now came the time that Moses should die, for God had said that neither should he enter the Promised Land. God told him also that he should appoint Joshua, the son of Nun, as his successor.

But as most of the people had been born in the wilderness, and did not fully know the events connected with the giving of the law, Moses drew them all together and recounted to them what had happened during the forty years since they had left Egypt.

He told them that the Lord had been angry with him for their sakes, and that though he had prayed that he might go into the good land that lay beyond Jordan,

his request had been refused, and he was only to be allowed to gaze on the land from the top of Mount Pisgah.

He told them how blessed they were among all nations, having God so nigh to them. "Only," said he, "take heed lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them to thy sons, and thy sons' sons." Moses warned the people that if they forgot God, and worshipped other gods, God would destroy them and they should be scattered among the nations. But even then if they sought the Lord again, with all their heart and soul, they should surely find Him, for God was a merciful God.

Moses told them of the great wonders that God had done for them, how they had heard the Almighty speaking to them out of heaven and out of the fire, and that they must keep His commandments for ever. He reminded them how the Lord had talked to him in Mount Horeb out of the midst of the fire, and had delivered to him the commandments, which they were to teach diligently to their children, and were not to forget when they dwelt in Canaan. "For the Lord thy God will bring thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; a land of wheat and barley and vines, and fig trees and pomegranates; a land of oil, olive and honey; a land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack anything in it; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass." Not for their goodness would God give them this land, but because of the wickedness of the nations who now possessed it, and whom He would destroy.

Moses also reminded them how he had found them worshipping the golden calf when he came down from the

The Ark of the Covenant

Alfred Rethel

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mountain, with the two tables of stone in his hands on which were written the commandments, and how in his anger he had cast the tables from his hands and broken them; and how, after another forty days and nights in the mountain, the tables of stone were renewed and God wrote upon them the ten commandments, according to the first writing.

"The land," said he, "is not as the land of Egypt from whence ye came out, but it is a land of hills and valleys, and drinketh water of the rain of heaven; a land which the Lord thy God careth for; the eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year. Every place whereon the soles of your feet shall tread shall be yours; from the wilderness and Lebanon, from the river, the river Euphrates, even unto the uttermost sea shall your coast be."

Moses again told the people of the different feasts which they were to hold, and recalled to their minds all the laws that had been given for their guidance when they should settle in the land of Canaan, telling them that after they had passed over Jordan they were to set up great stones, and plaster them with plaster, and write the words of the law upon them. These stones were to be set up on Mount Ebal, where an altar of whole stones, on which no tool was used, should be built. If they obeyed the commandments of God, they would be blessed in all they did, but if they disobeyed, great calamities would follow. "I have set before thee this day life and good and death and evil," he concluded.

Then Moses called Joshua, and told him to be strong and courageous, and that the Lord would be with him, and would not forsake him.

He then gave the Laws to the Levites to keep, and commanded that they should be read to the assembled people at the end of every seven years, and when he had so done he spake unto the people in a psalm, setting forth God's dealings with His people, and His vengeance on the disobedient.

"He is the Rock, His work is perfect, a God of truth, just and right is He. As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: so the Lord above did lead him. O that they were wise that they would consider."

His last words of blessing were a reminder of the favoured position of the children of Israel as the chosen of the Lord: "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms. Happy art thou, O Israel; who is like unto thee, O people, saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and the sword of thy excellency!"

After this solemn and final leave-taking Moses went up unto the mountain of Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, and the Lord shewed him all the land which He had promised to Abraham, to Isaac and Jacob. And there in the mountain Moses, the servant of the Lord, died, and was buried in a valley in the land of Moab, but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day. He was one hundred-and-twenty years old when he died, yet his eyes were not dim, nor his strength in any way diminished.

And the children of Israel mourned for their great leader thirty days.

By Nebo's lonely mountain,
On this side Jordan's wave,
In a vale in the land of Moab,
There lies a lonely grave;

And no man knows that sepulchre,
And no man saw it e'er;
For the angels of God upturned the sod,
And laid the dead man there.

That was the grandest funeral
That ever passed on earth;
But no man heard the trampling,
Or saw the train go forth—
Noiselessly as the daylight
Comes back when night is done,
And the crimson streak on ocean's cheek
Grows into the great sun;

Noiselessly as the springtime
Her crown of verdure weaves,
And all the trees on all the hills
Open their thousand leaves;
So without sound of music,
Or voice of them that wept,
Silently down from the mountain's crown
The great procession swept.

And had he not high honour—
The hill-side for a pall,—
To lie in state, while angels wait,
With stars for tapers tall;
And the dark rock-pines, like tossing plumes,
Over his bier to wave;
And God's own hand, in that lonely land,
To lay him in the grave?

Mrs C. F. Alexander

CHAPTER VIII

THE CONQUEST OF CANAAN

THE leadership now passed to Joshua, the son of Nun. He it was who was to lead the Israelites into the Promised Land to possess it, and whom God had commanded to be strong and courageous, and to remember that " the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest."

When the period of mourning for Moses had ended Joshua commanded the people to be ready to pass over the river Jordan, and he sent two spies secretly to view the land. Now these spies came to the house of Rahab in Jericho, and lodged there. But the King of Jericho heard that they were there, and sent to Rahab, demanding that she should give them up. Then Rahab hid the spies on the roof of the house amongst the stalks of flax that were there, and when the king's men came she told them that the spies had been there, but had departed, and that if they followed very quickly after they might overtake them. When the king's messengers had gone, she let the spies down over the wall by a cord through the window, and they escaped into the mountain, and stayed there three days, until the pursuers had returned. But before leaving Rahab's house they promised that for her kindness they would save her and all her family when they came to take the city. She was to hang in the window

the scarlet cord by which she had let the men down, and they promised that to all within her house no harm should come.

So the two spies returned to Joshua and told him all that had happened to them, and that the inhabitants of the land of Jericho were terrified because of the Israelites.

Then Joshua assembled all the people by the river Jordan, the priests bearing the Ark of the Covenant going before. And as soon as the feet of the priests touched the waters, God caused the waters to divide, and all the people went over on dry land. When they had all passed over, twelve men were chosen—one from every tribe—and these men took twelve stones out of the river and carried them to the place where they were to lodge at Gilgal, and set them up there in remembrance of the dividing of the waters. Joshua also set up twelve stones in the middle of the river, in the place where the priests had stood while waiting for the people to pass, for the priests were the last to come up from the bed of the river. In all there passed over 40,000 people ready armed for battle, after which the waters of Jordan returned to their place.

When the Israelites came thus into the land of the Canaanites, they rested for some days at Gilgal, and kept the passover. The manna with which they had hitherto been miraculously fed now ceased, for they had come into a land of plenty. At this time also an angel appeared to Joshua with a drawn sword in his hand, and when Joshua asked him if he were on his side or on the side of their adversaries, he answered, "As captain of the host of the Lord am I come."

The siege and capture of Jericho now followed, Joshua being instructed to surround the city, and for six days to

march once round about it each day. On the seventh day they went round the city seven times, and seven priests bearing the Ark, and having seven trumpets of rams' horns, went with them. The people remained silent until at the sound of a blast from the trumpets they gave a great shout, whereupon the walls of the city fell down flat. They burnt the city and all that was in it, save only the household of Rahab, and the silver and gold and vessels of brass and iron, which were put into the treasury of the Lord.

This event, and the taking of Ai which followed, struck terror into the hearts of the kings of the land, and they made a league together to fight with Joshua. The inhabitants of Gibeon, however, craftily tried to make a league with Joshua. They took old sacks and old wine-bottles upon their asses, and put old shoes on their feet and girded themselves with old garments. All their provisions also were dry and mouldy, and they came to the camp at Gilgal, pretending that they had journeyed a long distance out of a far country, having heard of his fame, and being anxious to make a covenant with him. They told him that the bread had been hot out of their ovens when they started, and the wine bottles new, and that it was by reason of the very long journey that their garments and shoes had become worn and rent. Then Joshua made a league with them, forgetting first to ask the counsel of the Lord.

No sooner had this been done than he heard that these Gibeonites were near neighbours, that their cities in fact could be reached in three days, and that they had altogether deceived him. He could not, however, go back from his compact with them, so he spared their cities and their lives, but he caused them to be hewers of wood and

drawers of water for the house of God and to be bondmen for ever.

Now when the five kings of the Amorites heard that the Gibeonites had made peace with Joshua, they at once made war on Gibeon. But the Gibeonites called upon Joshua to help them, and he marched out with his army from Gilgal, and routed the five kings and their hosts. As they were fleeing before him, a great hail-storm fell from heaven upon them, and more were killed by the hailstones than were killed by the sword. The Lord also, at the request of Joshua, caused the sun and the moon to stand still until the rout of the enemy was complete, after which Joshua and his men returned to the camp at Gilgal.

But the five kings hid in a cave, and Joshua caused great stones to be rolled to its mouth. Then, when the people had returned from pursuing the enemy, they slew the five kings and hanged them on five trees. Many other kings also did Joshua defeat, and utterly destroyed their cities, for the Lord was fighting for Israel. In all, thirty-three kings had now been conquered, two of whom had been defeated by Moses, and thirty-one by Joshua. Their lands were divided among the nine and a half tribes, for Moses had already given an inheritance to Reuben and Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh on the other side of Jordan. No inheritance was given to the Levites, except cities to dwell in. To Caleb was given Hebron for an inheritance, as it had been promised to him by Moses.

After the distribution of the land amongst the tribes, the whole congregation assembled at Shiloh and set up the tabernacle there. The remainder of the land which was still unconquered was now divided by lot, and to Joshua was given the city of Timnath-Serah in Mount Ephraim.

The six cities of refuge were also set apart, as had been commanded by Moses—Kedesh in Galilee, Shechem in Mount Ephraim, and Kiriath-Arba, or Hebron, in the mountain of Judah. On the other side of the river were—Bezer, out of the tribe of Reuber; Ramoth in Gilead, out of the tribe of Gad; and Golan in Bashan, out of the tribe of Manasseh. To the Levites also were given forty-eight cities. And when the Lord had given to the Israelites all the land that He had promised them, He gave them rest round about, and the two and a half tribes were allowed to return to the possessions that were given to them by Moses on the other side of Jordan.

In time, when Joshua had become old, he assembled the children of Israel together at Shechem, and reminded them of all that the Lord had done for them, and exhorted them to follow Him. The people promised to observe his commands, saying, "The Lord our God will we serve, and His voice will we obey." Then Joshua set up a stone as witness of their promise, and shortly after he died, being one hundred and ten years old, and they buried him in Timnath-Serah. The Israelites also buried in Shechem the bones of Joseph, which they had brought with them from Egypt.

Now when that generation had passed away, there arose a new generation who knew not the Lord or His wonderful works for His people, and the Israelites forsook the Lord God of their fathers and followed the gods of the people who were round about them. Therefore God gave them into the hands of their enemies, even of those kings left unconquered by Joshua, and wherever they went the hand of the Lord was against them.

For some time the Israelites were subject to the King of

Mesopotamia, from whom they were delivered by Othniel. Again for eighteen years they served the King of Moab, but the Lord raised them up a deliverer named Ehud, who slew Eglon king of Moab, and subdued his people. After him, Shamgar also delivered Israel from the hands of the Philistines.

Again the Israelites were overcome by Jabin, who reigned in Hazor. The captain of Jabin's host was Sisera, who had nine hundred chariots of iron. He oppressed the children of Israel for twenty years. At this time lived Deborah, a wise woman and prophetess, who dwelt under a palm tree in Mount Ephraim. When the Israelites came for her advice, she sent for Barak, who lived at Kedesh-Napthali, and told him to take ten thousand men of Napthali and Zebulun, and march to Mount Tabor. Deborah promised that she would get Sisera to come to the river Kishon, and that Barak should overcome him. So Barak did as Deborah told him, and Deborah went with him to Tabor, where they utterly put to rout Sisera and all his host. Sisera himself fled away to the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, for there was peace between Jabin king of Hazor and the house of Heber the Kenite. When Jael saw Sisera coming, she went to meet him, brought him into the tent, and covered him with a blanket, and gave him milk to drink. Sisera told her to stand in the door of the tent, and, if anyone came asking for him, to say he was not there. But when Sisera fell fast asleep, being wearied, Jael took a tent nail and a hammer and drove the nail into his temples, fastening him to the ground, so that he died.

Barak, meantime, pursued fast after Sisera, and Jael went out to meet him, and, bringing him into the tent, she showed him Sisera lying dead with the nail in his temples. So, by

the hand of a woman did God rid the Israelites of the tyranny of Jabin king of Hazor.

Then Deborah and Barak sang a song of victory:

Praise ye the Lord for the avenging of Israel, when the people willingly offered themselves.
Hear, O ye kings; give ear, O ye princes; I, even I, will sing unto the Lord; I will sing praise to the Lord God of Israel.
Lord, when Thou wentest out of Seir, when Thou marchedst out of the field of Edom, the earth trembled, and the heavens dropped, the clouds also dropped water.
The mountains melted from before the Lord, even that Sinai from before the Lord God of Israel.
In the days of Shamgar the son of Anath, in the days of Jael, the highways were unoccupied, and the travellers walked through by-ways.
The inhabitants of the villages ceased, they ceased in Israel, until that I Deborah arose, that I arose a mother in Israel.
They chose new gods; then was war in the gates: was there a shield or spear seen among forty thousand in Israel?
My heart is toward the governors of Israel, that offered themselves willingly among the people. Bless ye the Lord.
Speak, yé that ride on white asses, ye that sit in judgement, and walk by the way.
They that are delivered from the noise of archers in the places of drawing water, there shall they rehearse the righteous acts of the Lord, even the righteous acts toward the inhabitants of his villages in Israel: then shall the people of the Lord go down to the gates.
Awake, awake, Deborah; awake, awake; utter a song: arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Abinoam.
Then he made him that remaineth have dominion over

the nobles among the people: the Lord made me have dominion over the mighty.

Out of Ephraim was there a root of them against Amalek; after thee, Benjamin, among thy people: out of Machir came down governors, and out of Zebulun they that handle the pen of the writer.

And the princes of Issachar were with Deborah; even Issachar, and also Barak: he was sent on foot into the valley. For the divisions of Reuben there were great thoughts of heart.

Why abodest thou among the sheepfolds, to hear the bleatings of the flocks? For the divisions of Reuben there were great searchings of heart.

Gilead abode beyond Jordan: and why did Dan remain in ships? Asher continued on the sea-shore, and abode in his breaches.

Zebulun and Napthali were a people that jeoparded their lives unto the death in the high places of the field.

The kings came and fought, then fought the kings of Canaan in Taanach by the waters of Megiddo; they took no gain of money.

They fought from heaven; the stars in their courses fought against Sisera.

The river of Kishon swept them away, that ancient river, the river Kishon. O my soul, thou hast trodden down strength.

Then were the horse-hoofs broken by the means of the prancings, the prancings of their mighty ones.

Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty.

Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be; blessed shall she be above women in the tent.

He asked water, and she gave him milk; she brought forth butter in a lordly dish.

She put her hand to the nail, and her right hand to the workman's hammer; and with the hammer she

smote Sisera, she smote off his head, when she had pierced and stricken through his temples.

At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay down: at her feet he bowed, he fell: where he bowed, there he fell down dead.

The mother of Sisera looked out at a window, and cried through the lattice, Why is his chariot so long in coming? why tarry the wheels of his chariots?

Her wise ladies answered her, yea, she returned answer to herself,

Have they not sped? have they not divided the prey; to every man a damsel or two; to Sisera a prey of divers colours, a prey of divers colours of needlework, of divers colours of needlework on both sides, meet for the necks of them that take the spoil?

So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord: but let them that love Him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might.

After this victory the land had rest for forty years; but the children of Israel again did evil, and were delivered into the hand of the Midianites, who so oppressed them that they were forced to live in dens and caves among the mountains. The Midianites were so great in number that they came up like grasshoppers, destroying all the corn and cattle of the Israelites, and utterly ruining them.

Now there was a man named Gideon who threshed wheat, and tried to hide it from the Midianites. And an angel appeared to him and told him that he must be the deliverer of the people. But Gideon answered that he came of a poor family and was himself a very poor man, and he asked for a sign to show that the things were true whereof the angel spoke. Then the angel caused the flesh and unleavened cakes which Gideon brought to him to be consumed by fire. After this God talked with Gideon in the night, and told him to go and throw down the altar which

his father had set up to Baal, and to cut down the trees of the grove wherein this altar stood, making with the wood an altar to the Lord, and burning on it a sacrifice. So Gideon took ten men with him and went by night, and did as God had told him.

When the men of the city learned what had been done, they were very angry, and urged Gideon's father to kill him.

But the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet and called an army together. Then he asked God to shew him again a sign that he had been chosen to deliver Israel.

" Behold, I will put a fleece of wool on the floor; and if the dew be on the fleece only, and it be dry upon all the earth beside, then shall I know that Thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as Thou hast said." In the morning, when Gideon rose up, he was able to wring a bowl of water out of the fleece. Again he asked that the fleece might be dry and the dew all round upon the ground, and this also the Lord did. Then Gideon arose with a great army of 32,000 men and went out to meet the Midianites. But God told him that these were too many, and that the Israelites would boast and say that it was by their own might that they were able to overcome the Midianites. So all that were fearful or afraid were commanded to return, whereupon 22,000 went back, leaving Gideon with 10,000 men. Again God said that the people were too many, and that Gideon was to take them down to the water and to watch while they were drinking, and see which lapped the water with their tongue like a dog, and which bowed down on their knees to drink. There were three hundred that lapped the water and God said that with these Gideon should overcome

the Midianites, and that the remainder might return home. Then Gideon was told that if he still feared, he might take his servant, and go down outside the camp of the Midianites and hear what they were saying. Now the Midianites and the Amalekites were like grasshoppers in the valley, with camels as many as the sand on the seashore. So Gideon came to the camp, and he overheard a man telling a dream to his companion. He had dreamt that a cake of barley bread had tumbled into the camp of Midian and had overturned a tent. His companions said that by the barley bread Gideon was meant, and that God would deliver the Midianites into his hand.

So Gideon, who now felt sure that God was with him, returned to the Israelites, and divided his men into three companies. To each man he gave a trumpet with an empty pitcher, and a lamp within the pitcher for secrecy, and he told them that when they came to the outside of the Midianite camp they were to listen for the blast of his trumpet, and were to blow their trumpets all together and cry, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon."

So Gideon took one hundred men with him, and came outside the camp, and they blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers in their hands. And the others did likewise, holding the lamps in their left hands and the trumpets in their right, and crying out, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon."

And the Lord made a great fear to fall upon the Midianites, and in the commotion every man's sword was against his fellow, and they fled, the Israelites pursuing.

Gideon sent messengers to the Ephraimites to come and help in the pursuit, and the Ephraimites slew two princes of the Midianites, and brought their heads to

Gideon. So Gideon went on triumphantly, avenging himself on those who refused food to his men, and killing the two kings of the Midianites. And the Israelites asked that he and his descendants should rule over them, but he refused, and asked from them instead their golden ear-rings. These they willingly gave to the weight of 1,700 shekels of gold, and with these and the collars and ornaments and purple raiment of the Midianitish kings, and the chains that were round the necks of their camels, he made an ephod and put it in Ophrah, his city. Then the country had forty years of quiet in the days of Gideon, and Gideon dwelt at peace until his death at a good old age. But as soon as he was dead, the Israelites again went astray, and made Baal-berith their god.

Now Gideon had very many sons, but one of them, Abimelech, slew all his brothers except Jotham, the youngest, who had hidden himself. He then caused himself to be made king over the men of Shechem. And when they told it to Jotham, he went and stood in the top of mount Gerizim, and lifted up his voice and cried, and said unto them, "Hearken unto me, ye men of Shechem, that God may hearken unto you. The trees went forth on a time to anoint a king over them; and they said unto the olive tree, 'Reign thou over us.' But the olive tree said unto them, 'Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honour God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?' And the trees said to the fig tree, 'Come thou, and reign over us.' But the fig tree said unto them, 'Should I forsake my sweetness, and my good fruit, and go to be promoted over the trees?' Then said the trees unto the vine, 'Come thou, and reign over us.' And the vine said unto them, 'Should I leave my wine, which cheereth God and man, and

go to be promoted over the trees?' Then said all the trees unto the bramble, 'Come thou, and reign over us.' And the bramble said unto the trees, 'If in truth ye anoint me king over you, then come and put your trust in my shadow: and if not, let fire come out of the bramble and devour the cedars of Lebanon.'"

Jotham then went on to apply this parable to the men of Shechem, saying, "If ye have dealt truly and sincerely with Gideon and with his house this day, then rejoice ye in Abimelech, and let him also rejoice in you. But if not, let fire come out from Abimelech and devour the men of Shechem and the house of Millo; and let fire come out from the men of Shechem and from the house of Millo, and devour Abimelech."

And this indeed happened, for after Abimelech had reigned for three years, the men of Shechem turned against him, and Gaal, the son of Ebed, fought against him. But Abimelech overcame him, and beat down the city and sowed it with salt. He also set fire to the tower where the men of Shechem had gathered together, and then went on and took the city of Thebez. But there was a strong tower within this city, to which all the men and women had gone, and while Abimelech was about to set fire to this tower a woman threw a millstone upon his head. And he cried to his armour-bearer, "Draw thy sword, and slay me, that men say not of me—'A woman slew him.'" So his armour-bearer killed him, and thus God avenged his cruelty in slaying the sons of Gideon.

After Abimelech, Puah was judge in Israel; also Jair, a Gileadite, who had thirty sons. After Jair's death, the Israelites served strange gods, and forgot the Lord who had done so much for them. So God sold them into the hands of the

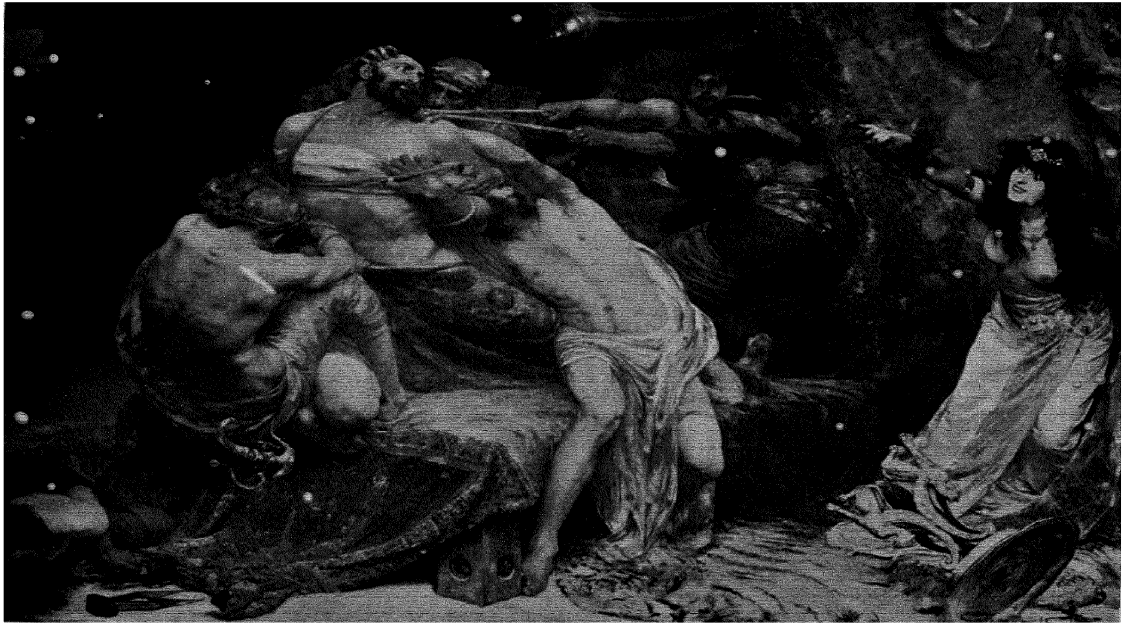
Philistines and Ammonites, who oppressed them. Then the Israelites asked Jephthah the Gileadite to be their head, and to fight for them against the Ammonites. Jephthah vowed a vow unto the Lord that if He would deliver the Ammonites into his hands, he would give as a burnt offering whatsoever should come forth out of the doors of his house to meet him on his return. The Ammonites were overcome, and Jephthah returned to his home at Mizpah. And his daughter, his only child, came out to meet him with timbrels and dances, rejoicing at the return of her father. Then Jephthah was dismayed and rent his clothes, remembering the promise he had made. But when he told her, the brave girl said that he must keep his word, seeing that God had delivered the Ammonites to him. But she begged him to give her two months to go into the mountains and weep with her companions. This she did, and, on her return, her father fulfilled his vow, and caused his daughter to be slain. And every year, for four days, the daughters of Israel lamented for the daughter of Jephthah.

Jephthah judged Israel for six years, and after him were other judges. But the Israelites still did evil, and the Lord delivered them into the hands of the Philistines for forty years.

Now in due time there was a certain man named Manoah, to whose wife an angel appeared twice, telling her that she should have a son, and that before his birth she must drink neither wine nor strong drink. He told her also that when her son was born no razor must come on his head. Then Manoah and his wife offered a burnt offering to the Lord, and in due time Samson, their son, was born.

When Samson had grown up, he loved a daughter of the Philistines, and wanted to make her his wife. So he and his

father and mother went down to Timnath, where she lived. On the way, a young lion came out and roared at him, and the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him, and he tore the lion with his hands, as if it had been a young kid. Returning later, by the same road, he found in the carcase of the lion a swarm of bees and honey, and he ate the honey and gave some to his father and mother. Then they went down to make a feast for the bride, and thirty young men came to keep Samson company, as was the custom of that country. And Samson asked the young men this riddle, "Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness." He said that if they could find out the meaning of this saying within the seven days of the feast, he would give them thirty shirts and thirty changes of raiment, but if they did not succeed they should give to him the things named. The days went on, but the young men could not read the riddle, and they went to Samson's wife and tried to get her to find out the answer from her husband. So she begged him with many tears to tell her the meaning, and at last Samson consented. She then went and disclosed it to the young men, and when the seventh day came they were able to give the answer, "What is sweeter than honey? and what is stronger than a lion?" Then Samson knew that his wife had disclosed the secret, and he was angry, and went down to Ashkelon and killed thirty men, and gave their garments to the young men who had explained the riddle. For this the Philistines took his wife from him, whereupon Samson was very angry, and caught three hundred foxes and tied them two and two together by the tail, and put firebrands between their tails, and sent them in among the corn of the Philistines, burning it up, and burning also the vine-



Samson and Delilah

Solomon J. Solomon, R.A.

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yards and olives. The Philistines retaliated by putting his wife and her father to death, for which many of them were slain by Samson. Then three thousand men of Judah went against Samson and bound him with two new cords to bring him captive to the Philistines, but he burst the cords as if they had been flax burnt with fire, and slew numbers of the Philistines with the jawbone of an ass, his only weapon. After this feat he was sore athirst, and when he called to God for water, God made water come out of the jawbone, so that his thirst was quenched.

Samson judged Israel for twenty years of the time that they were subject to the Philistines. When his enemies tried to take him while he was in the city of Gaza, he arose in the night and carried away the gates of the city on his shoulders to the top of a hill.

Now Samson came to love a woman whose name was Delilah, and the Philistines bribed her with eleven hundred pieces of silver to find out where Samson's great strength lay. So she asked Samson to tell her, and Samson said that if she bound him with seven green withs that were never dried he would be as weak as other men. Then the lords of the Philistines brought her the seven green withs, and she bound Samson with them. There were men lying in wait to see the result of their stratagem, but when Delilah cried, "The Philistines be upon thee, Samson," he broke the withs as a thread of tow is broken when the fire touches it. Again Delilah asked him where his strength lay, and this time he told her to bind him fast with new ropes, but these also he broke like a thread. Another time he told her to weave the seven locks of his head into a web, and this she did, fastening it to

a part of the beam above his head when he was asleep. But when he arose he carried away the web and the portion of the beam to which it was attached.

Then Delilah pressed him to tell her the truth, saying that he did not love her, and that he had only mocked her, and Samson, vexed to death by her daily chiding, told her that no razor had come upon his head from the day of his birth, and that if he were shaven, his strength would go from him. Then, when Samson slept, Delilah caused his head to be shaven, and she sent for the Philistines, and they took him and put out his eyes and bound him with fetters of brass, and cast him into prison, and offered a great sacrifice of rejoicing to Dagon their god. When they were making merry, they sent for Samson to make sport for them, but his hair had begun to grow again, and he asked the lad who led him to let him feel the pillars on which the house rested, so that he might lean on them. Now the house was quite full of men and women, all the lords of the Philistines being there, and great numbers of people on the roof. And Samson asked God to strengthen him so that he might take vengeance on those who had done him such harm, and he took hold of the two middle pillars with his hands, and bowed himself with all his might so that the house fell and all the people were killed. Samson also died with them, and was laid in the burying place of Manoah his father.

After the death of Samson every man did that which was right in his own eyes, that is to say, the whole country was in confusion for want of a proper leader.

Another story of the time when the judges ruled in Israel has attracted young and old throughout the genera-

tions. It is a very beautiful and human story, and the incidents probably happened during the judgeship of Deborah and Barak.

There was a famine in the land of Judah, and a certain man named Elimelech went to sojourn in the country of Moab with Naomi, his wife, and his two sons, Mahlon and Chilion. Here Elimelech died, and his sons took unto them wives of the daughters of the land, Orpah and Ruth. After some years Mahlon and Chilion died, so that having lost husband and sons Naomi yearned to return to her own people. She therefore departed from the place where she had lived during those years, together with Orpah and Ruth, and when she had come to a parting of the ways she kissed her daughters-in-law and said to them:

"Go, return each of you to your mother's house. The Lord deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with my sons, and with me, and send you husbands worthy of your faithfulness to me and mine."

But Orpah and Ruth lifted up their voices and wept, declaring that they would not leave their mother-in-law.

Then Naomi said: "Nay, my daughters, why will you go with me? Have I sons that I can give you husbands? Turn again and dwell in peace in the land of your fathers."

And Orpah, after she had kissed her mother-in-law, returned, sorrowful, the way they had come. But Ruth would not be prevailed upon to go, yet still Naomi affectionately urged her to return after her sister-in-law.

Then Ruth said: "Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.

"Where thou diest will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me and more also, if aught but death part thee and me."

So the two went together to Bethlehem, and all the city came out and said, "Is this Naomi?"

But she said, "Call me not Naomi (pleasant), call me Mara (bitter), for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty."

Now it was harvest time, and Ruth begged Naomi to let her go and glean ears of corn in the field of Boaz, who was a kinsman of Elimelech, and a man of wealth. So she went, and Boaz himself came into the field among the reapers and said to them, "The Lord be with you," and they answered, "The Lord bless thee." Then Boaz asked who Ruth was, and, being told, he shewed her great favour, and said that he had heard how she had followed her mother-in-law with faithful affection, and that God would reward her.

And Boaz told his young men to let fall on purpose some handfuls of corn for her, and to be kind to her; and in the evening Ruth brought her gleanings to her mother-in-law. In the end Ruth became the wife of Boaz, and to them in due time a son was born, whom Naomi took and laid in her bosom and nursed, thus being comforted for the death of her own sons.

The name of this boy was Obed, whose son Jesse afterwards became the father of David.

CHAPTER IX

THE STORY OF SAMUEL AND ELI

THERE was a man of Mount Ephraim named Elkanah, whose wife Hannah had no son. This grieved her very much, and she went up to the House of the Lord at Shiloh every year to pray to God and to offer sacrifice. It happened one day that as she prayed, Eli the priest, who sat upon a seat by the post of the Temple of the Lord, saw her. And Hannah prayed to the Lord in the bitterness of her spirit, and promised that if God would only give her a son, she would give him unto the Lord all the days of his life.

Now Eli saw her lips moving, but did not hear the words, and he thought her manner very strange, but Hannah explained what her trouble was, and Eli said, "Go in peace; and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of Him." So Hannah went away with a happy face, and God in due time granted her prayer, and gave her a son, whom she called Samuel, which meant "asked of God."

As soon as Samuel was weaned, his mother took him to the temple at Shiloh, with an offering of three bullocks, one ephah[1] of flour, and a bottle of wine. And Hannah told Eli that the Lord had granted her prayer, and that

[1] About three pecks.

she would lend her son to the Lord for as long as he lived. She expressed her thankfulness also in these words:

> My heart rejoiceth in the Lord; mine horn is exalted in the Lord; my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; because I rejoice in thy salvation.
> There is none holy as the Lord: for there is none besides Thee; neither is there any rock like our God.
> The Lord killeth, and maketh alive: He bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up.
> The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich; He bringeth low, and lifteth up.
> He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory; for the pillars of the earth are the Lord's and He hath set the world upon them.
> He will keep the feet of His saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail.

Elkanah and Hannah returned home to Ramah, and left the child to minister unto the Lord before Eli the priest, girded with a linen ephod; and every year his mother brought him a little coat when she came to offer sacrifice.

Now Eli the priest was old, and his two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were very wicked and a continual grief to him. One day a man of God appeared to Eli, and rebuking him for the evil deeds of his sons, he told him that great punishment should come upon his house because of their wickedness. "There shall not be an old man in thy house for ever," said he; "all the increase of thine house shall die in the flower of their age." God also told him that his two sons Hophni and Phinehas should die in one day, and that He would raise up a faith-

ful priest, to whom every one left in Eli's house should come and crouch for a piece of silver and a morsel of bread.

And the child Samuel grew in favour with the Lord and with men, and he ministered unto the Lord before Eli in the Temple.

And it came to pass one night ere the lamp of God went out in the Temple of the Lord, where the Ark of God was, and Eli was laid down in his place, and his eyes began to wax dim, that he could not see, and Samuel was also laid down to sleep, that the Lord called Samuel; and he answered, "Here am I." And he ran unto Eli, and said, "Here am I; for thou calledst me." And he said, "I called not; lie down again." And he went and lay down. And the Lord called yet again, "Samuel." And Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, "Here am I; for thou didst call me." And he answered "I called not, my son; lie down again."

Again a third time the Lord called Samuel, and again he went to Eli, and at last Eli perceived that it was God who was calling the child, so he told Samuel that if he heard the voice again he was to answer, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth." So Samuel went and lay down, and when the Lord again called "Samuel, Samuel," he answered as Eli had directed him. Then God told him all the evil that he would bring on the house of Eli because of the wickedness of his sons, and Samuel lay till morning and feared to tell Eli the words that he had heard. But Eli called Samuel and asked him what the Lord had said, and Samuel told all and hid nothing, and Eli said, "It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth to Him good."

So Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him, and all Israel knew that he was to be a prophet of the Lord.

Now Israel went out to fight with the Philistines, and was overcome by them; and the people thought if they might fetch the Ark from Shiloh and bring it into the camp, it would strike terror into the hearts of their enemies. So they sent to Shiloh and brought the Ark, and when it came into the camp they shouted with a great shout. The Philistines at first were afraid when they heard that the Ark of God had come, but they soon took courage and turned upon the Israelites and overcame them, slaying Hophni and Phinehas, and taking the Ark of God.

Then a man of the tribe of Benjamin ran back to Shiloh with his clothes rent and earth upon his head, to tell the evil news. Eli was now ninety-eight years old, and his eyes were dim, and he sat by the wayside watching, and fearing for the safety of the Ark of God. When the man came into the city with the news, all the city cried out, and Eli asked what the noise meant. Then the young man told him of the defeat of Israel, and the death of his two sons, and that the Ark of God was taken. When he told of the Ark of God, Eli fell off his seat backward by the gate, and his neck broke so that he died. He had judged Israel forty years.

The Ark of the Lord was taken by the Philistines to Ashdod, where they set it up in the house of their god Dagon, but when they arose early in the morning they found that Dagon had fallen upon his face before the Ark. They set the god up again, but next morning Dagon had again fallen before the Ark, and the head and both the palms of his hands had fallen off, leaving only the stumps. Other evils did the people of Ashdod suffer because of the presence of the Ark, so they sent it on to other cities, but still, wherever it went, it brought trouble upon the people. So their priests advised them to make a trespass offering, ac-

cording to the number of the lords of the Philistines. These offerings were to be put in a coffer, and they were to take two milch kine who had never borne a yoke, and fasten them to a cart, and set the Ark on the cart to lead it home. If the kine took the straight way to Beth-Shemesh, they would know that the Lord had wrought all this evil upon them. This then they did, and the kine took the straight way to Beth-Shemesh, lowing as they went, and going neither to the right nor the left. Now the men of Beth-Shemesh were reaping the harvest, and they saw the Ark coming and rejoiced greatly. And the cart came into a field and stood there by a great stone, and they took the wood of the cart and offered up the kine for a burnt offering. And the Levites took down the Ark and the coffer with the jewels of gold and laid them on the great stone. The bearers then returned. But the men of Beth-Shemesh had looked into the Ark, and for this God smote many thousands of them so that they died, wherefore they sent messengers to the people of Kirjath-jearim asking them to come and fetch the Ark. This the men of Kirjath-jearim did, and brought it to the house of Abinadab, and sanctified his son Eleazar to keep it.

Twenty years did the Ark remain here, and the hearts of the people turned again to the Lord, and they repented of their sins. Then God subdued the Philistines for them, and gave them rest from their enemies during all the days of Samuel.

Samuel judged Israel all his days, and went every year on circuit to Bethel, and Gilgal, and Mizpah, to judge the people, returning always to Ramah, where was his home. And it came to pass when he was old, that he made his sons judges over Israel. But they did not walk in the ways of

their father, but were lovers of money, and accepted bribes. Therefore their rule displeased the people, and they gathered themselves together and came to Samuel, demanding that he should set a king to rule over them, such as other nations had. Then Samuel asked counsel of God, and God told him to let the people have what they wanted, but at the same time to warn them that in time they would be sorry that they had asked for a king, for that he would make them his bondmen, and take from them their fields and vineyards and oliveyards.

Samuel told these things to the people, but they still cried out that they wanted a king to judge them and fight their battles.

CHAPTER X

THE FIRST KING OF ISRAEL

NOW there was a man named Kish belonging to the tribe of Benjamin. He was a man of power, and had a son named Saul, a goodly young man, head and shoulders taller than any of the rest of the people. And this man was chosen by God to be king over the people. It happened that Saul and his servant went out to seek the asses of Kish which had been lost, and not finding them, they went to inquire of Samuel the prophet. Now God had told Samuel that Saul was coming, and that he was to anoint him to be captain over the people. So when Saul came to Samuel, the prophet invited him to a feast, reserving the best place for him, and giving him the choicest portion of meat, and greeting him as "the desire of Israel." This astonished Saul, who explained that he belonged to the smallest of the tribes of Israel. Then Samuel told Saul what God had said, and anointed him with oil and kissed him, and gave him three signs by which he was to know that God had chosen him. He was to go to Gilgal and wait there, and on the way he would meet two men by Rachel's sepulchre who should tell him that the asses had been found, and that his father was sorrowing for him. Further on he would meet three men going up to Bethel, one carrying three kids, another three loaves of bread and the third a bottle of wine. Lastly, when he

came to the garrison of the Philistines, he would meet a company of prophets with a psaltery and tabret and pipe and harp, and the Spirit of the Lord would come upon him and he would prophesy with them.

All these things came to pass as Samuel had said, and when those who knew him saw Saul prophesying, they said, "Is Saul also among the prophets?" Then Samuel called the people together to choose their king by lot, and the lot fell first upon the tribe of Benjamin, and then upon Saul. Saul, however, had hidden himself, and when they fetched him, lo! he was head and shoulders higher than anyone else. Then Samuel said, "See ye him whom the Lord hath chosen, and there is none like him among all the people?" And all the people shouted, "God save the king!" Immediately afterwards Saul won a great victory over the Ammonites, and he was then proclaimed king at Gilgal. Samuel recounted how he had tried to live uprightly and to judge the people aright, and he told them that if they followed God with a true heart, all would be well with them and with their king.

Now when Saul had reigned two years over Israel, he gathered the Israelites at Gilgal to go and fight against the Philistines. But the Israelites had neither sword nor spear, for the Philistines had not allowed any smiths to remain in Israel. Saul should have waited for Samuel to come and offer sacrifice, but the prophet did not come, so Saul himself offered the burnt offering. Soon after, Samuel came and found what Saul had done, wherefore he rebuked him, and told him that because of his presumption his kingdom should not continue, but that God would choose a king after his own heart.

And while the Israelites lay encamped before Michmash, it

befell that Jonathan the son of Saul said unto the young man that bare his armour: "Come, let us go over to the garrison of our enemies, on the other side; it may be that the Lord will strengthen our arms, for He is mighty to save by many or by few." And his armour-bearer said unto him, "Do all that is in thine heart; behold, I am with thee according to thy desires." The two young men stole secretly from the camp and their way lay through rocky passes, until they reached a crag in front of the fastness in which lay the garrison of the Philistines. Then said Jonathan, "Behold, we will discover ourselves to the men, and if they say, 'Tarry until we come to thee,' we will stand; but if they say, 'Come up with us,' then we will go up, for the Lord will deliver them into our hands." And they did as Jonathan had said, wherefore the Philistines looked forth and said, one to another, "lo! the Hebrews come forth out of the holes where they had hidden," and they called to Jonathan and his armour-bearer: "Come up to us and we will shew you how to make war." Then said Jonathan to his companion, "Follow me, for the Lord hath delivered them into our hands." And the two young men climbed the steep and rocky slopes upon their hands and knees, and the Lord gave them such strength and might that they quickly slew some twenty of the garrison. And the Lord put an exceeding great fear in the hearts of the Philistines, so that they fell back from before the faces of Jonathan and his armour-bearer, and there was much commotion in the garrison.

Now a watchman of Saul beheld from his post that the Philistines were attacked, and that they appeared to be discomfited, and he quickly carried the news to the king.

Saul could not understand this, as none of the Israelites

of his sons to be king instead of Saul. So Samuel went to Bethlehem, and when Jesse had come to the sacrifice with his son Eliab, who was great of stature, Samuel said, "Surely the Lord's anointed is before me." But God told Samuel not to look at Eliab, for the Lord seeth not as men seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart. Then Jesse bade his other sons pass before Samuel, but Samuel still said, "The Lord hath not chosen these."

Then Samuel asked Jesse if he had no other children, and Jesse answered that there was still the youngest, who was keeping the sheep in the field. And he was brought in unto Samuel, and the prophet saw that he was goodly to look upon, for he was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance. And the Lord told Samuel to anoint him, for that this was he who should be king instead of Saul. From that day the Spirit of the Lord came upon David, but the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit troubled him.

Now Saul heard that David the son of Jesse was a cunning player upon the harp, so when the evil spirit troubled him he sent for David to come and play to him. This David did, and Saul loved him very much, and made him his armour-bearer.

Once more the Philistines gathered their armies against Israel, and encamped on the side of a mountain, and the Israelites marched forth against them and pitched their camp on the side of the mountain opposite, with the valley between. Then the Philistines sent out a champion, a giant named Goliath of Gath, who had a helmet of brass and a brazen coat of mail, which weighed about 5,000 shekels.[1]

[1] A shekel is about half an ounce.

He had greaves of brass upon his legs, and a gorget of brass between his shoulders. The staff of his spear was like a weaver's beam, and the spear head weighed six hundred shekels of iron, and his shield-bearer went before him. This champion challenged the Israelites to send out a man to fight with him. " If he be able to fight with me and to kill me, then will we be your servants; but if I prevail against him, and kill him, then shall ye be our servants." This challenge he repeated for forty days, and there was found no man to go out against him.

Then Saul proclaimed that whoever should kill Goliath should have great riches and should marry his daughter.

Now three of Jesse's sons were with Saul's army, but David, the youngest, had gone back to feed his father's sheep. Then Jesse called David and told him to take food to his brothers with the army, and see how they fared. This David did, and as he talked with his brothers, Goliath came out and repeated his challenge. And David was amazed to see that the men of Israel were sore afraid and he asked: " Who is this Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God? " And those who stood around told him how the giant warrior had come out day by day, and how the king had promised to enrich the man who should slay him.

And it was told to Saul how that David had come and had inquired concerning the king's promise, and he sent for the youth, and when he had been brought in David said: " Let no man's heart be troubled, thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine." But Saul said, " Thou art not able to go out against him, for thou art but a youth, and he a seasoned warrior." Then David told Saul how he had killed with his own hands a lion and a bear which had

stolen a lamb from the flock. "The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, He will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine" Then said Saul, "Go, the Lord be with thee."

And the king armed David with his own armour, but the heavy mail was too much for the young man and he said, "I cannot fight with these for I have not proved them." Instead he took his staff in his hand, and chose five smooth stones out of the brook, and put them in his shepherd's bag, and with his sling in his hand he drew near to the Philistine. When Goliath looked at David, he disdained him, for he was but a youth, and ruddy and of a fair countenance. And Goliath cursed him and said, "Am I a dog that thou comest to me with staves?" ... "I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field."

Then said David to the Philistine, "Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield; but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand, and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcases of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. And all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the Lord's, and He will give you into our hands."

At this the giant came near to meet David, and the youth hasted and took a stone out of his bag, and slung it with such skill and force that it smote him in the forehead, and sank deeply, so that he fell lifeless to the ground. David

then ran and stood upon the giant, and with his own sword for David had no weapon save his sling, he cut off his head When the Philistines saw that their champion had fallen they turned and fled, and the Israelites pursued them a far distance.

After these things David went no more to his father's house, and he and Jonathan became great friends, so that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. And David found great favour in the sight of Saul also, and he was set over the men of war, and the people accepted him gladly.

Now it came to pass that as the army returned from slaughtering the Philistines, the women came out of all the cities singing and dancing, with tabrets and instruments of music, to meet the king. And they sang, "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands." This made Saul angry and from this time he was jealous of David. On the morrow an evil spirit came upon him, and as David played before him upon his harp, Saul threw a javelin with intent to kill him. Fortunately it missed its aim, and David escaped. Thenceforth Saul was afraid of him, but David behaved himself wisely, and all Israel and Judah loved him.

Saul then tried to ensure David's death, telling him that he would give him his daughter Michal for his wife if he would bring him proof that he had slain one hundred of the Philistines. This adventure pleased David, and he slew two hundred Philistines, and brought proof thereof to Saul, himself being unharmed. So Michal, who loved him, became David's wife. Again, many times Saul sought to slay him, but Jonathan told David; and once also Michal, his wife, saved him from Saul's hands when he had sent messengers to take

him. Making an image, she laid it in the bed, and put a pillow of goats' hair for a bolster, so that Saul's messengers returned to their master with the report that David was sick. Then Saul commanded that he should be brought on the bed, whereupon the messengers discovered that only an image lay there. In the meantime David escaped to Samuel, and went and lived with him at Nahoth, to which place Saul twice sent messengers. But the Spirit of God was upon the messengers, and they prophesied, and when Saul himself went to Nahoth, the Spirit of God came to him, and he also prophesied.

Then David fled from Nahoth and came to Jonathan, with whom he made a covenant that he should let him know if Saul still intended evil against him. David was to absent himself for three days, and was then to hide in a field, and Jonathan, having found out the intentions of his father, was to shoot three arrows, sending a lad to fetch them. If he said to the lad, "The arrows are on this side of thee; take them," then David would understand that Saul intended him no harm. But if Jonathan said to the lad, "The arrows are beyond thee"; then David was to flee. On the first day David's absence was not noticed; but on the second day Saul inquired where he was, and Jonathan said he had desired to go to Bethlehem to sacrifice. Then Saul was very angry with Jonathan because he had let David go, and told him that David should surely die. When Jonathan pleaded for his friend, Saul cast a javelin at him, and Jonathan arose in fierce anger, knowing well that Saul meant to slay David. In the morning, therefore, when Jonathan shot the arrows as he had promised, he called to the lad and said, "Is not the arrow beyond thee?" And he also added, "Make speed, haste, stay not." When the lad

had gone, David came out of hiding, and he and Jonathan said farewell to each other, and Jonathan returned to the city.

Then David came to Ahimelech the priest, from whom he begged some bread and a sword, and Ahimelech gave him the hallowed bread from the altar, and the sword of Goliath. Then, still fleeing from Saul, David arrived at Gath, where, for fear of the king of that place, he pretended to be mad. Escaping thence, he hid in the cave of Adullam, and to that place many who were discontented or distressed betook themselves, and soon there were with David about four hundred men. From thence he went to the forest of Hareth. But when Saul heard that Ahimelech had helped David, he caused Ahimelech to be put to death, together with many others of the priests; and he put to death also every man, woman, and child, and every living thing in Nob, the priest's city. But one of Ahimelech's sons, Abiathar, escaped, and went to David. Saul still pursued David, seeking to kill him, but the Lord was with him, and Saul had to return, hearing that the Philistines had invaded the kingdom during his absence. Then David stayed in a stronghold at Engedi, and when Saul heard of it he took 3,000 men and went to seek him upon the rocks of the wild goats. Once Saul wandered into the very cave where David and his men were hidden, but in the darkness did not see them. David, unknown to him, cut a piece off the skirt of Saul's robe, but would not let his men do him any hurt, because Saul, though his enemy, was the anointed of God. But when Saul had gone out of the cave, not knowing that David had been in hiding there, David came after him, and bowing himself to the ground, said, "My lord the king," and declared to Saul that he

wished him no harm, and that even that day when he might have killed him he had refrained from doing so—in proof whereof he shewed Saul the skirt of the robe which he had cut off. Then Saul's heart was touched, and he said to David, "Thou art more righteous than I; for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil." Saul also said that now he knew indeed that David would be king, and begged David that he would not utterly destroy his household. David promised this, and returned to his stronghold. In those days Samuel died, and the Israelites lamented for him and buried him at Ramah.

Now when David wanted food for the men who were with him, he sent messengers to Nabal, a man of great possessions, to whom David had already shewn kindness. Nabal was a very churlish man, but his wife Abigail was a woman of good understanding, and of a beautiful countenance. When David's messengers came, Nabal refused to give them anything; wherefore David was very angry and would have killed Nabal and all his men had not Abigail his wife brought a present and interceded for him.

But shortly afterwards the Lord smote Nabal that he died, and David took Abigail to be his wife.

Yet again did Saul come out with armed men against David, having with him Abner, the captain of his host. And at night, while Saul lay sleeping in the trench, David and Abishai came secretly, and took the cruse of water and the spear which lay by the king's bolster, leaving him unharmed.

This done, David went up to the top of a hill and called to Abner, telling him that he had failed in his duty and had not taken care of the king his master, and asking him where were the king's spear and his cruse of water.

Whereupon Saul again repented, promising to do David no more harm. After these things David went and lived amongst the Philistines, who gave him the city of Ziklag.

Now the Philistines again gathered their armies together to fight against Israel, and made their camp at Shunem, and Saul gathered his men and encamped at Gilboa. And when Saul saw the great host of the Philistines, he was afraid, and asked counsel of God, but God did not answer him. He then went to a witch who lived at Endor, and was told that the Lord had rent the kingdom out of his hand, and had given it to David, and that he and all his men would fall into the hands of the Philistines.

Then the Philistines attacked Saul, and David was with Achish of Gath in the rearguard of the army. But the princes of the Philistines were vexed that David should be there, lest in the battle he should take the side of the enemy against them. So Achish prevailed upon David and his men to return to Ziklag. On his return he found that the Amalekites had taken his city and burnt it, and had carried the people away captive, and that Abigail was among the captives. Then David was greatly distressed, but he pursued the Amalekites and overcame them, and recovered the captives and the booty that had been carried off.

Meantime the great battle was raging between Saul and the Philistines, and the Israelites were stricken and fled before the Philistines, and Jonathan and his brothers were among the slain. Then Saul, seeing that the battle was going sore against him, besought his armour-bearer to kill him, but the armour-bearer refused, wherefore he took a sword and fell upon it and so died. On the morrow, when the Philistines came to

strip the bodies of the slain, they found the body of Saul, and after cutting off the head and stripping the armour, they fastened it to the wall of the city of Beth-Shan. Then the men of Jabesh-Gilead, hearing of these things, went by night and took the bodies of Saul and of his three sons and burnt them at Jabesh, burying the bones under a tree. The Israelites were so terror-stricken at the defeat of Saul and his host that they fled out of their cities, and the Philistines came and dwelt in them.

On the third day after the battle there went a young man out of the camp with his clothes rent and earth on his head to bring the news of the death of Saul and Jonathan to David. And when David asked how he knew that Saul and Jonathan were dead, he answered that he himself had, at Saul's command, slain him on Mount Gilboa after the battle, and that he had brought to David the crown that was on his head and the bracelet that was on his arm. Then David rent his clothes, and mourned, and fasted for Saul and for Jonathan and for the house of Israel, but he caused the young man who had brought the news to be put to death, because he said that he had slain the Lord's anointed.

And David lamented over Saul and Jonathan:

> The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places: how are the mighty fallen!
>
> Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon: lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph.
>
> Ye mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew, neither let there be rain upon you, nor fields of offerings: for there the shield of the mighty is vilely cast away, the shield of Saul, as though he had not been anointed with oil.

From the blood of the slain, rom the fat of the mighty, the bow of Jonathan turned not back, and the sword of Saul returned not empty.
Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided: they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions.
Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet, with other delights: who put on ornaments of gold upon your apparel.
How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle! O Jonathan, thou wast slain in thine high places.
I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.
How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!

CHAPTER XI

THE STORY OF KING DAVID

AFTER these things the men of Judah anointed David king over the house of Judah in Hebron, but Abner, the captain of Saul's host, took Ishbosheth, the son of Saul, and made him king over Israel. Then followed a battle between the men of Israel under Abner, and David's men under Joab, and Abner was beaten. Asahel, the brother of Joab, who was as light of foot as a wild roe, pursued after Abner, and was slain by him.

This was the beginning of a long war between the house of Saul and the house of David, but David became stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul weaker. At last Abner quarrelled with Ishbosheth and went over to David and made a treaty with him, declaring that David should be king over both Israel and Judah. But Joab, distrusting Abner, slew him secretly in revenge for the death of his brother Asahel. Then David grieved very sorely, and declared that he had nothing to do with Abner's death. The Israelites, much troubled, slew Ishbosheth the king and brought his head to David at Hebron, but David caused the head to be buried, and put to death the men who had slain Saul's son. Then all the tribes came together to Hebron and anointed David king over Israel. He

was thirty years old when he became king, and reigned in all forty years—seven-and-a-half years over Judah at Hebron, and thirty-three years over Israel and Judah at Jerusalem. And Hiram King of Tyre sent cedar trees, and carpenters, and masons, and they built David a house, and the Lord was with him.

After these things, David, with a great company, went to fetch the Ark of God from the house of Abinadab, and brought it home to the city of David with shouting and with the sound of the trumpet, David himself dancing and singing with the rest before the Lord. And David returned thanks to the Lord:—

Give thanks unto the Lord, call upon His name, make known His deeds among the people.
Sing unto Him, sing psalms unto Him, talk ye of all His wondrous works.
Glory ye in His holy name: let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord.
Seek the Lord and His strength, seek His face continually.
Remember His marvellous works that He hath done, His wonders, and the judgements of His mouth;
O ye seed of Israel His servant, ye children of Jacob, His chosen ones.
He is the Lord our God; His judgements are in all the earth.
Be ye mindful always of His covenant, the word which He commanded to a thousand generations;
Even of the covenant which He made with Abraham, and of His oath unto Isaac;
And hath confirmed the same to Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant,
Saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance;
When ye were but few, even a few, and strangers in it.
And when they went from nation to nation, and from one kingdom to another people,

He suffered no man to do them wrong; yea, He reproved kings for their sakes,
Saying, Touch not Mine anointed, and do My prophets no harm.
Sing unto the Lord, all the earth; show forth from day to day His salvation.
Declare His glory among the heathen; His marvellous works among all nations.
For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; He also is to be feared above all gods.
For all the gods of the people are idols: but the Lord made the heavens.
Glory and honour are in His presence; strength and gladness are in His place.
Give unto the Lord, ye kindreds of the people, give unto the Lord glory and strength.
Give unto the Lord the glory due unto His Name: bring an offering, and come before Him; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.
Fear before Him, all the earth: the world also shall be stable, that it be not moved.
Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; and let men say among the nations, The Lord reigneth.
Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof: let the fields rejoice, and all that is therein.
Then shall the trees of the wood sing out at the presence of the Lord, because He cometh to judge the earth.
O give thanks unto the Lord; for He is good: for His mercy endureth for ever.
And say ye, Save us, O God our salvation, and gather us together, and deliver us from the heathen, that we may give thanks to Thy holy name, and glory in Thy praise.
Blessed be the Lord God of Israel for ever and ever.

And all the people said, "Amen," and praised the Lord.

David, now being at rest from his enemies, wished to build a fitting house for the Ark of God. But God, through

Nathan the prophet, forbade him to do so, and told him that to his son should fall the task of building a temple. David shewed kindness to Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, who was lame, giving him all that had been Saul's and allowing him to dwell at Jerusalem and to eat at the king's table.

Now David loved Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite, and in order that she might become his wife he caused Joab, the captain of the host, who was besieging the town of Rabbah, to put Uriah in the forefront of the battle that he might be slain. This Joab accomplished, whereupon David took Bathsheba to be his wife.

But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord. And the prophet Nathan came to rebuke him, and he told him the following parable: "There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor. The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds; but the poor man had nothing save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up; and it grew up together with him and with his children; and it did eat of his own meat, and drink of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter. And there came a traveller unto the rich man; and he spared to take of his own flock, and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him; but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him." When David heard this story, he was very angry, and declared that whoever had done this thing should be put to death, and that the lamb should be restored fourfold. And Nathan said to David, "Thou art the man." Then he recounted to him how good the Lord had been to him, and how everything had been given to him, and yet he had envied Uriah his wife, and had caused

him to be slain with the sword of the children of Ammon. "Because thou hast despised the commandments of the Lord," continued Nathan, "the sword shall never depart from thine house. The sin which thou didst commit was done secretly, but thy punishment shall be before all Israel and before the sun." And David said, "I have sinned against the Lord." He had now to hear the punishment which he must bear; and Nathan told him, to his infinite sorrow, that because he had given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to point the finger of scorn, the son which Bathsheba had borne to him should die.

And it came to pass that the child was stricken even unto death, and David besought God for its life, lest haply He might give ear unto his entreaty; and he fasted, and went in, and lay all night upon the earth. And the elders of his house arose and went to him, to raise him up from the earth; but he would not, neither did he eat bread with them. And it came to pass on the seventh day that the child died. And the servants of David feared to tell him that the child was dead; for they said, "Behold, while the child was yet alive we spake unto him, and he would not hearken unto our voice; how will he then vex himself if we tell him that the child is dead?" But when David saw that his servants whispered together, he perceived that the child was dead. He said therefore unto them, "Is the child dead?" And they said, "He is dead." Then David arose from the earth and washed, and anointed himself, and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the Lord, and worshipped. And afterwards he came to his own house, and bread was set before him, and he did eat. Then said his servants unto him, "What thing is this that thou hast done? Thou didst fast and weep for the child while it was

alive, but when the child was dead thou didst rise and eat bread." And he said, "While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept, for I said, 'Who can tell whether God will be gracious to me, that the child may live?' But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me."

In due time Bathsheba was comforted, for another son was born to her and to David, and was called Solomon, and the Lord loved him.

David had many troubles in his own family. One son, Ammon, was because of his evil living slain by his brother Absalom, who was renowned for his beauty throughout all Israel. This Absalom afterwards made a conspiracy against David, and went to Hebron and sent spies throughout Israel, telling all that when they heard the sound of the trumpet they were to know that Absalom reigned in Hebron. He took as his counsellor Ahithophel, who had of old been counsellor to David. When David found that the conspiracy was dangerous to him, he fled from Jerusalem and went to Mount Olivet. And being told that Ahithophel was among the conspirators, he prayed that God would turn the counsel of Ahithophel to foolishness. Then Hushai came to David, but David sent him back to the city and told him to pretend to be Absalom's friend, and to tell to Zadok and Abiathar the priests all that went on, so that the counsel of Ahithophel might be defeated. So Absalom and all his followers came to Jerusalem. And Ahithophel counselled Absalom to give him 12,000 men that he might pursue after David and come upon him while he was weak and weary, so that he might be easily overcome. This counsel pleased Absalom, but he sent

also for Hushai and inquired of him why he was not with David. Hushai craftily answered, "Whom the Lord and His people and all the men of Israel choose, his will I be and with him will I abide." And he said also that as he had served David so he would serve his son Absalom. Hushai then advised Absalom not to listen to the counsel of Ahithophel, but to collect all the Israelites together and himself go to war against David, so that David and his men might be utterly routed.

This counsel Absalom decided to follow, whereupon Hushai immediately sent messengers to David to warn him. These messengers narrowly escaped discovery, but were hidden in a well by a woman, who covered up the well, and put earth over it, until it was safe for them to come out. When David heard the news that Hushai had sent, he and all his men went over the river Jordan and came to Mahanaim. Absalom also passed over Jordan, with Amasa, the captain of his host, and pitched in the land of Gilead, but Ahithophel, seeing that his counsel was not followed, went home to his house, and hanged himself. At Mahanaim, Shobi, the Ammonite, shewed kindness to David and brought food to his men, who were weary and hungry and thirsty in the wilderness. Then David divided his men into three companies, but the people persuaded him not to go with them to battle, but to stay in safety in the city. This he did, commanding them to deal gently with Absalom for his sake. In due course the rival forces met in the wood of Ephraim, where Absalom's men were overcome, and 20,000 slain.

Now Absalom sought to escape upon a mule, and as he rode under the thick boughs of a great oak, he was caught up by his hair, and the mule went from under him and he

hung helpless in the tree. Then a young man who saw him went and told Joab, David's captain, and Joab said, "Why didst thou not smite him there to the ground, I would have given thee ten shekels of silver and a girdle?" But the young man answered that not for one thousand shekels of silver would he have harmed the king's son. Wherefore Joab took three darts and killed Absalom, and his men threw the body of the prince into a pit in the wood. Then Joab said to Cushi, "Go, tell the king what thou hast seen." Ahimaaz the son of Zadok begged that he might go also, so he ran after Cushi, and overtook him.

Now David sat between the two gates of the city, and the watchman saw a man running, and told the king. And the king said, "If he be alone there is tidings in his mouth." Again the watchman saw a second man running, and the king said, "He also bringeth tidings." And the watchman said, "Methinks the running of the foremost is like the running of Ahimaaz the son of Zadok"; and the king said, "He is a good man, and cometh with good tidings."

Then Ahimaaz called to the king and said, "All is well. Blessed be the Lord thy God, which hath delivered up the men that lifted up their hand against my lord the king." Then David asked, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" And Ahimaaz said that he had seen a great tumult, but did not know what it was. After him Cushi came, and said, "Tidings, my lord the king, for the Lord hath avenged thee this day of all them that rose up against thee." Then the king said again, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" And Cushi answered, "The enemies of my lord the king, and all that rise against thee to do thee hurt, be as that young man."

And the king was much moved, and went up to the

chamber over the gate, and wept; and as he went, thus he said, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!"

Now because of the great grief of the king the victory was turned into mourning, and the people slunk away stealthily to their houses, as people being ashamed steal away when they flee from battle. Then Joab came to the king, where he wept and mourned for Absalom, and said, "Thou hast shamed this day the faces of all thy servants, which this day hath saved thy life, and the lives of thy sons and of thy daughters, and the lives of thy wives, in that thou lovest thine enemies, and hatest thy friends; for thou hast declared this day that thou regardest neither princes nor servants: for this day I perceive that if Absalom had lived, and all we had died this day, then it had pleased thee well. Now therefore arise, go forth and speak comfortably unto thy servants: for I swear by the Lord, if thou go not forth, there will not tarry one with thee this night: and that will be worse unto thee than all the evil that befell thee from thy youth until now."

Then David arose, and sent for Zadok and Abiathar the priests, and told them to speak to the elders of Judah, and say, "Ye are my brethren, ye are my bones and my flesh, wherefore then are ye the last to bring back the king?" Then the men of Judah sent to the king and urged him to come back, so David returned and came to Jordan, and the men of Judah came to meet him to bring him across the river. With them was Shimei, who had cursed David when he was fleeing from Absalom, and who now came and begged his forgiveness, and received pardon. Mephibosheth also came to meet him—the lame Mephi-

bosheth, who had neither dressed his feet, nor trimmed his beard, nor washed his clothes from the day the king departed until the day he came again in peace.

When David asked why he had not gone with him, he told him of the treachery of Ziba his servant—how he had taken advantage of his lameness and had slandered him to David, declaring that he wished to get back the kingdom from David. (These things Ziba had done after David's flight, and David had believed him, and had given over to him the possessions of Mephibosheth.) Then David said, "Thou and Ziba divide the land," but Mephibosheth answered, "Yea, let him take all, forasmuch as my lord the king is come again in peace unto his own house."

Barzillai the Gileadite also, an aged man, who had shewn great kindness to David at Mahanaim, conducted the king over the river Jordan. The king wished to reward him, but Barzillai refused, and begged that he might be allowed to return to his own city, but that Chimham his friend might go to Jerusalem with David.

So David returned across the river. And the men of Israel came to meet the king, and were angry with the men of Judah that they had brought him back, and had not told them or asked their advice. The men of Judah answered that the king was near of kin to them, but the Israelites said, "We have ten parts in the king, and we have also more right in David than ye." So the quarrel grew hot between the men of Judah and the men of Israel, whereupon an evil-minded man, Sheba, a Benjamite, blew a trumpet and said, "We have no part in David, neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse; every man to his tents, O Israel." So the men of Israel left David and followed

Sheba, but the men of Judah stayed with their king, and brought him home to Jerusalem.

Then David called Amasa and made him captain instead of Joab, and told him and his men to pursue Sheba. And Joab's men went out also and pursued Sheba, and Joab treacherously slew Amasa, who had been made captain in his stead. Then Joab went through all the tribes of Israel, and gathered them together to pursue Sheba, and they besieged him in the city called Abel. But a wise woman of Abel came to Joab and said, "I am one of them that are faithful in Israel; thou seekest to destroy a city and a mother in Israel; why wilt thou swallow up the inheritance of the Lord?" Then Joab told her that if Sheba were delivered up to him he would depart, and the woman said, "His head shall be thrown to thee over the wall." And this was done, so Joab returned from the city and came to the king at Jerusalem, and was captain over all the host of Israel.

For the sin that Saul had committed in slaying the Gibeonites, God sent a three years' famine on the land, which ceased not until seven sons of Saul were put to death, two of whom were the sons of his wife Rizpah. Then Rizpah watched by her dead sons and took sackcloth and spread it upon a rock from the beginning of harvest until water dropped upon them out of heaven, and suffered neither the birds of the air to rest on them by day nor the beasts of the fields by night.

This devotion to her dead sons reached the ears of David, wherefore he commanded that the bones of the slain men, together with those of Saul and Jonathan, which he caused to be brought from Jabesh-gilead, should be buried in the country of Benjamin. After this the famine ceased in the land.

Many times did the Philistines fight against David, but he overcame them, and he returned thanks unto the Lord:

The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer;
The God of my rock; in Him will I trust; He is my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower and my refuge, my Saviour; Thou savest me from violence.
I will call on the Lord, who is worthy to be praised; so shall I be saved from mine enemies.
When the waves of death compassed me, the floods of ungodly men made me afraid;
The sorrows of hell compassed me about; the snares of death prevented me;
In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried to my God; and He did hear my voice out of His temple, and my cry did enter into His ears.
Then the earth shook and trembled, the foundations of heaven moved and shook, because He was wroth.
He bowed the heavens also and came down, and darkness was under His feet.
And He rode upon a cherub and did fly, and He was seen upon the wings of the wind.
And He made darkness pavilions round about Him, dark waters and thick clouds of the skies.
He sent from above, He took me; He drew me out of many waters.
He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them that hated me; for they were too strong for me.
They prevented me in the day of my calamity; but the Lord was my stay.
He brought me forth also into a large place, He delivered me, because He delighted in me.

. . . . . .

For I have kept the ways of the Lord, and have not wickedly departed from my God.
For all His judgements were before me; and as for His statutes, I did not depart from them.

I was also upright before Him, and have kept myself from mine iniquity.
Therefore the Lord hath recompensed me according to my righteousness, according to my cleanness in His eye-sight.
With the merciful Thou wilt shew thyself merciful, and with the upright man Thou wilt shew thyself upright.
With the pure Thou wilt show Thyself pure; and and with the froward Thou wilt shew Thyself unsavoury.
And the afflicted people Thou wilt save; but Thine eyes are upon the haughty that Thou mayest bring them down.
For Thou art my lamp, O Lord, and Thou wilt lighten my darkness.
For by Thee I have run through a troop; by my God have I leaped over a wall.

. . . . . .

As for God, His way is perfect; the Word of the Lord is tried; He is a buckler to all them that trust in Him.
For who is God, save the Lord? and who is a rock save our God? God is my strength and power; and He maketh my way perfect.
He maketh my feet like hinds' feet; and setteth me upon my high places.
He teacheth my hands to war; so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms.

. . . . . .

Thou hast also given me the shield of Thy salvation; and Thy gentleness hath made me great.
Thou hast enlarged my steps under me; so that my feet did not slip.
I have pursued mine enemies and destroyed them and turned not again until I had consumed them.
And I have consumed them, and wounded them that they could not arise; yea, they are fallen under my feet.
For Thou hast girded me with strength to battle; them that rose up against me hast Thou subdued under me.

Thou hast also given me the necks of mine enemies, that I might destroy them that hate me.
They looked, but there was none to save; even unto the Lord, but He answered them not.
Then did I beat them as small as the dust of the earth, I did stamp them as the mire of the street, and did spread them abroad.
Thou also hast delivered me from the strivings of my people, Thou hast kept me to be head of the heathen: a people which I knew not shall serve me.
Strangers shall submit themselves unto me; as soon as they hear, they shall be obedient unto me.
Strangers shall fade away, and they shall be afraid out of their close places.
The Lord liveth, and blessed be my rock; and exalted be the God of the rock of my salvation.
It is God that avengeth me, and that bringeth down the people under me.
And that bringeth me forth from mine enemies; Thou also hast lifted me up on high above them that rose up against me; Thou hast delivered me from the violent man.
Therefore I will give thanks unto Thee, O Lord, among the heathen, and I will sing praises unto Thy name.

And it came to pass that Satan tempted David to number all the people of Israel, wherefore God was angry with him. Then David was grieved because of his sin, and God sent to him Gad the prophet who bade him choose between three forms of punishment—either seven years of famine in the land, or three months' flight before his enemies, or three days' pestilence. And David said to Gad, "I am in a great strait; let me fall now into the hand of the Lord, for His mercies are great, and let me not fall into the hand of men."

So the Lord sent a pestilence upon the Israelites, and there died of them 70,000 men. Then the Lord repented

Him of the evil, and stayed the hand of the destroying angel by the threshing-place of Ornan the Jebusite. And Gad told David to set up an altar there to the Lord, so David bought the threshing-floor and the oven of Ornan the Jebusite for six hundred shekels of gold. Ornan would have given him the threshing-floor and the oven for the burnt-offering, and the threshing instruments for wood, and the wheat for a meat-offering, but David said, "I will not take that which is thine for the Lord, nor offer burnt-offerings without cost!" So David built an altar there and offered the burnt-offering, and the plague was stayed.

Now David was old, and Adonijah, one of his favourite sons, revolted against his father and proclaimed himself king, and Joab and Abiathar followed him, but Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, Shimei, and other mighty men remained with David. Then Bathsheba, David's wife, and Nathan the prophet, went to David, and told him that Adonijah had made himself king, and asked him if this was by his wish, or if he still held to his promise that Solomon, the son of Bathsheba, should reign after him. Then David said that Solomon and not Adonijah should certainly reign after him, and he told Zadok and Nathan to go and bring Solomon at once and anoint him king over Israel and Judah, and to blow with the trumpet and say, "God save King Solomon." This was done, and all the people piped with pipes and rejoiced. When Adonijah heard this, he was afraid, and all that were with him returned home, and he himself went and made peace with King Solomon.

David now knowing that he was about to die, called Solomon, his son to him, and said: "I go the way of all the

earth; be thou strong therefore, and shew thyself a man; and keep the charge of the Lord thy God, to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes and His commandments, and His judgements, and His testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself; that the Lord may continue His word which he spake concerning me, saying, 'If thy children take heed to their way to walk before me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, there shall not fail thee a man on the throne of Israel.'"

David also charged Solomon to avenge on Joab the treacheries that he had at various times committed, namely the slaying of Abner and Amasa. To Barzillai the Gileadite, and his sons, Solomon was to shew great kindness, but Shimei, who had cursed David, was to be put to death.

David then called an assembly of the people and told them how it had been his wish to build a fitting house for God, but that God had forbidden him because he had been a man of war, and that it was reserved for Solomon, his son, to carry on this work. He exhorted the people to fear God and walk in His ways, so that the kingdom might be established, and he exhorted Solomon to serve God with a perfect heart and with a willing mind; for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts. Then David gave to Solomon the plans for the building of the House of God, and gold and silver for all the workmanship in it. David had also prepared gold and silver and brass and iron and wood and precious stones for the building, and he asked the people to give willingly of their substance to

the service of the Lord. This the people did, bringing much gold and silver and brass and iron and precious stones, and they all rejoiced greatly, because with perfect heart they offered willingly to the Lord.

David also rejoiced and praised the Lord in the presence of the great assembly, and said: "Blessed be thou, Lord God of Israel our Father, for ever and ever. Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is Thine; Thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and Thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honour come of Thee, and Thou reignest over all; and in Thine hand is power, and might; and in Thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all. Now therefore, our God, we thank Thee, and praise Thy glorious name. But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of Thee, and of Thine own have we given Thee. For we are strangers before Thee, and sojourners, as were all our fathers: our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding. O Lord our God, all this store that we have prepared to build Thee an house for Thine holy name cometh of Thine hand, and is all Thine own. I know also, my God, that Thou triest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness. As for me, in the uprightness of mine heart I have willingly offered all these things: and now have I seen with joy Thy people, which are present here, to offer willingly unto Thee. O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, our fathers, keep this for ever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of Thy people, and prepare their heart unto Thee; and give unto Solomon, my son, a perfect heart, to keep Thy commandments, Thy testimonies, and Thy statutes, and to do all these

things; and to build the palace, for one which I have made provision."

Then the congregation worshipped the Lord, and offered burnt offerings, and proclaimed Solomon king for the second time, and anointed him unto the Lord to be the chief governor, and Zadok they anointed to be priest. And the Lord bestowed on Solomon such royal majesty as had not been on any king before him in Israel.

So David died in a good old age, having reigned for forty years, and Solomon his son reigned in his stead.

CHAPTER XII

THE STORY OF SOLOMON THE WISE

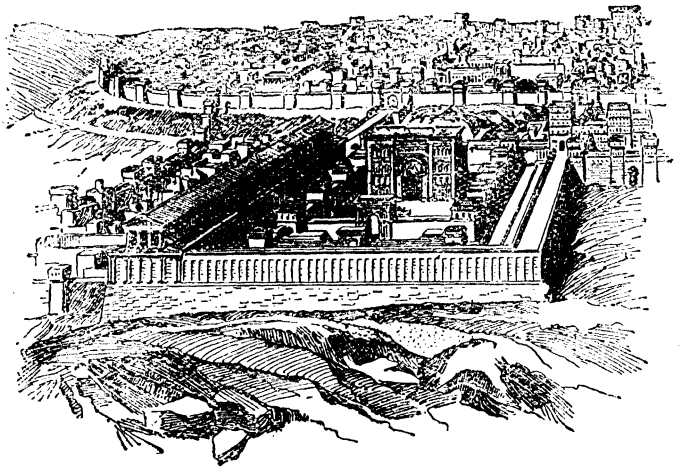
AFTER his father's death, Solomon married the daughter of Pharaoh, king of Egypt. His brother Adonijah, who had rebelled, begged of Solomon to give him as his wife the beautiful Shunammite Abishag, who had been nurse to David during his latter days, but Solomon was angry and caused Adonijah to be put to death, and he also caused to be slain Joab, the captain of David's host, and Shimei who had cursed David, and Abiathar the priest, who had also forsaken David.

At Gibeon the Lord appeared unto Solomon in a dream and said, "Ask what I shall give thee." And Solomon said, "Thou hast shewed unto Thy servant David my father great mercy, according as he walked before Thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with Thee; and Thou hast kept for him this great kindness, that Thou hast given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day. And now, O Lord my God, Thou hast made Thy servant king instead of David my father; and I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in. And Thy servant is in the midst of Thy people which Thou hast chosen, a great people, that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude. Give therefore Thy servant an understanding heart to judge Thy people,

that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge so great a people?" And it pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this thing. And He said unto him, "Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life; neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies; but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgement; behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee. And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches and honour: so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee all thy days. And if thou wilt walk in My ways, to keep My statutes and My commandments, as thy father David did walk, then I will lengthen thy days."

When Solomon returned to Jerusalem, his wisdom was put to a practical test. Two women living in the same house had each a child born to her, and one of the babes died in the night, whereupon its mother placed the dead child beside the other woman, taking the living child, and declaring it to be her own. The two women were now brought before King Solomon, who decided the question in a simple way that has become proverbial. He ordered that a sword should be brought, and that the living child should be cut in two, one half being given to each woman. On this, the true mother cried out, "O my lord, give her the living child, and in no wise slay it." But the other said, "Let it be neither mine nor thine, but divide it, as my lord hath said." Then the king declared that the child should not be slain, but should be given to the woman who had shewn by pleading for its life that she was its mother.

And now began a long era of peace for the kingdom of Israel and Judah. From Dan to Beersheba each man dwelt safely under his vine and under his fig-tree, and this continued the greater part of the reign of Solomon. Solomon had enormous wealth. It is recorded that he made silver and gold at Jerusalem as plenteous as stones. He had no



THE TEMPLE RESTORED

less than 40,000 stalls of horses for his chariots and 12,000 horsemen. And God gave him, moreover, wisdom and understanding exceeding that of any other man, and people came from all parts to hear his wisdom, and the proverbs that he spake, and the songs that he made.

There being rest on every side, Solomon now set about building the Temple, first sending to Hiram, King of Tyre, who had been a friend of David, asking him to command his servants to hew down cedar trees in Lebanon, for that there were no men amongst the children of Israel with

skill to hew timber like unto the Sidonians. Solomon said that he would pay the hire of the men, and would send his own servants to work with them. And Hiram rejoiced greatly that the son of his old friend should have put his hand to this great work, and he readily promised that his men should hew the cedar and fir, and bring them down to the sea, whence they would be conveyed by floats and discharged at Joppa, to be brought to Jerusalem.

So Hiram and Solomon made a league together, and Hiram gave Solomon the cedar and fir, and Solomon gave Hiram wheat and oil for food for his household year by year. Solomon raised a levy of 30,000 men to go to work in Lebanon, 10,000 to go each month, so that the men were in Lebanon one month and at home for two months. He had also 30,000 that bare burdens, and 40,000 hewers in the mountains, besides the 3,300 officers who were appointed to oversee the work. And Solomon's and Hiram's men hewed great stones for the foundations of the Temple. Hiram also, at Solomon's request, sent a man skilled in working in gold, silver, brass and iron, in purple and crimson and blue, so that he might help the skilled men whom David had already provided.

In the second month of the fourth year of Solomon's reign the great building was begun at Jerusalem, in Mount Moriah, in the place that David had bought from Ornan the Jebusite. It was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither, so that there was no sound of axe or hammer or any tool in the house while the men were building.

The porch was overlaid with pure gold, and the greater house ceiled with fir, and overlaid with gold. The beams and posts and walls and doors were also overlaid with

gold, and precious stones were used in the decoration. The most holy place also was overlaid with gold, and there were the two golden Cherubim whose outstretched wings measured twenty cubits from tip to tip, and whose faces were towards the house. The veil was of blue and purple and crimson and fine linen, on which figures of Cherubim were embroidered. Solomon made also an altar of brass, twenty cubits long, twenty broad, and ten feet high, and he made a molten sea which stood upon twelve oxen, three looking north, three east, three south, and three west.

The sea was a handbreadth thick, and the brim was worked with flowers and lilies. He made also the golden lavers and candlesticks and tables and the basins of gold, also the golden snuffers and spoons and censers.

Huram, a skilled workman from Tyre, made the pots and shovels and basins, the pillars and chapiters, and the two wreaths to cover the pommels of the chapiters, and four hundred pomegranates on the two wreaths. He made also the lavers and the sea with the twelve oxen under it.

Everything was done in accordance with the directions given of old by the Lord to Moses, and in the eighth month of the eleventh year of Solomon's reign, more than seven years after the first stone was laid, the building was finished.

Then Solomon assembled all the people and the priests, and brought the Ark of God (in which were the two tables of stone which Moses put there at Mount Horeb) into the most holy place, under the wings of the Cherubim. When the priests came out of the holy place, and while the trumpeters and singers were praising the Lord, a cloud filled the Temple, and the priests could not minister because the glory of the Lord had filled the House of the Lord.

Then spake Solomon, "The Lord said that he would dwell in the thick darkness. I have surely built Thee an house to dwell in, a settled place for Thee to abide in for ever." And he turned his face about, and blessed all the congregation of Israel, all the congregation of Israel standing. And he said, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, which spake with His mouth unto David my father, and hath with his hand fulfilled it, saying, 'Since the day that I brought forth My people Israel out of Egypt, I chose no city out of all the tribes of Israel to build an house, that My name might be therein; but I chose David to be over My people Israel.' And it was in the heart of David my father to build an house for the name of the Lord God of Israel. And the Lord said unto David my father, 'Whereas it was in thine heart to build an house unto My name, thou didst well that it was in thine heart. Nevertheless thou shalt not build the house, but thy son, that shall come forth out of thy loins, he shall build the house unto My name.' And the Lord hath performed His word that He spake, and I am risen up in the room of David my father, and sit on the throne of Israel, as the Lord promised, and have built an house for the name of the Lord God of Israel. And I have set there a place for the ark, wherein is the covenant of the Lord, which He made with our fathers, when He brought them out of the land of Egypt."

And Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord, in the presence of all the congregation of Israel, and spreading forth his hands toward heaven, he said, "Lord God of Israel, there is no God like Thee, in heaven above, or on earth beneath, who keepest covenant and mercy with Thy servants that walk before Thee with

all their heart. Who hast kept with Thy servant David my father all that Thou didst promise him: Thou spakest also with Thy mouth, and hast fulfilled it with Thine hand, as it is this day. Therefore now, Lord God of Israel, keep with Thy servant David my father that Thou promisedst him, saying, 'There shall not fail thee a man in My sight to sit on the throne of Israel; so that thy children take heed to their way, that they walk before Me as thou hast walked before Me.' And now, O God of Israel, let Thy Word, I pray Thee, be verified, which Thou spakest unto Thy servant David my father.

"But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, the heaven, and heaven of heavens, cannot contain Thee; how much less this house that I have builded! Yet have Thou respect unto the prayer of Thy servant, and to his supplication, O Lord my God, to hearken unto the cry and to the prayer which Thy servant prayeth before Thee to-day. That Thine eyes may be open toward this house night and day, even toward the place of which Thou hast said, 'My name shall be there'; that thou mayest hearken unto the prayer which Thy servant shall make toward this place. And hearken Thou to the supplication of Thy servant, and of Thy people Israel, when they shall pray toward this place: and hear Thou in heaven Thy dwelling place, and when Thou hearest, forgive.

"If any man trespass against his neighbour, and an oath be laid upon him to cause him to swear, and the oath come before Thine altar in this house, then hear Thou in heaven, and do, and judge Thy servants, condemning the wicked, to bring his way upon his head; and justifying the righteous, to give him according to his righteousness. When Thy

people Israel be smitten down before the enemy, because they have sinned against Thee, and shall turn again to Thee, and confess Thy Name, and pray, and make supplication unto Thee in this house; then hear Thou in heaven, and forgive the sin of Thy people Israel, and bring them again unto the land which Thou gavest unto their fathers.

"When heaven is shut up, and there is no rain, because they have sinned against Thee, if they pray toward this place, and confess Thy name, and turn from their sin, when Thou afflictest them; then hear Thou in heaven, and forgive the sin of Thy servants, and of Thy people Israel, that Thou teach them the good way wherein they should walk, and give them rain upon Thy land, which Thou hast given to Thy people for an inheritance.

"If there be in the land famine, if there be pestilence, blasting, mildew, locust, or if there be caterpillar; if their enemy besiege them in the land of their cities; whatsoever plague, whatsoever sickness there be; what prayer and supplication soever be made by any man, or by all Thy people Israel, which shall know every man the plague of his own heart, and spread forth his hands toward this house; then hear Thou in heaven Thy dwelling place, and forgive, and do, and give to every man according to his ways, whose heart Thou knowest, (for Thou, even Thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men;) that they may fear Thee all the days that they live in the land which Thou gavest unto our fathers.

"Moreover concerning a stranger, that is not of Thy people Israel, but cometh out of a far country for Thy name's sake (for they shall hear of Thy great name, and of Thy strong hand, and of Thy stretched-out arm); when

he shall come and pray toward this house, hear thou in heaven Thy dwelling-place, and do according to all that the stranger calleth to Thee for, that all people of the earth may know Thy name, to fear Thee, as do Thy people Israel; and that they may know that this house, which I have builded is called by Thy Name.

"If Thy people go out to battle against their enemy, whithersoever Thou shalt send them, and shall pray unto the Lord toward the city which Thou hast chosen, and toward the house that I have built for Thy name, then hear Thou in heaven their prayer and their supplication, and maintain their cause. If they sin against Thee (for there is no man that sinneth not), and Thou be angry with them, and deliver them to the enemy, so that they carry them away captives unto the land of the enemy, far or near: Yet if they shall bethink themselves in the land whither they were carried captives, and repent, and make supplication unto Thee in the land of them that carried them captive, saying, 'We have sinned, and have done perversely, we have committed wickedness': and so return to Thee with all their heart, and with all their soul, in the land of their enemies, which led them away captive, and pray unto Thee toward their land, which thou gavest unto their fathers, the city which Thou hast chosen, and the house which I have built for Thy name; then hear Thou their prayer and their supplication in heaven Thy dwelling-place, and maintain their cause, and forgive Thy people that have sinned against Thee, and all their transgressions wherein they have transgressed against Thee, and give them compassion before them who carried them captive, that they may have compassion on them: for they be Thy people, and Thine inheritance, which Thou broughtest forth out of

Egypt, from the midst of the furnace of iron. For Thou didst separate them from among all the people of the earth, to be Thine inheritance, as Thou spakest by the hand of Moses Thy servant, when Thou broughtest our fathers out of Egypt, O Lord God."

Then Solomon arose from kneeling with his hands spread up to heaven and stood and blessed all Israel, telling them to let their hearts be perfect with the Lord their God, to walk in His statutes, and to keep His commandments, as at this day. And they offered sacrifices and made a great feast, and on the eighth day the people returned to their homes with joyful hearts, praising God for all His goodness.

Then King Solomon gave to Hiram of Tyre thirty cities, for that Hiram had furnished him with cedar and fir and gold. The Gentiles, the people that were still left in the land, whom the Israelites had not conquered, Solomon made to be bondservants, but of the children of Israel he made no bondmen. Solomon also made a great navy of ships on the shore of the Red Sea, and Hiram sent his sailors in the ships with the servants of Solomon, and they fetched gold from Ophir, and presented it to the king.

Now the Queen of Sheba heard of the great fame of Solomon, and she came to Jerusalem with a great retinue, and with camels bearing spices and gold and precious stones. And when she saw all this state and magnificence and heard the wisdom of the king, she said, "Thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard. Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom. Blessed be the Lord thy God which delighted in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel; because the Lord loved Israel for

ever, therefore made He thee king to do judgement and justice." Then the Queen presented to the king the gold and spices and precious stones, and Solomon gave to her whatsoever she asked, and she returned to her own country.

Solomon's ships brought him so much gold that he made two hundred targets and three hundred shields of beaten gold, and he made a great throne of ivory, which he over laid with pure gold. The throne had six steps, and on each step stood a lion, with a lion also at each side of the throne itself. All his drinking vessels were of pure gold. He had also a navy at Tarshish which brought him gold and ivory, apes and peacocks, so that his riches exceeded that of all other kings of the earth.

But when Solomon was old, his Philistine wives turned away his heart after other gods, and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God. And the Lord was angry with him and stirred up many enemies against him, and told him that He would rend his kingdom from his son, leaving him only one tribe for the sake of David.

Amongst Solomon's enemies was Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, a mighty man of valour. This man the prophet Ahijah met outside Jerusalem, and when they two were alone in a field Ahijah rent the garment of Jeroboam in twelve pieces, and told Jeroboam to take ten pieces, for that the kingdom would be rent from Solomon and ten tribes would be given to Jeroboam, only one tribe being given to Solomon's son. When Solomon knew of this, he tried to kill Jeroboam, but Jeroboam fled to Egypt, where he stayed until Solomon's death.

Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel for forty years, and after his death, Rehoboam, his son, reigned in his stead.

CHAPTER XIII

THE KINGS AND ELIJAH

WHEN REHOBOAM came to the throne, the children of Israel gathered together under the leadership of Jeroboam, and came to the king to ask him to remove from the people the heavy burdens which Solomon had put upon them to maintain his royal state. But Rehoboam, preferring the advice of the young men who had grown up with him to that of the elders, spoke roughly to them and refused their demands, whereupon the children of Israel rebelled against him and made Jeroboam their king, so that only the tribe of Judah, to which he himself belonged, was left to Rehoboam. Jeroboam built Shechem in Mount Ephraim, and dwelt there; but Jerusalem, where stood the Temple, was in the hands of Rehoboam. Now Jeroboam was afraid that if the people went to Jerusalem to worship, they would turn again to Rehoboam. So he made two calves of gold, and set one in Bethel and the other in Dan, and said to the people, "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem to worship: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." Also Jeroboam made priests of the lowest of the people, and ordained a feast and offered sacrifices, causing the people to sin.

Then God sent a prophet out of Judah to prophesy against Jeroboam as he stood by the altar, and when

Jeroboam put forth his hand to lay hold of him, the hand withered, and the altar was rent, and the ashes poured out from it. Jeroboam, in affright, begged the prophet to entreat God to restore him the use of his hand, and God granted his request, but when the king asked the prophet to come home and eat and drink with him, he refused, saying that the Lord had forbidden him to eat bread or drink water in that place, or to return by the way he had come. So the prophet went towards home by another way.

Now an old prophet who lived at Bethel went after him and found him sitting under an oak tree, and begged him to go home with him and eat bread. But again the prophet refused. Then the old prophet told him a lying story, and said: "I am a prophet also as thou art, and an angel spake to me by the word of the Lord, saying, 'Bring him back with thee into thine house, that he may eat bread and drink water.'" Upon this the man of God allowed himself to be persuaded, and he went home with the old man and ate bread and drank water.

This act of disobedience brought a terrible punishment. As the prophet again took his way home a lion met him by the way and killed him, leaving his ass untouched. And certain men passed by and saw a lion standing by the body, and they came and told it to the old prophet, and he went out and brought back the dead body and buried it in his own sepulchre.

Despite this terrible lesson Jeroboam returned not from his evil ways. Judah also did evil in the Lord's sight during the reign of Rehoboam, and made groves and worshipped images, after the manner of the surrounding nations, instead of following the Lord. Wherefore Shishak king of Egypt came against Jerusalem and took away the trea-

sures of the Temple, and of the king's house. He also carried away the shields of gold which Solomon had made, and Rehoboam made brazen shields in their stead.

There was war between Jeroboam and Rehoboam all their days. And when Jeroboam had reigned seventeen years, Rehoboam died and was succeeded by Abijam, who reigned a very short time and was followed by his son Asa. Asa reigned forty-one years, and did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, and removed the idols that had been set up.

Early in Asa's long reign Jeroboam died, and was succeeded by other kings, all of whom walked not in the ways of David and Solomon their fathers, until Ahab, who came to the throne in the thirty-eighth year of King Asa's reign, and of whom it is written that he did more to provoke the Lord God to anger than all the Kings of Israel that were before him. He took as his wife, Jezebel, the daughter of the king of the Zidonians, and he worshipped Baal, and set up an altar to Baal in Samaria, which was now the capital of the kings of Israel.

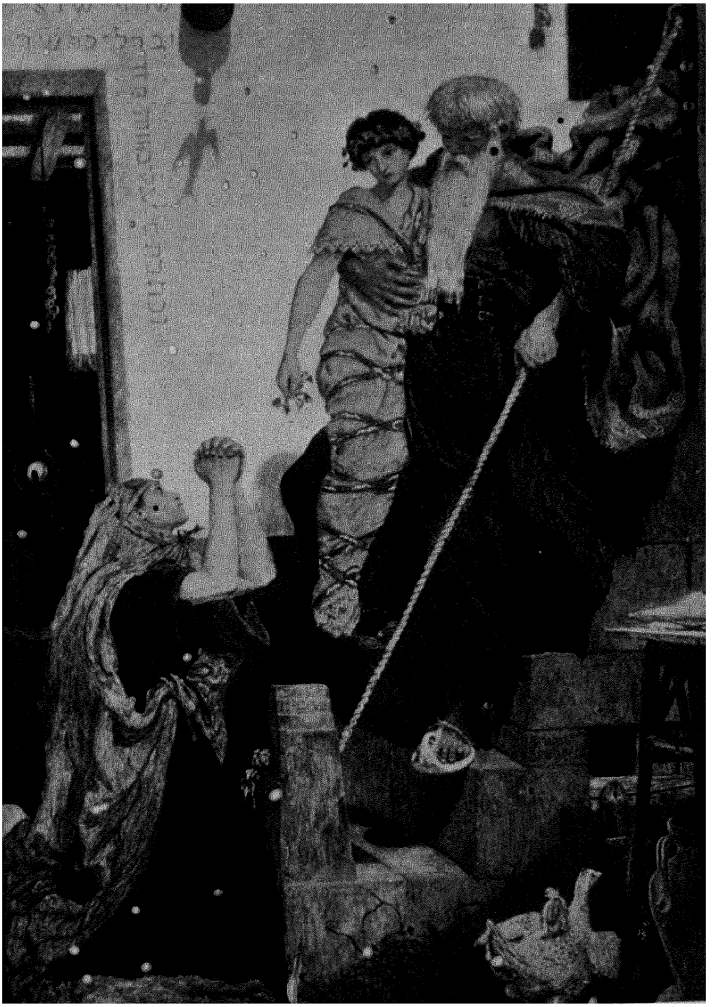
Then Elijah the Tishbite was sent to prophesy against Ahab, and to tell him that there would be neither dew nor rain in the land because of his sins. Elijah himself, by the command of God, hid by the brook Cherith, and drank of the brook, and was fed by ravens which God sent to bring him food. When the brook dried up, God sent him to Zarephath in Zidon to the house of a widow, telling him that this widow would give him food. Elijah met the widow woman as she was gathering sticks at the gate of the city, and he asked her to fetch him a little water to drink and a morsel of bread. But the widow answered that she had only a handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil

in a cruse, and that she was gathering the sticks that she might go in and prepare their last meal before they should die. Then Elijah told her not to fear, but to bake him a cake with the meal, and afterwards to make one for herself and her son, for that God had promised that the barrel of meal and cruse of oil should last until the day when rain should descend on the land. And it was as the prophet had said, and Elijah and the widow and her son had food for many days.

Now it befell that the widow's son fell sick, and there was no breath in him, and his mother came to Elijah in great distress. Wherefore Elijah took the boy and carried him up into a loft where he slept, and stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried to the Lord, "O Lord, my God, I pray Thee, let this child's soul come into him again." And the Lord heard the voice of Elijah, and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived. Then Elijah took him and brought him down out of the loft, and delivered him into his mother's arms and said, "See, thy son liveth." And the woman said, "Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the Word of the Lord in thy mouth is truth."

Now the famine was sore in Samaria, and Ahab called Obadiah, the governor of his house, a just and God-fearing man, who on a day had hidden a hundred prophets of the Lord from the fury of Jezebel, and told him to go throughout the land to all the fountains of water and the brooks to see if he could find any grass for the horses and mules.

As Obadiah went on his way he met Elijah, who had been bidden by God to tell Ahab that He would stay the famine, and send rain upon the earth. "Go, tell the king," said he, "Behold! Elijah is here!" But Obadiah was afraid,



Elijah and the Widow's Son
Ford Madox Brown

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and said: "As soon as I am gone from thee the Spirit of the Lord shall carry thee whither I know not, and when I come and tell Ahab, and he cannot find thee, he shall slay me."

And Elijah said: "As the Lord of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, I will surely show myself unto him to-day.'

So Obadiah went and told Ahab, and Ahab came forth to meet Elijah, and said: "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" And Elijah answered, "I have not troubled Israel, but thou and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord and thou hast followed Baal." Then Elijah asked of the king that he would gather together upon Mount Carmel all Israel, and when this was done, Elijah came unto all the people, and said, "How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow Him: but if Baal, then follow him." And the people answered him not a word. Then said Elijah unto the people, "I, even I only, remain a prophet of the Lord; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men. Let them therefore give us two bullocks; and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under: and I will dress the other bullock, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under. And call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the Lord; and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God." And all the people answered and said, "It is well spoken." And Elijah said unto the prophets of Baal, "Choose you one bullock for yourselves, and dress it first; for ye are many; and call on the name of your gods, but put no fire under." And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying "O Baal, hear us!" But there was no voice, nor any sign from the heavens.

And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, "Cry aloud; for he is a god: either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is on a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked." And the prophets cried aloud, and cut themselves, after their manner, with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them. And when midday was passed, they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, but there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded.

Then Elijah said unto all the people, "Come near unto me." And all the people came near unto him; and he repaired the altar of the Lord that was broken down. And he took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of the Lord came, saying, "Israel shall be thy name;" and with the stones he built an altar in the name of the Lord, and he made a trench about the altar, as great as would contain two measures of seed. And he put the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid him on the wood, and said, "Fill four barrels with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice, and on the wood." And he said, "Do it the second time;" and they did it the second time. And he said, "Do it the third time;" and they did it the third time. And the water ran round about the altar; and it filled the trench also.

And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet drew near, and said, "Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that Thou art God in Israel, and that I am Thy servant, and that I have done all these things at Thy word. Hear me, O Lord, hear me; that this people may know that thou art the Lord God, and that Thou hast turned their heart back again." Then the fire of

the Lord fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, "The Lord, He is the God! the Lord, He is the God!" And Elijah said unto them, "Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape." And they took them; and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there. And Elijah said unto Ahab, "Get thee up, eat and drink; for there is a sound of abundance of rain." So Ahab went up to eat and to drink: and Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees, and said to his servant, "Go up now, look toward the sea." And he went up, and looked, and said, "There is nothing." And he said, "Go again seven times." And it came to pass that at the seventh time the servant said, "Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand." And Elijah said, "Go up, say unto Ahab, Prepare thy chariot, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not." And it came to pass in the meanwhile, that the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain And Ahab rode, and went to Jezreel. And the hand of the Lord was on Elijah; and he girded up his loins, and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel.

Now Jezebel was very wroth when she heard what had been done, and she declared that Elijah should die, so he fled for his life and came to Beersheba, where he left his servant. From this city the prophet went a day's journey into the wilderness and at last, overcome by weariness, he sat down under a juniper tree, and begged God to let him die.

But as he lay and slept, an angel touched him, and said, "Arise and eat." And he looked, and, behold, there was a

cake baked on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head: and he did eat and drink, and laid him down again. And the angel of the Lord came again the second time, and touched him, and said, "Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee." And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God. And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there; and, behold, the word of the Lord came to him, and He said unto him, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" And he answered, "I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant, thrown down Thine altars, and slain Thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away." And He said, "Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord." And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice. And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. And behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" And he said, "I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts; because the children of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant, thrown down Thine altars, and slain Thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away."

But God said: "Yet I have left Me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him."

Then the prophet was told to go to Damascus and to anoint Elisha, the son of Shaphat to be prophet after him. So Elijah departed and found Elisha ploughing with twelve yoke of oxen, and he cast his mantle upon him. Then Elisha left the oxen and ran after Elijah and said, "Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow thee." And this he did, and went after Elijah and ministered to him.

And Benhadad king of Syria, gathered all his host together, and with him were thirty-two other kings, and they sent messages to Ahab demanding tribute. And Ahab made answer to Benhadad and said, "My lord, O king, according to thy will be it done;" but when other more stringent demands were made, Ahab refused, whereupon Benhadad sent unto him and swore by his gods that he would humble Samaria into the dust. And Ahab replied, "Let not him that girdeth on his armour boast himself as one that putteth it off." Then the Syrians came and besieged the city of Samaria, but the Lord fought for Israel, and the Syrians were utterly defeated with great slaughter. Again they came against the Israelites in the valley of Aphek, for they said, "Their gods are gods of the hills," and they thought that if they fought in the plains they would surely overcome them. The Syrians were so numerous that they filled the country, while the Israelites were so small in comparison that they were like two little flocks of kids. But again the Syrians were defeated and great numbers were slain. The survivors fled to Aphek, where a wall fell on them and killed thousands of those that were left. After these repeated calamities, Benhadad promised to restore the cities he had taken, and Ahab spared his life, and made a covenant with him. But the Lord was angry with Ahab for this weakness, and sent to him a prophet who said, "Thus

saith the Lord, 'Because thou hast let go out of thy hand a man whom I appointed to utter destruction, therefore thy life shall go for his life, and thy people for his people.'"

Hard by the palace of Ahab king of Samaria, Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard, which the king coveted. And Ahab spake unto Naboth, saying, "Give me thy vineyard, that I may have it for a garden of herbs, because it is near unto my house: and I will give thee for it a better vineyard; or, if it seem good to thee, I will give thee the worth of it in money." And Naboth said to Ahab, "The Lord forbid that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee."

And Ahab came into his house heavy and displeased because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him; and he laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread.

But Jezebel his wife came to him, and said, "Why is thy spirit so sad, that thou eatest no bread?" And he said unto her, "Because I spake unto Naboth the Jezreelite, and said unto him, 'Give me thy vineyard for money; or else, if it please thee, I will give thee another vineyard for it:' and he answered, 'I will not give thee my vineyard.'" And Jezebel his wife said unto him, "Dost thou now govern the kingdom of Israel? Arise, and eat bread, and let thine heart be merry: I will give thee the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite." So she wrote letters in Ahab's name, and sealed them with his seal, and sent the letters unto the elders and to the nobles that were in his city dwelling with Naboth. And she wrote in the letters, saying, "Proclaim a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people; and set two men, sons of Belial, before him, to bear witness against him, saying, 'Thou didst blaspheme God and the king'; and then carry him out, and stone him, that he may die."

And the men of his city, even the elders and the nobles who were the inhabitants in his city, did as Jezebel had commanded them, and as it was written in the letters which she had sent unto them. They proclaimed a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people. And there came in two men, children of Belial, and sat before him: and the men of Belial witnessed against him, even against Naboth, in the presence of the people, saying, "Naboth did blaspheme God and the king." Then they carried him forth out of the city, and stoned him with stones, that he died. Then they sent to Jezebel, saying, "Naboth is stoned, and is dead." And it came to pass, when Jezebel heard that Naboth was stoned, and was dead, that she said to Ahab, "Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give thee for money: for Naboth is not alive, but is dead."

And it came to pass, when Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, that he rose up to go down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, to take possession of it. And the word of the Lord came to Elijah, saying, "Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, which is in Samaria: behold, he is in the vineyard of Naboth, whither he is gone down to possess it. And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, 'Thus saith the Lord, Hast thou killed, and also taken possession?' And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, 'Thus saith the Lord, In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine.'" And Ahab said unto Elijah, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" And he answered, "I have found thee: because thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the Lord. Behold, He will bring evil upon thee and will take away thy posterity."

Elijah told Ahab also that Jezebel should die because of

her sin, and that the whole house of Ahab should be utterly destroyed.

When Ahab heard these words, he rent his clothes and fasted and lay in sackcloth; and the Lord repented when He saw how Ahab had humbled himself, and said that the evil should not fall upon Ahab's house in his days, but in the days of his son.

War between Syria and Israel continued for three years, and in the third year the good king Jehoshaphat the son of Asa, who had succeeded his father as king of Judah, came to visit Ahab. Ahab asked him if he would be willing to go with him to try and get back their city of Ramoth-Gilead, which the Syrians had taken, and Jehoshaphat said that he would. Then Ahab asked advice of his prophets, who falsely told him that God would deliver the city into his hand. But when the prophet Micaiah came, he said, "I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills as sheep that have not a shepherd: and the Lord said, 'These have no master; let them return every man to his house in peace.'" Micaiah warned Ahab that God had put a lying spirit into the mouth of the other prophets, so that Ahab might be persuaded to go to Ramoth-Gilead. Then Ahab was very angry with the prophet, and commanded that he should be kept in prison until he returned in peace, but Micaiah said, "If thou return at all in peace, the Lord hath not spoken by me."

So the kings of Israel and Judah went together to do battle with the Syrians, Jehoshaphat wearing his robes, and Ahab being disguised. And the King of Syria commanded his men that they should fight neither with small nor great, save only with the King of Israel, so they pursued Jehoshaphat, thinking he was Ahab, until finding their mistake, they left him. His disguise did not save Ahab, for a certain man drew a bow at a venture and struck him

between the joints of his armour, wherefore he commanded the driver of his chariot to take him out of the host. And they supported him in his chariot till even, when he died. For twenty years had he reigned in Israel, and he was buried in Samaria, and Ahaziah his son reigned in his stead.

Now Ahaziah was an evil man, and served Baal, and having been sorely hurt by falling down through a lattice in an upper chamber, he sent messengers to Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron, to ask if he should recover. But God sent Elijah to meet his messengers, and to bid them say to Ahaziah, "Is it because there is not a God in Israel that ye go to enquire of Baal-zebub the god of Ekron? Thou shalt not come down from that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die." Now Ahaziah was surprised that the messengers returned so quickly, but they said that they had met a hairy man, girt with a girdle of leather about his loins, and they repeated his message. And Ahaziah said, "It is Elijah the Tishbite." Then he sent a captain with fifty men, who came to Elijah where he sat on the top of a hill, and said, "Thou man of God, the king hath said, 'Come down.'" And Elijah answered, "If I be a man of God, then let fire come down from heaven and consume thee and thy fifty." And there came down fire from heaven and consumed him and his fifty. A second time a captain of fifty with his men were sent, who said, "O man of God, thus hath the king said, 'Come down quickly.'" Elijah made the same answer and again fire came down and consumed the men. Again a third fifty were sent, but the captain fell down at Elijah's feet and begged that their lives might be spared, wherefore Elijah went down with them to the king, and gave him God's message. So Ahaziah died, having reigned only two years, and as he had no son, Jehoram, son of Ahab,

reigned in his stead. He began to reign in the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah.

And it came to pass, that the Lord purposed to take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind. And Elijah said unto Elisha as they went on the way from Gilgal, "Tarry here, I pray thee; for the Lord hath sent me to Bethel." And Elisha said unto him, "As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee." So they went down to Bethel. And the sons of the prophets that were at Bethel came forth to Elisha, and said unto him, "Knowest thou that the Lord will take away thy master from thy head to-day?" And he said, "Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace." And Elijah said unto him, "Elisha, tarry here, I pray thee; for the Lord hath sent me to Jericho." And he said, "As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee." So they journeyed together to Jericho. And the sons of the prophets that were at Jericho came to Elisha, and said unto him, "Knowest thou that the Lord will take away thy master from thy head to-day?" And he answered, "Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace." And Elijah said unto him, "Tarry, I pray thee, here; for the Lord hath sent me to Jordan." And he said, "As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee." And fifty men of the sons of the prophet went, and stood afar off to view: and they two went on and stood by Jordan. And Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground. And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, "Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee." And Elisha said, "I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me." And he said, "Thou hast asked a hard thing: nevertheless, if thou

see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so." And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. And Elisha saw it, and he cried, "My father, my father! the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof."

CHAPTER XIV

THE KINGS AND ELISHA

ELISHA took the mantle that fell from Elijah, and smote the waters, and said, "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" and the waters parted hither and thither, and Elisha went over. And when the sons of the prophets who had been spectators of the scene by the river Jordan saw him, they said, "The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha." And they came to meet him, and bowed themselves to the ground before him. And they said unto him, "Behold now, there be with thy servants fifty strong men; let them go, we pray thee, and seek thy master, lest peradventure the Spirit of the Lord hath taken him up, and cast him upon some mountain or into some valley." And he said, "Ye shall not send." And when they urged him till he was ashamed, he said, "Send." They sent therefore fifty men; and they sought three days, but found him not. And when they came again to him at Jericho, he said unto them, "Did I not say unto you, 'Go not?'" And the men of the city said unto Elisha, "Behold, the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord seeth: but the water is naught, and the ground barren." And he said, "Bring me a new cruse, and put salt therein." And they brought it to him. And he went forth unto the spring of the waters, and cast the salt in there, and said, "Thus saith the Lord, 'I have healed these waters; there

shall not be from thence any more death or barren land.' " So the waters were healed unto this day, according to the saying of Elisha which he spake.

Jehoram the son of Ahab now ruled over Israel. He did less evil than his father and mother, and put away the image of Baal; nevertheless his heart was not right with God, and he made Israel to sin. In his reign the King of Moab rebelled, and Jehoram, together with Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and the King of Edom, went out against him. And they were distressed for want of water for their hosts and for the cattle, but Elisha caused water to come by the way of Edom, and also promised them victory over the Moabites. The Moabites, seeing the sun shining on the water, thought it was blood, and that the kings had turned and slain one another. So they came to the camp of the Israelites to get the spoil, and the Israelites fell on them and put them to flight. And the kings beat down the cities of the Moabites and filled the good pieces of land with stones, and stopped all the wells of water and felled all the good trees.

Now a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets came unto Elisha, saying, "Thy servant my husband is dead; and thou knowest that thy servant did fear the Lord: and the creditor is come to take unto him my two sons to be bondmen." And Elisha said unto her, "What shall I do for thee? tell me, what hast thou in the house?" And she said, "Thine handmaid hath not anything in the house, save a pot of oil." Then he said, "Go, borrow thee vessels abroad of all thy neighbours, even empty vessels; borrow not a few. And when thou art come in, thou shalt shut the door upon thee and upon thy sons and shalt

pour out from the pot into all those vessels, and thou shalt set aside those which are full." So she went from him, and her sons brought vessels to her from the neighbours and they shut the door upon them and she poured out. And it came to pass, when the vessels were full, that she said unto one of her sons, "Bring me yet a vessel." And he said unto her, "There is not a vessel more." And the oil stayed. Then she came and told the man of God. And he said, "Go, sell the oil, and pay thy debt, and live thou and thy children of the rest."

And it fell on a day, that Elisha passed to Shunem, where was a great woman; and she constrained him to eat bread. And so it was that as oft as he passed by, he turned in thither to eat bread. And she said unto her husband, "Behold now, I perceive that this is an holy man of God, which passeth by us continually. Let us make a little chamber, I pray thee, on the wall; and let us set for him there a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick: and it shall be, when he cometh to us, that he shall turn in thither." So the next time that the prophet came thither he turned into the chamber and lay there. And he said to Gehazi his servant, "Call this Shunammite." And when he had called her, she stood before him. And he said unto Gehazi, "Say now unto her, 'Behold thou hast been careful for us with all this care; what is to be done for thee? wouldest thou be spoken for to the king, or to the captain of the host?'" She answered, "I dwell among mine own people." And he said "What then is to be done for her?" Gehazi answered, "Verily she hath no child, and her husband is old." And he said, "Call her." And when he had called her, she stood in the door. And Elisha said, "In due season thou shalt embrace a

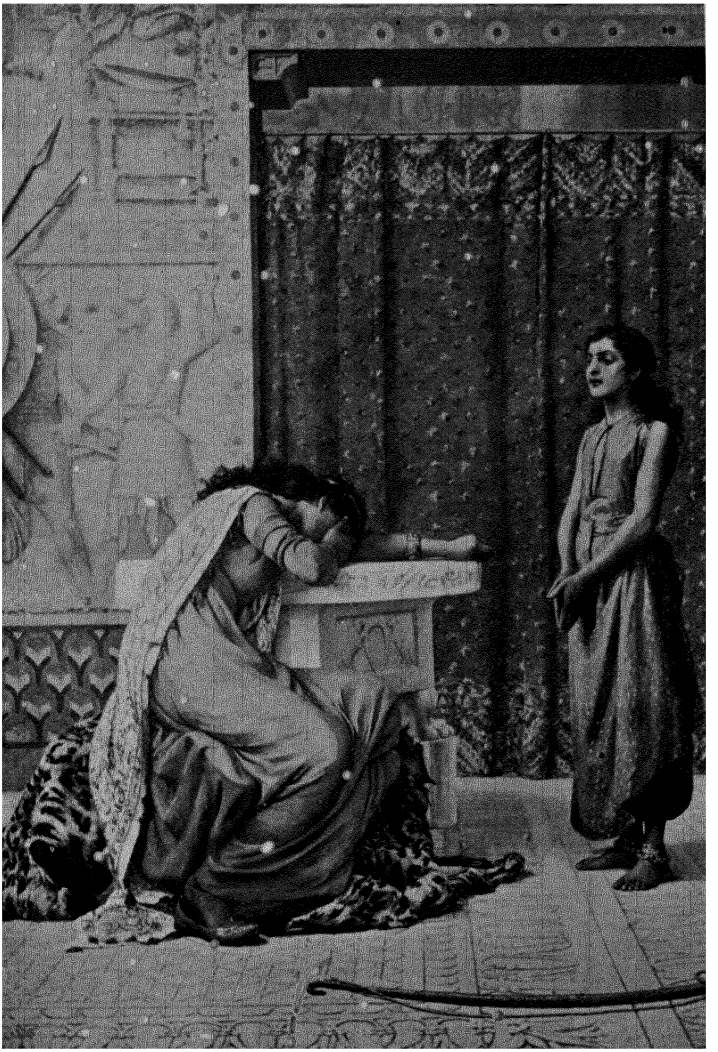
son." But she said, "Nay, my lord, thou man of God, do not lie unto thine handmaid."

And it was as Elisha had said unto her. Now when the child was grown, it fell on a day, that he went out to his father to the reapers. And he said unto his father, "My head my head!" And he said to a lad, "Carry him to his mother." When he had come to his mother, he sat on her knees till noon, and then died. And she went up, and laid him on the bed of the man of God, and shut the door upon him, and went out. And she called unto her husband, and said, "Send me, I pray thee, one of the young men, and one of the asses, that I may run to the man of God, and come again." And he said, "Wherefore wilt thou go to him to-day? it is neither new moon nor sabbath." And she said, "It shall be well." Then she saddled an ass, and said to her servant, "Drive, and go forward; slack not thy riding for me, except I bid thee." So she went, and came unto the man of God to Mount Carmel.

And it came to pass, when the man of God saw her afar off, that he said to Gehazi his servant, "Behold, yonder is that Shunammite: run now, I pray thee, to meet her; and say unto her, 'Is it well with thee? is it well with thy husband? is it well with the child?'" And she answered, "It is well." And when she came to the man of God to the hill, she caught him by the feet: but Gehazi came near to thrust her away. But the man of God said, "Let her alone; for her soul is vexed within her; and the Lord hath hid it from me, and hath not told me." Then she said, "Did I desire a son of my lord? did I not say, Do not deceive me?" Then he said to Gehazi, "Gird up thy loins, and take my staff in thine hand, and go thy way: if thou meet any man, salute him not; and if any salute thee, answer him not again: and lay my staff upon the face of the

child." But the mother of the child said, "As the Lord liveth and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee." And because the mother would not be denied, he arose, and followed her. And Gehazi passed on before them, and laid the staff upon the face of the child; but there was neither voice nor hearing: wherefore he returned again to his master, and told him, saying, "The child is not awaked." And when Elisha was come into the house, behold, the child lay dead upon his bed. He went in therefore, and shut the door upon them twain, and prayed unto the Lord. And he went up, and lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands; and he stretched himself upon the child, and the flesh of the child waxed warm. Then he returned, and walked in the house to and fro; and went up, and stretched himself upon him; and the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes. And he called Gehazi, and said, "Call this Shunammite." So he called her. And when she was come in unto him, he said, "Take up thy son." Then she went in, and fell at his feet, and bowed herself to the ground, and took up her son, and went out.

And Elisha came again to Gilgal: and there was a dearth in the land; and the sons of the prophets were sitting before him: and he said unto his servant, "Set on the great pot, and see the pottage for the sons of the prophets." And one went out into the field to gather herbs, and found a wild vine and gathered wild gourds thereof, and came and shred them into the pottage: for they knew them not. So they poured out for the men to eat: and it came to pass, as they were eating of the pottage, that they cried out, and said, "O thou man of God, there is death in the pot." And they could not eat thereof. But Elisha said, "Bring meal," and he cast it into the pot;



Naaman's Wife and the Captive Maid
Frank W. W. Topham, R.I.

and he said, "Pour out for the people, that they may eat." And they did eat and were not harmed.

And there came a man from Baal-shalisha, and brought the man of God bread of the first-fruits, twenty loaves of barley, and full ears of corn in the husk thereof. And he said, "Give unto the people, that they may eat." And his servant said, "What! should I set this before an hundred men?" He said again, "Give the people, that they may eat: for thus saith the Lord, 'They shall eat, and shall leave thereof.'" So he set it before them, and they did eat, and left thereof, according to the word of the Lord.

Now Naaman, captain of the host of the King of Syria, was a great man with his master, and honourable, because by him the Lord had given deliverance unto Syria; he was also a mighty man in valour, but he was a leper. And the Syrians had gone out by companies, and had brought away captive out of the land of Israel a little maid; and she waited on Naaman's wife. And she said unto her mistress, "Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy." And one went in, and told his lord, saying, "Thus and thus said the maid that is of the land of Israel." And the King of Syria said "Go to, go, and I will send a letter unto the King of Israel." And he departed, and took with him ten talents of silver, and six thousand pieces of gold, and ten changes of raiment. And he brought the letter to the King of Israel, saying, "Now when this letter is come unto thee, behold, I have therewith sent Naaman my servant to thee, that thou mayest recover him of his leprosy." And it came to pass, when the King of Israel had read the letter, that he rent his clothes, and said, "Am I God, to kill and make alive, that this man

doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy? Wherefore consider, I pray you, and see how he seeketh a quarrel against me." And it was so, when Elisha the man of God had heard that the King of Israel had rent his clothes, that he sent to the king, saying, "Wherefore hast thou rent thy clothes? let him come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel." So Naaman came with his horses and with his chariot, and stood at the door of the house of Elisha. And Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, "Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean. But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, "Behold, I thought, he will surely come out to me, and, stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and heal me. Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean?" So he turned and went away in a rage.

And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, "My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, 'Wash, and be clean,' shouldst thou not go and do it?" Then Naaman went down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean. And he returned to the man of God, he and all his company, and came, and stood before him; and he said, "Behold, now I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel: now therefore, I pray thee, take a blessing of thy servant." But he said, "As the Lord liveth, before whom I stand, I will receive none." And he urged him to take it; but he refused. And Naaman said,

"Shall there not then, I pray thee, be given to thy servant two mules' burden of earth? for thy servant will henceforth offer neither burnt offering nor sacrifice unto other gods, but unto the Lord. But in this thing the Lord pardon thy servant, that when my master goeth into the house of Rimmon to worship there, and he leaneth on my hand, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon; when I bow myself in the house of Rimmon, the Lord pardon thy servant in this thing."

And Elisha said unto him, "Go in peace." So he departed from him a little way. But Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said, "Behold, my master hath spared Naaman this Syrian, in not receiving at his hands that which he brought; but, as the Lord liveth, I will run after him, and take somewhat of him." So Gehazi followed after Naaman. And when Naaman saw him running, he lighted down from the chariot to meet him, and said, "Is all well?" And he said, "All is well. My master hath sent me, saying, 'Behold, even now there be come to me from Mount Ephraim two young men of the sons of the prophets: give them, I pray thee, a talent of silver, and two changes of garments.'" And Naaman said, "Be content, take two talents." And he urged him, and bound two talents of silver in two bags, with two changes of garments, and laid them upon two of his servants; and they bare them before him. And when he came to the tower, he took them from their hand, and bestowed them in the house: and he let the men go, and they departed. But he went in, and stood before his master. And Elisha said unto him, "Whence comest thou, Gehazi?" And he said, "Thy servant went no whither." And he said unto him, "Went not mine heart with thee, when the man turned again from his chariot to meet thee? Is it a time to receive money, and to receive garments, and olive-yards,

and vineyards, and sheep, and oxen, and menservants, and maidservants? The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed for ever." And he went out from his master's presence a leper as white as snow.

And the sons of the prophets said unto Elisha, "Behold now, the place where we dwell with thee is too strait for us. Let us go, we pray thee, unto Jordan, and take thence every man a beam, and let us make us a place there, where we may dwell. And he answered, "Go ye." And one said, "Be content, I pray thee, and go with thy servants." And he answered, "I will go." So he went with them. And when they came to Jordan, they cut down wood. But as one was felling a beam, the axe head fell into the water: and he cried, and said, "Alas, master! for it was borrowed." And the man of God said, "Where fell it?" And he shewed him the place. And he cut down a stick, and cast it in thither; and the iron rose to the surface. Therefore said he, "Take it up to thee." And he put out his hand, and took it.

The King of Syria warred again against Israel, but Elisha was able to tell the King of Israel of his secret plans and so save him from danger. And it came to pass that the King of Syria found out what Elisha had done, and he sent horses and chariots and a great company of men to Dothan to try and take him. Early in the morning Elisha's servant arose and saw the great host encompassing the city, and he said to Elisha, "Alas, my master! what shall we do?" But Elisha said, "Fear not, for they that be with us are more than they that be with them."

And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see." And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw; and, behold, the mountain was

full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha. And when the Syrians came down to him, Elisha prayed unto the Lord, and said, "Smite this people, I pray Thee, with blindness." And He smote them with blindness according to the word of Elisha. And Elisha said unto them, "This is not the way, neither is this the city; follow me, and I will bring you to the man whom ye seek." But he led them to Samaria. And it came to pass, when they were come into Samaria, that Elisha said, "Lord, open the eyes of these men, that they may see." And the Lord opened their eyes, and they saw; and, behold, they were in the midst of Samaria. And the King of Israel said unto Elisha eagerly, when he saw them, "My father, shall I smite them?" And he answered, "Thou shalt not smite them: wouldest thou smite those whom thou hast taken captive with thy sword and with thy bow? Set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink, and go to their master." And he prepared great provision for them; and when they had eaten and drunk, he sent them away.

And they went to their master who came with a great army and besieged Samaria, and there was a great famine because of the siege. The King of Israel, thinking that Elisha had brought all this evil upon them, sent to slay him, but Elisha said:

"Hear ye the word of the Lord: Thus saith the Lord, To-morrow about this time shall a measure of fine flour be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria." Then a lord on whose hand the king leaned answered the man of God and said, "Lo, if the Lord would make windows in heaven, might this thing be?" And Elisha said, "Behold thou shalt see it with thine eyes but shalt not eat thereof."

And there were four leprous men at the entering in

of the gate: and they said one to another, "Why sit we here until we die? If we enter into the city, then the famine is in the city, and we shall die there: and if we sit still here, we die also. Now therefore come and let us fall unto the hosts of the Syrians; if they save us alive we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall but die." And they rose up in the twilight to go unto the camp of the Syrians; and when they were come to the uttermost part of the camp of Syria, behold, there was no man there. For the Lord had made the host of the Syrians to hear a noise of chariots and a noise of horses, even the noise of a great host: and they said one to another, "Lo, the King of Israel hath hired against us the kings of the Hittites and the kings of the Egyptians, to come upon us." Wherefore they arose and fled in the twilight and left their tents, and their horses, and their asses, even the camp as it was, and fled for their lives.

And when these lepers came to the uttermost part of the camp, they went into one tent, and did eat and drink, and carried thence silver, and gold, and raiment, and went and hid it; and came again, and entered into another tent, and carried thence also, and went and hid it. Then they said one to another, "We do not well: this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace: if we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will come upon us: now therefore come, that we may go and tell the king's household." So they came and called unto the porters of the city: and they told them, saying, "We came to the camp of the Syrians, and, behold, there was no man there, neither voice of man, but horses tied, and asses tied, and the tents as they were when the host of Syrians lay before the gates." And the porters told it to the king's household within.

And the king arose in the night, and said unto his ser-

vants, " I will now shew you how the Syrians have sought to entrap us. They know that we be hungry; therefore are they gone out of the camp to hide themselves in the field, saying, 'When the men of Israel come out of the city, we shall catch them alive, and get into the city.' " And one of his servants answered and said, " Let some take, I pray thee, of the horses that remain, which are left in the city, and let us send and see whether it be as the king hath said." They took therefore two chariot horses; and the king sent, saying, " Go and see." And they went after the host of the Syrians, unto Jordan; and, lo, all the way was full of garments and vessels, which the Syrians had cast away in their haste: and the messengers returned, and told the king. Wherefore the people went out, and spoiled the tents of the Syrians, and it came to pass that a measure of fine flour was sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, according to the word of the Lord.

And the king appointed the lord on whose hand he leaned to have the charge of the gate: and because the press was exceeding great the people trode upon him in the gate, and he died, as the man of God had said, who spake when the king came down to him.

After these things Benhadad king of Syria lay on a bed of sickness, and he sent Hazael to Elisha to ask if he should recover, but Elisha replied that he should die, and, saying so, he wept. When Hazael asked him why he wept, he said it was because he foresaw the evils that Hazael would bring upon the children of Israel.

But Hazael said, " Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing? " And Elisha answered, " The Lord hath shewed me that thou shalt be king over Syria." Then Hazael went back to his master, and when Benhadad asked him what message he brought, he replied, " He told

me that thou shouldest surely recover." But the day afterwards Hazael took a thick cloth and dipped it in water and spread it on his master's face, so that he died, and Hazael reigned in his stead.

During this time Jehoram, son of Jehoshaphat, reigned in Judah. He was a wicked king, and on his death he was succeeded by his son Ahaziah, who also did evil in the sight of the Lord, for he had married a daughter of Ahab king of Israel, and followed in the steps of his father-in-law. Yet for David's sake the Lord did not destroy Judah.

Then Elisha called one of the children of the prophets and told him to take a box of oil in his hand and go to Ramoth-Gilead, and seek there Jehu the son of Nimshi and anoint him to be king over Israel. So the young man went to Ramoth-Gilead, to the captains of the host, and said, " I have an errand to thee, O captain." And Jehu said, " Unto which of all of us? " And the young man answered, " To thee, O captain." Then he went into the house, and poured the oil on Jehu's head, telling him that God had anointed him to be king over Israel, and that he was to smite the whole house of Ahab so that all his seed should perish.

When Jehu told the captains the message the young man had brought, they blew the trumpets and said, " Jehu is king." So Jehu conspired against Jehoram king of Israel, son of Ahab, who had been wounded in a battle with Hazael king of Syria, and had gone to Jezreel to be healed of his wounds. Ahaziah king of Judah had also gone to Jezreel to see Jehoram.

Then Jehu rode in a chariot to Jezreel, and the watchman on the tower of Jezreel saw a company coming, and told Jehoram, who sent a horseman to meet them and to ask, " Is it peace? " But Jehu said, " What

hast thou to do with peace? turn thee behind me." Then the watchman told Jehoram that the messenger was not returning, so Jehoram sent again a horseman to ask, "Is it peace?" And Jehu answered, "What hast thou to do with peace? turn thee behind me." The watchman again reported that the messenger was not returning, and added, "The driving is like the driving of Jehu the son of Nimshi; for he driveth furiously." Then Jehoram king of Israel and Ahaziah king of Judah went each in his chariot, and they met Jehu in the portion of Naboth. And Jehoram asked, "Is it peace, Jehu?" But Jehu replied that there could be no peace while the wicked Jezebel was alive.

Then Jehoram turned and fled, and cried out, "There is treachery, O Ahaziah." And Jehu drew a bow with his full strength and killed him, and his body was thrown into the field of Naboth, whom Ahab had caused to be put to death. Ahaziah also was slain, and his servants carried him in a chariot back to Jerusalem, and buried him in the tomb of his fathers.

When Jehu was come to Jezreel, Jezebel heard of it, and she painted her face and tired her head and looked out at a window. And as Jehu came in at the gate, she cried, "Had Zimri peace who slew his master?" Then Jehu said, "Who is on my side? Who?" And two attendants looked out of the window, and he commanded them to throw Jezebel down. Thus Jezebel died, having wrought in her lifetime much evil to Israel.

Then Jehu slew all that remained of Ahab's house in Jezreel and Samaria, and all his kinsfolk and his priests and all the prophets of Baal, and cast down the images of Baal, but he left the golden calves that had been set up in Dan and Bethel by Jeroboam, and he took no heed to

walk in the law of the Lord, the God of Israel. He reigned twenty-eight years over Israel in Samaria.

When he had reigned six years, Joash the son of Ahaziah, came to the throne in Jerusalem. He had been in hiding since the death of his father, for Athaliah, mother of Ahaziah, had caused all the heirs to the throne to be put to death, and Joash had only escaped because his aunt had hidden him. But at last Jehoiada the priest proclaimed him king, and the wicked Athaliah was slain. Joash was seven years old when he began to reign, and he followed the counsel of Jehoiada the priest, and did that which was right in the sight of the Lord. Among other good works he gave orders for the repair of the Temple. Jehoiada took a chest and bored a hole in the lid of it and set it beside the altar, and all the money that was brought into the house of the Lord was put into it, to pay the carpenters and builders and masons and hewers of stone, and to buy timber and hewed stone. But the vessels of gold and silver were not renewed out of this money.

Joash reigned forty years in Jerusalem, and his end was a sad one, for his servants made a conspiracy against him and slew him, and he was succeeded by Amaziah his son.

And now Elisha was fallen sick of the sickness whereof he died. And the King of Israel came down unto him, and wept over his face, and said, "O my father, my father! the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof!" And Elisha said unto him, "Take bow and arrows"; and he took unto him bow and arrows. And he said "Put thine hand upon the bow"; and the king put his hand upon it; and Elisha put his hands upon the king's hands. And he said, "Open the window eastward"; and the king opened it. Then Elisha

said, "Shoot"; and he shot. Then said the prophet, "The arrow of the Lord's deliverance and the arrow of the deliverance from Syria; for thou shalt smite the Syrians in Aphek, till thou have consumed them," Again Elisha said, "Take the arrows"; and the king took them. And he said unto the King of Israel, "Smite upon the ground"; and the king smote thrice, and stayed. And the man of God was wroth with him, and said, "Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times; then hadst thou smitten Syria till thou hadst consumed it: whereas now thou shalt smite Syria but thrice." And Elisha died, and they buried him.

CHAPTER XV

FROM JONAH TO THE CAPTIVITY

DURING the reign of King Amaziah the word of the Lord came unto Jonah, saying: "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city of the Assyrians, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before Me."

But Jonah's heart was unwilling, and he did not submit himself to the will of God, but fled to Joppa, whence he took ship for Tarshish. Then the Lord sent out a great wind, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken. And the sailors were sore afraid and called upon their gods, and tried to lighten the ship by casting forth the goods that were on board. Amidst all this commotion Jonah lay asleep in the ship, and the shipmaster went to him and said, "What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not." Then they cast lots so that they might see for whose sake the evil had come upon them, and the lot fell upon Jonah, wherefore they asked whence he had come and what his business was. When they heard that he was an Hebrew and had fled from the presence of the Lord God of Israel, they asked, "What shall we do with thee that the sea may be calm unto us?" And Jonah said, "Take me up and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you: for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you." Nevertheless the sailors tried hard to row to land,

but could not, for the sea grew more and more tempestuous. So they cried to the Lord and said, "We beseech Thee, O Lord, we beseech Thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood: for Thou, O Lord, hast done as it pleased Thee." So they took up Jonah and cast him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging, wherefore the sailors feared the Lord exceedingly and they offered a sacrifice.

Now God had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah, and he was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights, and he cried unto the Lord out of the fish, and the Lord heard Jonah's prayer and spoke to the fish, and it cast him up upon the dry land.

Then did Jonah sing a song of thanksgiving for his deliverance:

> I was cast out of Thy sight; yet did I look again toward Thy holy temple.
> The waters compassed me about, even to the soul: the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head.
> I went down to the bottom of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever: yet didst Thou bring up my life from corruption, O Lord my God.
> When my soul fainted within me I remembered the Lord: and my prayer came in unto Thee, into Thine holy temple.
> They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy.
> But I will sacrifice unto Thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord.

Again, a second time, God commanded Jonah to go and preach against Nineveh, and this time he obeyed and went and cried against the city, "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown!"

Then the King of Nineveh proclaimed a great fast, and ordered the people to put on sackcloth, and turn from their evil ways, "For," said he, "who can tell if God will not repent, and turn away from His fierce anger, that we perish not?"

And, indeed, when God saw that they had turned from their evil ways, He repented of the evil that He had said He would do to them, and did it not.

But Jonah was cast down in his soul because God had spared Nineveh after that he had cried against the city, and he reproached God and said:

"Was not this my saying, when I was yet in my own country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that Thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and that Thou mightest repent Thee of the evil. O Lord, take, I beseech Thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live."

And God said to him, "Doest thou well to be angry?" Then Jonah went out of the city, and sat on the east side, and made a booth for himself and sat under the shadow, till he might see what would become of the city. And God made a gourd to spring up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, and Jonah was exceeding glad because of the gourd.

But in the morning God sent a worm which caused the gourd to wither; and when the sun rose, it beat on Jonah's head, so that he fainted and said, "It is better for me to die than to live."

And God said to Jonah, "Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd?" And Jonah answered, "I do well to be angry, even unto death."

Then saith the Lord, "Thou hast had pity on the gourd,

for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night. And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?"

Many kings came and went in Judah and Israel, and they caused the people to go after strange gods, so that the countenance of the Lord was turned from them and He gave them as a prey unto their enemies. One of these kings was Ahaz, who sat upon the throne of Judah. He took even the silver and gold of the house of the Lord and the treasures of the king's house, and gave them to Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria, in order that he might save him out of the hands of Rezin king of Syria. Tiglath-Pileser went to Damascus and took it and slew Rezin, and when Ahaz went to Damascus to meet Tiglath-Pileser, he saw there an altar, of which he sent a pattern to Urijah the priest, and Urijah built one like it on which the offerings were made. The brazen altar of the house of the Lord was used by Ahaz for himself. King Ahaz also took down the sea from the oxen that were underneath it in the house of the Lord, and put upon it a pavement of stones.

In like manner the Israelites sinned greatly against the Lord, so that He rejected all the seed of Israel, and afflicted them, and delivered them into the hand of the spoilers, until He had cast them out of His sight. For He rent Israel from the house of David, and Israel was carried away out of their own land to Assyria unto this day. None was left but the tribe of Judah only. And the King of Assyria brought people from Babylon and from other countries, and put

them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel.

But there arose a king in Judah who did that which was right in the sight of the Lord. His name was Hezekiah, and he broke down the images that his fathers had set up. In his reign Sennacherib king of Assyria came against the fenced cities of Judah, and took them. And Hezekiah paid him three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold, all the silver that was found in the house of the Lord. But still the Assyrians came back, and their king sent Rabshakeh with a great host against Jerusalem, and he derided the people of Judah, and provoked them with intent to stir them to revolt. And Rabshakeh stood and cried with a loud voice in the tongue of the men of Judah, saying:

"Hear the word of the great king, the King of Assyria: Thus saith the king, 'Let not Hezekiah deceive you; for he shall not be able to deliver you out of my hand. Neither let Hezekiah make you trust in the Lord, saying, 'The Lord will surely deliver us, and this city shall not be delivered into the hand of the King of Assyria.' Hearken not to Hezekiah: for thus saith the King of Assyria, 'Make an agreement with me by a present, and come out to me, and then eat ye every man of his own vine, and every one of his fig tree, and drink ye every one the waters of his cistern; until I come and take you away to a land like your own land; a land of corn and wine, a land of bread and vineyards, a land of olive oil and of honey, that ye may live, and not die.' Hearken not unto Hezekiah, when he persuadeth you, saying, 'The Lord will deliver us.' Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered at all out of the hand of the King of Assyria? Where are the gods of Hamath, and of Arpad? where are the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena and Ivah? have

they delivered Samaria out of mine hand? Who are they among all the gods of the countries, that have delivered this country out of mine hand, that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem out of mine hand?' "

But the people held their peace, for the king's commandment was, "Answer him not."

When Hezekiah heard the words of Rabshakeh, he covered himself with sackcloth and went into the house of the Lord; and he sent to Isaiah the prophet, and begged that he would pray to God for them, and Isaiah told him not to fear, for that God would cause the Assyrians to fall by the sword.

Then again Rabshakeh sent messengers to Hezekiah with a letter, deriding him for his trust in God. And Hezekiah went into the house of the Lord and spread the letter before the Lord.

And Hezekiah prayed before the Lord, and said, "O Lord God of Israel, which dwellest between the cherubim, Thou art the God, even Thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; Thou hast made heaven and earth. Lord, bow down Thine ear, and hear; open, Lord, Thine eyes, and see; and hear the words of Sennacherib, which hath sent him to reproach the living God. Of a truth, Lord, the kings of Assyria have destroyed the nations and their lands, and have cast their gods into the fire; for they were no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone; therefore they have destroyed them. Now therefore, O Lord our God, I beseech Thee, save Thou us out of his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that Thou art the Lord God, even Thou only." Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent to Hezekiah, saying, "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, 'That which thou hast prayed to me against Sennacherib king of Assyria I have heard.' This is the word that the Lord

hath spoken concerning him: 'The virgin, the daughter of Zion, hath despised thee, and laughed thee to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee. Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed? and against whom hast thou exalted thy voice, and lifted up thine eyes on high? even against the Holy One of Israel.

"'By thy messengers thou hast reproached the Lord, and hast said, 'With the multitude of my chariots I am come up to the height of the mountains, to the sides of Lebanon, and will cut down the tall cedar trees thereof, and the choice fir trees thereof: and I will enter into the lodgings of His borders, and into the forest of His Carmel. I have digged and drunk strange waters, and with the sole of my feet have I dried up all the rivers of besieged places.

"'Hast thou not heard how I have made them long ago, and formed them of ancient times? Should I now bring it to pass, that thou shouldest make my fenced cities into ruinous heaps? I know thy abode, and thy going out, and thy coming in, and thy rage against Me. Because thy rage against Me and thy tumult is come up into Mine ears, therefore I will put My hook in thy nose, and My bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest.

"'Behold, the King of Assyria shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shield, nor cast a bank against it. By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and shall not come into this city,' saith the Lord. 'For I will defend this city, to save it, for Mine own sake, and for My servant David's sake.'"

That night the angel of the Lord smote the camp of the Assyrians, and when the soldiers arose at daybreak there

was a cry of great mourning, for they found that all the mighty men of valour, and the leaders and captains lay dead within their tents. Thus the Lord confounded Sennacherib, and he returned to Nineveh with shame of face, and was slain by his sons while he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god.

The Assyrian came down like a wolf on the fold,
And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold;
And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea,
When the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee.

Like the leaves of the forest when summer is green,
That host, with their banners, at sunset were seen:
Like the leaves of the forest when autumn hath blown,
That host on the morrow lay withered and strown.

For the Angel of Death spread his wings on the blast,
And breathed in the face of the foe as he passed;
And the eyes of the sleepers waxed deadly and chill,
And their hearts but once heaved, and for ever grew still.

And there lay the steed with his nostril all wide,
But through it there rolled not the breath of his pride:
And the foam of his gasping lay white on the turf,
And cold as the spray of the rock-beating surf.

And there lay the rider distorted and pale,
With the dew on his brow, and the rust on his mail;
And the tents were all silent, the banners alone,
The lances uplifted, the trumpets unblown.

And the widows of Ashur are loud in their wail,
And the idols are broke in the temple of Baal;
And the might of the Gentile, unsmote by the sword,
Hath melted like snow in the glance of the Lord.

Then Hezekiah fell sick, and Isaiah told him that he must set his house in order, for that he must die.

* Lord Byron. *The Destruction of Sennacherib.*

But Hezekiah prayed to the Lord and besought God to remember how he had walked before Him in truth and with a perfect heart, wherefore God told Isaiah to go again to Hezekiah and tell him that he should be healed, that he should still live for fifteen years, and that God would deliver him out of the hand of the King of Assyria.

Then Hezekiah asked for a sign that all this should come to pass, and Isaiah said, "This sign shalt thou have of the Lord, that the Lord will do the thing that He hath spoken: shall the shadow go forward ten degrees, or go back ten degrees?" And Hezekiah answered, "It is a light thing for the shadow to go down ten degrees: nay, but let the shadow return backward ten degrees." So Isaiah cried unto the Lord, and he brought the shadow on the dial ten degrees backward.

Then the good King Hezekiah gave thanks unto the Lord, saying:—

I said in the cutting off of my days, I shall go to the gates of the grave: I am deprived of the residue of my years.

I said, I shall not see the Lord, even the Lord, in the land of the living: I shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world.

Mine age is departed, and is removed from me as a shepherd's tent: I have cut off like a weaver my life; He will cut me off with pining sickness: from day even to night wilt Thou make an end of me.

I reckoned till morning, that, as a lion, so will He break all my bones: from day even to night wilt Thou make an end of me.

Like a crane or a swallow, so did I chatter; I did mourn as a dove: mine eyes fail with looking upward: O Lord I am oppressed; undertake for me.

What shall I say? He hath both spoken unto me, and Himself hath done it; I shall go softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul.

O Lord, by these things men live and in all these things is the life of my spirit: so wilt Thou recover me and make me to live.

Behold, for peace I had great bitterness; but Thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption: for Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back.

For the grave cannot praise Thee, death cannot celebrate Thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for Thy truth

The living, the living, he shall praise Thee, as I do this day: the father to the children shall make known Thy truth.

The Lord was ready to save me: therefore we will sing my songs to the stringed instruments all the days of our life in the house of the Lord.

The King of Babylon at this time sent letters to Hezekiah and a present, for he had heard that he was sick. And Hezekiah shewed the messengers all his precious things, the silver and the gold and the spices, and all that was in his house and in his dominion. Then Isaiah the prophet came to Hezekiah and asked who the men were, and what they had seen. Hezekiah told him, and Isaiah said that the day would come when all that was in his house, which his forefathers had stored up, and all the people of his house, should be carried away by the King of Babylon.

In due time the years which God had granted to Hezekiah came to an end, and he was succeeded by his son Manasseh, who built up the high places which his father had destroyed, and set up altars to Baal, and worshipped all the host of heaven. He built altars in the very house of God itself at Jerusalem, and set up in it a graven image, and wrought much wickedness in the sight of the Lord.

Because of these things the Lord said that He would bring great evil on Jerusalem, and would wipe Jerusalem

as a man wipeth a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down. After Manasseh reigned Amon, who was slain by his servants, and after him came Josiah, who was only eight years old when he began to reign. His reign was good, and he did much to restore the Temple.

In his reign Hilkiah the high priest found in the house of the Lord the book of the Law, and gave it to Shaphan the scribe, who shewed it to Josiah, saying, "Hilkiah the priest hath delivered me a book." Shaphan read the book before the king, and when the king heard the words of the book he rent his clothes, and sent to enquire of the Lord, for he said, "Great is the wrath of the Lord that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book." Then they went to Huldah, a prophetess, who lived at Jerusalem, and communed with her.

And she said unto them, "Tell the man that sent you to me, thus saith the Lord, 'Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the words of the book which the King of Judah hath read. Because they have forsaken Me, and have burnt incense unto other gods, that they might provoke Me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore My wrath shall be kindled against this place, and shall not be quenched.' But to the king of Judah, which sent you to enquire of the Lord, thus shall ye say to him, 'Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, as touching the words which thou hast heard; Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the Lord, when thou heardest what I spake against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and hast rent thy clothes, and wept before Me; I have also heard thee. Behold therefore, I will

gather thee unto thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered into thy grave in peace; and thine eyes shall not see all the evil which I will bring upon this place.'" And they brought the king word again.

Then the king assembled all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem, and went up to the house of the Lord with all the men of Judah and the priests and prophets and all the people, small and great, and he read to them the words of the Book that had been found. And he stood by a pillar and made a covenant with the people that they should keep the commandments and testimonies of the Lord with all their heart and soul. Then he commanded the priests to bring out from the house of the Lord all the vessels that were made for Baal, and they were burned outside Jerusalem in the fields of Kedron. He also put down the idolatrous priests that had burned incense to Baal, and to the sun and moon and planets, and brake the images in pieces and cut down the groves.

Also the altar that was at Bethel and the high place that Jeroboam had made he broke down, and burnt and stamped them to powder. And the king commanded the people to keep the Passover.

From the days of the judges, in all the days of the kings of Israel and Judah, never had such a Passover been held as that ordered by King Josiah. And like unto him was there no king before him, that turned to the Lord with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him.

Josiah was slain at Megiddo by Pharaoh-nechoh, king of Egypt. Nechoh was warring against the king of Assyria, and Josiah also went out against him. Nechoh besought him to desist from meddling in the matter, but Josiah went

disguised to the battle and was slain. And Jeremiah the prophet lamented for Josiah, as did also the men and women of Jerusalem. Josiah was buried in Jerusalem, and the people made Jehoahaz his son king, but he only reigned three months, for Pharaoh-nechoh put him in prison, and exacted from the people of Judah a tribute of one hundred talents of silver, and a talent of gold. Jehoahaz died in Egypt, and Pharaoh-nechoh made Eliakim, son of Josiah, king over Judah, and changed his name to Jehoiakim. This Jehoiakim taxed the land in order to give silver and gold to Pharaoh. He also submitted to the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, for three years, after which he turned and rebelled against him.

Then the Lord sent bands of the Chaldees and Syrians, and Moabites and Ammonites against Judah to destroy it, as He had destroyed Israel, because of the wickedness of its kings and people.

Jehoiakim was followed by his son Jehoiachin, who was not troubled by the Egyptians, for the King of Babylon had shaken their empire and taken away their dominion over surrounding nations.

But in the eighth year of the reign of Jehoiachin, the conqueror of Egypt came up once again and besieged Jerusalem, and because the king had no power whereby he could withstand the might of Nebuchadnezzar, he went out unto him with his household and with seven thousand men of might and craftsmen and smiths, and all that were strong and apt for war. Nebuchadnezzar carried them all to Babylon, together with nearly all the treasures of the Lord's house and of the king's house, first having cut in pieces all the vessels of gold which Solomon had made in the Temple. Ten thousand captives carried he away, and none remained in the land save the poorest sort of the

people, and over these Nebuchadnezzar made Zedekiah, the brother of Jehoiachin, to be king.

In the ninth year of his reign Zedekiah rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar, who came again against Jerusalem, and built forts round about it, and besieged it until the eleventh year of King Zedekiah. And in the fourth month the famine prevailed in the city, and because there was no food the men of war fled in the night, taking the king with them.

And the army of the Chaldees pursued after the king unto the plains of Jericho, where a great battle was fought which resulted in the utter rout of the men of Judah and the capture of Zedekiah, who was brought to the king of Babylon at Riblah. Zedekiah's sons were slain before his eyes; his own eyes were put out, and he was bound with fetters of brass and carried to Babylon.

Nebuchadnezzar burnt the house of the Lord and the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem, and he carried away what treasures remained in the temple; and the army of the Chaldees broke down the walls of Jerusalem round about. Those who were left in the city were carried away to Babylon, where they were servants to the king and his sons till the reign of the kingdom of Persia. But the captain of the guard left the poor of the land to be vine-dressers and husbandmen, and he made Gedaliah to be ruler over them.

By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down; yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion.
We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.
For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion.
How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?
If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning.

If I do not remember Thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.

Remember, O Lord, the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem; who said, Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation thereof.

O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed; happy shall be he that rewardeth Thee as Thou hast served us.

Happy shall be he that taketh and dasheth Thy little ones against the stones.—Ps. cxxxvii.

Now when all the captains of the bands which remained at large and the Jews that were scattered abroad learned that Gedaliah had been made governor, they came to him, and amongst them was Ishmael, who came with intent to slay him.

And Gedaliah advised these men to serve the Chaldeans, and promised that if they did this it should be well with them.

Then Johanan, one of the captains, came secretly to Gedaliah, saying, "Let me slay Ishmael, for the King of the Ammonites hath sent him to slay thee, and wherefore should all the Jews which are gathered unto thee be scattered, and the remnant in Judah perish?"

But Gedaliah paid no heed to these words, and so it came to pass that Ishmael came unto him, and as they did eat together he arose, with ten men that were with him, and smote the governor with the sword, so that he died. And they slew also the Jews that were with Gedaliah, and the Chaldees.

And all the people, both small and great, arose and fled into Egypt, for they feared the wrath of the Chaldees very exceedingly.

In the thirty-seventh year of the captivity of Jehoiachin,

Evil-Merodach, the King of Babylon, released him from prison, and was kind to him, giving him an allowance every day all the days of his life, setting him above the kings that were with him in Babylon.

The prophet Jeremiah had warned the Jews of the evil which would come upon them, but they would not heed, and now amidst the miseries of slavery and famine which was to be their lot for many weary years, he expressed the bitterness of soul which oppressed the exiles. His lamentation concludes with these penitent appeals to the mercy of God:

Remember, O Lord, what is come upon us: consider, and behold our reproach.
Our inheritance is turned to strangers, our houses to aliens.
We are orphans and fatherless, our mothers are as widows.
We have drunken our water from money; our wood is sold unto us.
Our necks are under persecution: we labour, and have no rest.
We have given the hand to the Egyptians, and to the Assyrians, to be satisfied with bread.
Our fathers have sinned, and are not; and we have borne their iniquities.
Servants have ruled over us: there is none that doth deliver us out of their hand.
We gat our bread with the peril of our lives, because of the sword of the wilderness.
Our skin was black like an oven, because of the terrible famine.
Princes are hanged up by their hand: the faces of elders were not honoured.
They took the young men to grind, and the children fell under the wood.
The elders have ceased from the gate, the young men from their musick.

The joy of our heart is ceased; our dance is turned into mourning.
The crown is fallen from our head: woe unto us, that we have sinned!
For this our heart is faint: for these things our eyes are dim.

CHAPTER XVI

THE STORY OF DANIEL THE PROPHET

AMONGST the captives which were carried away into Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar in the reign of Jehoiachin king of Judah, were certain young men who were well-favoured, skilful in wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and who were chosen to stand in the king's palace. Among these were Daniel, or Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. The king appointed to these young men, a daily portion of meat and wine, so that they might be well-nourished and pleasing to look upon when they stood before him. But Daniel did not wish to receive the meat and wine at the hands of the king, and begged of the steward who was set over them that they might be excused from taking it. But the prince who looked after the young men of the king's palace, with whom God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love, told Daniel that if the king should see their countenances less well-favoured than the countenances of the other young men he would hold him responsible, and his life would be in danger.

Then Daniel said, " Prove thy servants, I beseeech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink. Then let our countenances be looked upon before

thee, and the countenance of the children that eat of the portion of the king's meat: and as thou seest, deal with thy servants." Daniel was granted his request, and at the end of the ten days the countenances of Daniel and of his companions were fairer and fatter than those of the young men who had eaten of the king's meat Therefore their portion of meat and wine was withdrawn, and they were allowed to eat pulse.

God gave to these four great knowledge and wisdom, and to Daniel in particular He gave great skill to interpret dreams. In all matters of wisdom and understanding they were found to be ten times better than the king's magicians and astrologers.

Now in the second year of his reign, Nebuchadnezzar dreamed a dream, and his spirit was troubled. So he called all his wise men, and they said that if he would tell them the dream they would explain its meaning. But the king answered that the dream had gone from him, and that if they could not shew what the dream was and explain it, he would have them put to death. If, however, they told the dream, he would give them riches and honour.

Then the wise men answered that such a thing was impossible, wherefore the king was very angry, and ordered that they should all be slain. So Arioch, the captain of the king's guard, went out to slay the wise men, and Daniel and his three friends amongst them. But Daniel went to the king and begged him to give him time, for that he would explain the dream.

So he and his friends prayed to God, and God revealed the secret to Daniel in a vision of the night. Then Daniel praised and thanked God and said:

"Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are His: and He changeth the times and

the seasons: He removeth kings; and setteth up kings: He giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding. He revealeth the deep and secret things: He knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with Him. I thank Thee, and praise Thee, O Thou God of my fathers, who hast given me wisdom and might, and hast made known unto me now what we desired of Thee: for Thou hast now made known unto us the king's matter."

So Daniel went before the king, and when Nebuchadnezzar asked him if he could make known the dream, he answered that though all the magicians and astrologers could not shew it to the king, yet there was a God in heaven who could reveal secrets, "But," said Daniel, "this secret is not revealed to me for any wisdom that I have beyond other men."

Then Daniel told the king that in his dream he had seen an image great and bright, and terrible in form. His head was of gold, his breast and arms were of silver, the lower part of his body and his thighs were of brass, his legs were of iron, and his feet partly of iron and partly of clay. Then came a stone, which was in no one's hands, and smote the image on his feet and broke them in pieces, and the image fell and was broken in pieces and became like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors, and the wind carried it away. But the stone became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.

Daniel then explained what the dream meant. The head of gold was Nebuchadnezzar, the great king, to whom God had given a kingdom and power, and strength and glory. The silver represented another kingdom, inferior to his which should come after him. Then would follow a third kingdom, of brass, and a fourth of iron, which breaketh in

pieces and subdueth all things. The feet and toes, partly of iron and partly of potter's clay, represented a kingdom divided, partly strong, and partly feeble. And as iron cannot mix with clay, so the two parts of the kingdom would not cleave to each other. The great stone meant that the God of Heaven would set up a kingdom which should never be destroyed, that this kingdom would break in pieces and consume all the other kingdoms, and itself should stand for ever.

Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face and worshipped Daniel, and said, "Your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets."

And the king made Daniel great in the land. He gave him many gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon. He also listened to Daniel's request, and gave Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego authority over the affairs of the province of Babylon.

Some time after these events Nebuchadnezzar set up a great image of gold, and gathered all the people together to worship it. And a herald cried aloud:

"To you it is commanded, O people, nations and languages, that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up; and whoso falleth not down and worshippeth shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace."

Then all the people fell down and worshipped, as was commanded. But certain of the Chaldeans came to the king and told him that the Jews whom he had put over the affairs of the province of Babylon—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—had not worshipped the golden image,

and that they served other gods than the gods of Nebuchadnezzar Wherefore the king in rage commanded the men to be brought, and he said to them:

" Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up? Now if ye be ready that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made, well: but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands? " Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, answered and said to the king, " O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up."

At this fearless reply the fury of the king was so great that he commanded that the furnace should be heated seven times more than usual, and that the most mighty men of his army should bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and cast them into the furnace. So they were bound, and were thrown, dressed in all their garments, into the furnace, and the flames of the fire were so fierce that the men who threw them in were slain.

Then Nebuchadnezzar rose up in haste and cried: " Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?" And they answered, " True, O king."

And he said, " Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the son of God."

And the king went to the door of the furnace and called, saying, " Ye servants of the most high God, come forth, and come hither." So the three men came forth, and all the people saw that the fire had had no power over their bodies, neither was their hair singed nor were their coats changed, nor was there any smell of fire upon them. Then Nebuchadnezzar blessed God who had delivered his servants that trusted in Him, and he made a decree that anyone who spoke against God should be put to death, " because there is no other god that can deliver after this sort." He also promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the province of Babylon.

King Nebuchadnezzar was to know more of the power and might of the God of his servant Daniel, and was to receive sore chastening at the hand of the Lord. We read that he was brought to acknowledge the justice of the punishment that fell upon him in this wise: Nebuchadnezzar was at rest in his house, and all things prospered exceedingly, when one night he was visited by a dream that made him afraid and perplexed.

He directed, therefore, that his wise men should be brought before him to declare the meaning of the vision. One and all, however, the astrologers, the Chaldeans, the soothsayers, failed to interpret the strange things that had appeared to the king upon his bed.

But at length Daniel came in, and Nebuchadnezzar addressed him, saying:

" O Belteshazzar, master of the magicians, because I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in thee, and no secret troubleth thee, tell me the visions of my dream that I have seen, and the interpretation thereof. Thus were the visions of mine head in my bed; I saw, and behold a tree in the midst of the earth, and the height thereof was great.

The tree grew, and was strong; and the height thereof reached unto heaven, and the sight thereof to the end of all the earth: the leaves thereof were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all: the beasts of the field had shadow under it, and the fowls of the heaven dwelt in the boughs thereof, and all flesh was fed of it. I saw in the vision of my head upon my bed, and, behold, a watcher and an holy one came down from heaven; He cried aloud, and said thus, 'Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches, shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit: let the beasts get away from under it, and the fowls from his branches: Nevertheless leave the stump of his roots in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts in the grass of the earth: Let his heart be changed from man's, and let a beast's heart be given unto him; and let seven times pass over him. This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones: to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men.'

This dream I, King Nebuchadnezzar, have seen. Now thou, O Belteshazzar, declare the interpretation thereof, forasmuch as all the wise men of my kingdom are not able to make known unto me the interpretation: but thou art able; for the spirit of the holy gods is in thee."

Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was perplexed for one hour, and his thoughts troubled him. And the king spake, and said, "Belteshazzar, let not the dream, nor the interpretation thereof, trouble thee." Wherefore Belteshazzar answered and said, "My lord, the dream be to them that hate thee, and the interpretation thereof to thine

enemies. The tree that thou sawest, which grew, and was strong, whose height reached unto the heaven, and the sight thereof to all the earth; whose leaves were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all; under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and upon whose branches the fowls of the heaven had their habitation. It is thou, O king, that art grown and become strong: for thy greatness is grown, and reacheth unto heaven, and thy dominion to the end of the earth. And whereas the king saw a watcher and an holy one coming down from heaven, and saying, 'Hew the tree down, and destroy it; yet leave the stump of the roots thereof in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts of the field, till seven times pass over him.' This is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the Most High, which is come upon my lord the king: That they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee, till thou know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will.

"And whereas they commanded to leave the stump of the tree roots; this is a sign that thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee, after that thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule. Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by showing mercy to the poor; if haply it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity."

All this came upon the king Nebuchadnezzar as Daniel had foretold. At the end of twelve months as he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon he spake, and said,

"Is not this great Babylon, that I have built by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" While the word was yet in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, "O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; Thy kingdom is departed from thee: and they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will."

The same hour was the judgement fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar. His reason departed from him, and he was driven from the habitations of men to dwell with the wild creatures of field and wood. He did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven. Long he dwelt thus, until his hairs were grown like eagle's feathers, and his nails like birds' claws.

At length the days appointed for this terrible lesson drew to an end, and the poor outcast regained his reason. With it came the knowledge of the foolishness of his vanity in the days of his glory, and after he had been restored to his throne he spake these words of humility:

"And at the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the Most High, and I praised and honoured Him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, 'What doest Thou?' At the same time my reason returned unto me; and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honour

and brightness returned unto me; and my counsellors and my lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me.

"Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and His ways judgement: and those that walk in pride He is able to abase."

After Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, his son, sat upon the throne of Babylon. His magnificence was very great, and once he made a great feast for a thousand of his lords. The king and his guests drank wine out of the golden vessels of the Temple of God, which had been carried away from Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, and while they were all drinking and praising gods of gold and silver and iron and brass and wood and stone, there came forth the fingers of a man's hand and wrote on the plaster of the wall. Then the king was afraid and troubled, and he called all the wise men and told them that whoever should read the writing and tell its meaning should be clothed in scarlet, and have a chain of gold about his neck, and be the third ruler in the kingdom. But no one could read the writing. Then the queen remembered Daniel and his wisdom, and she said to Belshazzar, "There is a man in thy kingdom in whom is the spirit of the holy gods," and she told how Daniel had knowledge and understanding, and could read dreams. So Daniel was called before the king, and the matter was explained to him, the king also telling him of the great rewards offered to anyone who could read the writing.

Then Daniel answered and said before the king, "Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another;

yet will I read the writing unto the king, and make known to him the interpretation. O thou king, the most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honour: and for the majesty that He gave him, all people, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him. Whom he would he slew; and whom he would he kept alive; and whom he would he set up; and whom he would he put down. But when his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and his glory was taken from him. And he was driven from the sons of men; and his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild asses. He fed upon grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven; till he knew that the most high God ruled in the kingdom of men, and that He appointeth over it whomsoever He will. And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this: but hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of His house before thee, and thou, and thy lords, and thy wives, have drunk wine in them; and thou hast praised the gods of silver, and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know: and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified. Therefore was the part of the hand sent from Him; and this writing was written, *Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin.* The interpretation thereof is: 'God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.' "

When Daniel had finished the reading, Belshazzar gave unto him great honour and reward; but in the night watch the king was slain, and Darius the Median took the kingdom.

Now it pleased Darius to set over his kingdom one hundred and twenty princes, and he appointed three presidents to have authority over these, of whom Daniel was first. The king even thought to set Daniel over the whole realm, because he had confidence in his integrity.

But his brother presidents and the princes were jealous of him, and plotted to bring about his downfall. They could find no occasion against him, for his faithfulness was well known, so they said to each other, " We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God." So they assembled together and said to the king:

" King Darius, live for ever. All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, the counsellors, and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any god or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions. Now, O king, establish the decree, and sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not."

So King Darius signed the decree, and when Daniel knew this he went into his house and prayed and gave thanks to God three times a day as was his custom, with the windows open towards Jerusalem. This open defiance of the king's decree was quickly conveyed to Darius by Daniel's enemies, who had expected that the true and noble nature of the Hebrew prophet would cause him to fall into the trap which they had laid. They approached the king artfully in order that he might be forced to punish Daniel, even against his will.

" Hast thou not signed a decree," said they, " that every man that shall ask a petition of any god or man

within thirty days, save of thee, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions?" The king answered and said, "The thing is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not." Then answered they, and said before the king, "Daniel, which is of the children of the captivity of Judah, regardeth not thee, O king, nor the decree that thou hast signed, but maketh his petition three times a day."

When the king heard this, he was sore displeased with himself, and he laboured to deliver Daniel. But the princes reminded him that by the law of the Medes and Persians no decree which the king had made could be altered. So there was no way of escape for the king, and he was forced to issue command that Daniel should be thrown into the den of lions, but he said, "Thy God, whom thou servest continually, He will deliver thee."

A stone was laid on the mouth of the den, and it was sealed with the signet of the king, and with the signet of his lords. Then the king went to his palace, and all that night fasted, nor were instruments of music brought before him, and sleep went from him. Very early in the morning he arose and went in haste to the den of lions and cried in a lamentable voice:

"O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?" Then said Daniel unto the king, "O king, live for ever. My God hath sent His angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before Him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt."

Great was the joy of the king, and he commanded that Daniel should be taken up out of the den with all haste, and no manner of hurt was found on him. And the men who

had accused Daniel were cast to the lions, together with their families.

Then King Darius wrote to all people, nations and languages:

"Peace be multiplied unto you. I make a decree, that in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for He is the living God, and steadfast for ever, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and His dominion shall be even unto the end. He delivereth and rescueth, and He worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions."

So Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and lived also in the reign of Cyrus, king of Persia, who ruled over Babylon; and to Daniel it was granted to see many dreams and vision.

CHAPTER XVII

THE RETURN OF THE CAPTIVES

When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream.
Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The Lord hath done great things for them.
The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad.
Turn again our captivity, O Lord, as the streams in the south.
They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.
He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.—Ps. cxxvi.

IN the first year of the reign of Cyrus, king of Persia, the Lord stirred up the spirit of the king, and he sent a written proclamation throughout the kingdom:

"Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and He hath charged me to build Him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all His people who will undertake this matter? His God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel (He is the God,) which is in Jerusalem. And let the men of his place where he sojourneth help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, besides the free-will offering for the house of God that is in Jerusalem."

Then the chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and Levites, and all whose spirit God had raised, made ready to go up to Jerusalem. Their neighbours also helped them and willingly offered vessels of silver and gold and precious things. Cyrus also ordered his treasurer to bring out the vessels of the house of the Lord which had been taken away out of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, and to give them to Sheshbazzar, prince of Judah. The vessels of silver and gold—the chargers, knives and basins—were 5,400 in number, and these the captives brought up with them when they returned from Babylon to Jerusalem. In all, 42,360 souls went up under the leadership of Zerubbabel, together with many thousands of servants and two hundred singing men and women. There were also thousands of horses, camels, mules and asses.

When they were all gathered together in Jerusalem, the priests, with Zerubbabel and his brethren, builded up the altar of the Lord, and offered burnt offerings, and kept the feast of tabernacles and the other feasts ordained by God.

It was not until the second year of their coming to Jerusalem, however, that they began the work of rebuilding the house of the Lord. Cyrus had granted large sums of money for the masons and carpenters, and meat, drink and oil for the workers of Tyre and Zidon, who should bring cedar trees from Lebanon by sea to Joppa, in order that the Temple might be rebuilt; and when the builders had laid the foundation, the people rejoiced with trumpets and cymbals, and sang together a song of praise and thanksgiving to God, " because He is good, for His mercy endureth for ever towards Israel."

Many of the people shouted aloud for joy with a great shout, while some amongst them who remembered the first

temple wept with a loud voice, so that the sounds of joy and of weeping were mingled together.

Now when their enemies heard that the Temple was being rebuilt, they came to Zerubbabel and to Joshua, the priest, and said, "Let us build with you: for we seek your God as ye do." But Zerubbabel and Joshua answered them, "Ye have nothing to do with us to build an house unto our God; but we ourselves together will build unto the Lord God of Israel, as Cyrus the King of Persia hath commanded us."

After this refusal, the people of the land began to trouble them in building, and to harass them and frustrate their purpose, and this went on all the days of Cyrus, king of Persia.

Now in the reign of Artaxerxes, the king's chancellor wrote a letter to the king setting forth that the Jews intended to build up Jerusalem, and to set up the walls of the rebellious and bad city, in order that they might avoid the payment of toll, tribute or custom, and that the revenue of the king, therefore, was in danger. He reminded him that in the Book of Records he would find that this same city of Jerusalem had been destroyed because of its rebellions and seditions of old. Then the king sent back an answer that he had found that all they said was true, and had, therefore, given orders that building should cease until further commandment should be received from him. When the letter of Artaxerxes had been received, the chancellor and other great officers of the king hastened to Jerusalem and put an end to the work by force. So the building ceased, and was not begun again until the reign of Darius, king of Persia.

Now in the second year of the reign of this king the prophets Haggai and Zechariah stirred up the Jews in Judah

and Jerusalem, and the word of the Lord came by Haggai, saying, "Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your roofed houses while My house lies waste? Who is left among you that saw this house in its first glory, and how do ye see it now? Go up to the mountains, therefore, and bring wood, and build My house. So will I take pleasure in it and will be glorified." And the Jews began again to build the house of the Lord, and with them were the prophets of God, helping them.

Then came the king's governor and his companions with intent to hinder them, and said, "Who hath commanded you to build this house, and to make up this wall?" But they could not make them to cease, wherefore they sent a letter to King Darius, saying:

"Unto Darius the king, all peace. Be it known unto the king, that we went into the province of Judea, to the house of the great God, which is builded with great stones, and timber is laid in the walls, and this work goeth fast on, and prospereth in their hands. Then asked we those elders, and said unto them thus, 'Who commanded you to build this house, and to make up these walls?' We asked their names also, to certify thee, that we might write the names of the men that were the chief of them. And thus they returned us answer, saying, 'We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth, and build the house that was builded these many years ago, which a great king of Israel builded and set up. But after that our fathers had provoked the God of heaven unto wrath, He gave them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the King of Babylon, the Chaldean, who destroyed this house, and carried the people away into Babylon. But in the first year of Cyrus the King of Babylon, the same King Cyrus made a decree to build this house of God. And the vessels also of gold and silver of the house

of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took out of the Temple that was in Jerusalem, and brought them into the Temple of Babylon, those did Cyrus the king take out of the Temple of Babylon, and delivered them unto one, whose name was Sheshbazzar, whom he had made governor. And he said unto him, 'Take these vessels, go, carry them into the Temple that is in Jerusalem, and let the house of God be builded in his place.' Then came the same Sheshbazzar, and laid the foundation of the house of God which is in Jerusalem: and since that time even until now hath it been in building, and yet it is not finished.'

"Now, therefore, if it seem good to the king, let there be search made in the king's treasure house at Babylon, whether it be so, that a decree was made of Cyrus the king to build this house of God at Jerusalem; and let the king send his pleasure to us concerning this matter."

And Darius caused search to be made and a roll was found on which was written the decree of Cyrus that the Temple should be rebuilt with three rows of great stones, and a row of new timber, that the expenses were to be paid out of the king's purse, and that the gold and silver vessels taken by Nebuchadnezzar were to be returned.

So Darius sent this message in answer to the letter:

"Let the work of this house of God alone; let the governor of the Jews, and the elders of the Jews, build it in His place. Moreover I make a decree that of the king's goods, even of the tribute beyond the river, forthwith expenses be given unto these men, that they be not hindered. And that which they have need of, both young bullocks and rams, and lambs, for the burnt offerings of the God of heaven, wheat, salt, wine and oil, according to the appointment of the priests which are at Jerusalem, let it be

given them day by day without fail: that they may offer sacrifices of sweet savours unto the God of heaven, and pray for the life of the king, and of his sons.

"Also I have made a decree, that whosoever shall alter this word, let timber be pulled down from his house, and, being set up, let him be hanged thereon; and let his house be made a dunghill for this. And the God that hath caused his name to dwell there destroy all kings and people that shall put their hand to alter and to destroy this house of God which is at Jerusalem. I Darius have made a decree; let it be done with speed."

So the work of building proceeded, and the house of the Lord was finished in the sixth year of the reign of Darius, and the feast of dedication was held by the children of Israel, the priests and the Levites, and the rest, with great joy. Also the children of Israel which were come again out of captivity kept the passover, and the feast of unleavened bread seven days with joy, for the Lord had made them joyful in that He had turned the heart of the King of Assyria unto them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel.

Now after these things, in the seventh year of Artaxerxes Longimanus, king of Persia, there went up to Jerusalem from Babylon others of the children of Israel. With them went Ezra, a ready scribe in the Law of Moses, who had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgements. Artaxerxes gave to Ezra this letter:

"Artaxerxes, king of kings, unto Ezra the priest, a scribe of the law of the God of heaven, perfect peace. I make a decree, that all they of the people of Israel, and of his priests and Levites, in my realm, which are minded of their own free will to go up to Jerusalem, go

with thee. Forasmuch as thou art sent of the king, and of his seven counsellors, to enquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem, according to the law of thy God which is in thine hand; and to carry the silver and gold, which the king and his counsellors have freely offered unto the God of Israel, whose habitation is in Jerusalem. With all the silver and gold that thou canst find in all the province of Babylon, and with the free-will offering of the people, and of the priests, offering willingly for the house of their God which is in Jerusalem; thou mayest buy speedily bullocks, rams, lambs, and offer them upon the altar of the house of your God which is in Jerusalem. And whatsoever shall seem good to thee, and to thy brethren, to do with the rest of the silver and the gold, that do after the will of your God. The vessels also that are given thee for the service of the house of thy God, those deliver thou before the God of Jerusalem. And whatsoever more shall be needful for the house of thy God, which thou shalt have occasion to bestow, bestow it out of the king's treasure house. And I, even I Artaxerxes the king, do make a decree to all the treasurers which are beyond the river, that whatsoever Ezra the priest, the scribe of the law of the God of heaven, shall require of you, it be done speedily, unto an hundred talents of silver, and to an hundred measures of wheat, and to an hundred baths of wine, and to an hundred baths of oil, and salt without prescribing how much. Whatsoever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it be diligently done for the house of the God of heaven: for why should there be wrath against the realm of the king and his sons? Also we certify you, that, touching any of the priests or ministers of this house of God, great or small, it shall not be lawful to impose toll, tribute or custom, upon them. And thou, Ezra, after the wisdom of thy God

that is in thine hand, set magistrates and judges, which may judge all the people that are beyond the river, all such as know the laws of thy God; and teach ye them that know them not. And whosoever will not do the law of thy God, and the law of the king, let judgement be executed speedily upon him, whether it be unto death, or to banishment, or to confiscation of goods, or to imprisonment."

And Ezra gave thanks and said: "Blessed be the Lord God of our fathers, which hath put such a thing as this in the king's heart, to beautify the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem; and hath extended mercy unto me before the king, and his counsellors, and before all the king's mighty princes."

So Ezra was strengthened by these manifest signs that the favour of the Lord God of Israel was upon him, and he gathered together out of Israel chief men to go up with him, and they assembled at the river that runneth to Ahava. Here they remained for three days in tents, and a fast was proclaimed, that they might humble themselves before God and seek from Him guidance and protection upon their way. They had been ashamed to ask from the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to guard them against enemies on the way, because they had told him "the hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him: but His power and His wrath is against all them that forsake Him."

Ezra then chose twelve of the priests, and weighed out to them the silver and the gold and the vessels and offerings which had been given to them by the king and his lords and by the people, and made them responsible for their safety until they should deliver them to the chief priests in Jerusalem.

So they resumed their way, and God protected them

from their enemies, so that they came safely to Jerusalem, where they offered sacrifices and delivered the king's commissions to his governors.

Now amongst the Jewish servants of Artaxerxes in Shushan, his palace, was Nehemiah, and it came to pass that tidings were brought to him from Jerusalem, and he learned of the forlorn state of his brethern there. He was also told that the walls were broken down and the gates burned, so that there was no security for the people of the city from wicked men who desired to come into the city for to do them hurt.

Then Nehemiah mourned exceedingly and he prayed to God to give him favour with the king that he might be instrumental in helping his brethren in their defenceless state. He implored God to remember how that He had promised through Moses that if after He had scattered His people abroad for their transgressions they should turn unto Him, He would bring them again to His chosen place even from uttermost parts.

And the countenance of Nehemiah was sad for much thinking upon this matter, and Artaxerxes noticed this, for his servant usually was cheerful in his presence. And the king said, "Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick? Methinks that thy heart is sorrowful." And Nehemiah answered, "Let the king live for ever. Is it wonderful that my face should be sad seeing that the city, the place of my fathers' tombs, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed by fire?" Then said the king, "For what dost thou desire to make request?" And Nehemiah took courage and boldly asked that he might be sent unto Jerusalem to rebuild the city.

Then Artaxerxes questioned Nehemiah as to the length of the journey, and the time that he would need to be gone, and because God had inclined his heart to be gracious, he not only assented to Nehemiah's request, but he commanded that letters should be written unto his governors, and that an escort of horsemen should be sent to convey Nehemiah safely to Jerusalem. He also commanded that the keeper of his forest should provide timber necessary for the work of building.

Upon his arrival at Jerusalem Nehemiah went out secretly in the night to view the walls, and he found their condition fully as bad as had been described to him. He then called together the chief men among the Jews, and told them that the countenance of the king was with him, and they said, "Let us rise up and build." But their enemies around laughed the Jews to scorn and despised them, whereupon Nehemiah answered, "The God of heaven He will prosper us; therefore we His servants will arise and build, but ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial in Jerusalem."

So the building of the wall went on, in spite of the scoffing of their enemies, until half had been completed, for the people had a mind to work.

But Sanballat, who all along had been their enemy, conspired with others to come and fight against them, but it was told to Nehemiah, and he set a watch both day and night. And he said to the builders, "Be ye not afraid of them; remember the Lord which is great and terrible. He will fight for you; fight ye therefore for your brethren, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your houses." So the builders returned every one unto his work.

From that day forth, the builders on the wall, and those that bear burdens, and those that laded, every one with

one of his hands wrought, and with the other hand held a weapon. And as the work was a great one and the people were separated, one being far from another, the workmen were told that if they heard the sound of the trumpet they were to gather together in one place in order that they might better withstand any attacks which might be made upon them.

Moreover Nehemiah said to the people, "Let every one lodge within Jerusalem that they may be a guard in the night." And all who laboured and all who watched did so with sleepless vigilance. None of them put off his clothes.

And when Sanballat saw how the work prospered, and that it would certainly be finished, he spread a snare for Nehemiah. Four times he sent, saying, "Come, let us meet together outside Jerusalem," but each time Nehemiah returned answer, "I am doing a great work. Why should I leave it to come down to you?"

Then Sanballat was wroth, and he sent openly to Nehemiah saying that he would report to the king that the Jews intended to rebel, and to make Nehemiah their king. But Nehemiah prayed to God to strengthen him, and told Sanballat that he imagined these things, and knew well that there was no truth in them.

After this Sanballat hired a false prophet, who warned Nehemiah that he had better come with him into the Temple and shut the doors, for that his enemies were coming to slay him in the night. This he did in order that Nehemiah should show fear, but Nehemiah's trust in God was not shaken, and perceiving that God had not sent the prophet, he refused.

So all the evil intentions of the enemies of God's people were frustrated, and the wall was finished in fifty-two days. Even their enemies were obliged to admit that

the work had been wrought by the God of Israel, and they were much cast down. All this time Nehemiah had not only refused to take any money for his work as governor, but had also fed at his own table many of the Jews and rulers, for it had been very difficult to obtain sufficient food for all the workers.

When the wall was finished, Nehemiah made Hanani his brother, and Hananiah rulers over Jerusalem, and ordered that the gates should not be opened until the sun was hot, and that watchers should be appointed; for, though the city was large, the people were few, and the houses had not yet been rebuilt.

Then the people gathered together into the street that was before the water gate, and Ezra the scribe stood on a pulpit of wood, and read the Book of the Law of Moses to the people, from morning until midday, all ears being attentive. And Ezra blessed the Lord, and all the people answered, "Amen, Amen," with lifting up of hands, and they bowed their heads and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground, and wept. But Nehemiah and Ezra said to them: "This day is holy unto the Lord your God; mourn not, nor weep. Go your way, eat and drink, and send portions to them for whom nothing is prepared; for the joy of the Lord is your strength."

The second day the chief of the fathers of all the people, the priests, and the Levites, gathered again to Ezra to hear the word of the Law. And they found it written in the Law that in the feast of the seventh month the children of Israel should dwell in booths. So they commanded the people to go and fetch olive branches and pine branches and myrtle branches and palm branches, and branches of thick trees, and to make booths upon the roofs of their houses, and in the courts of the house of God, and in the

streets. This had not been done since the days of Joshua the son of Nun.

For seven days they kept the feast, and Ezra read each day from the Book of the Law of God.

Then was held a solemn fast and the people met in solemn assembly to confess their sins. And the Levites said:

"Stand up and bless the Lord your God for ever and ever.

"O Lord, blessed be Thy glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise. Thou, even thou, art Lord alone; Thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and Thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth Thee. Thou art the Lord the God, who didst choose Abram, and broughtest him forth out of Ur of the Chaldees, and gavest him the name of Abraham; and foundest his heart faithful before Thee, and madest a covenant with him to give the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Jebusites, and the Girgashites, to his seed, and hast performed Thy words. For Thou art righteous; and didst see the affliction of our fathers in Egypt, and heardest their cry by the Red Sea; and shewedst signs and wonders upon Pharaoh, and on all his servants, and on all the people of his land: for Thou knewest that they dealt proudly against them. So didst Thou get Thee a name, as it is this day. And Thou didst divide the sea before them, so that they went through the midst of the sea on the dry land; and their persecutors Thou threwest into the deeps, as a stone into the mighty waters. Moreover Thou leddest them in the day by a cloudy pillar; and in the night by a pillar of fire, to give them

light in the way wherein they should go. Thou camest down also upon Mount Sinai, and spakest with them from heaven and gavest them right judgements, and true laws, good statutes and commandments: and madest known unto them Thy holy sabbath, and commandedst them precepts, statutes and laws, by the hand of Moses Thy servant; and gavest them bread from heaven for their hunger, and broughtest forth water for them out of the rock for their thirst, and promisedst them that they should go in to possess the land which Thou hadst sworn to give them.

"But they and our fathers dealt proudly, and hardened their necks, and hearkened not to thy commandments. And refused to obey, neither were mindful of Thy wonders that Thou didst among them; but hardened their necks, and in their rebellion appointed a captain to return to their bondage. But Thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and forsookest them not. Yea, when they had made them a molten calf, and said, 'This is thy God that brought thee up out of Egypt,' and had wrought great provocations; yet Thou in Thy manifold mercies forsookest them not in the wilderness: the pillar of the cloud departed not from them by day to lead them in the way; neither the pillar of fire by night, to shew them light, and the way wherein they should go. Thou gavest also Thy good spirit to instruct them, and withheldest not Thy manna from their mouth, and gavest them water for their thirst. Yea, forty years didst Thou sustain them in the wilderness, so that they lacked nothing; their clothes waxed not old, and their feet swelled not. Moreover Thou gavest them kingdoms and nations, and didst divide them into corners: so they possessed the land of Sihon, and the land of Heshbon, and the land of Bashan. Thou didst multiply their children as the stars of

heaven, and broughtest them into the land, concerning which Thou hadst promised to their fathers, that they should go in to possess it.

"So the children went in and possessed the land, and Thou subduedst before them the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, and gavest them into their hands, with their kings, and the people of the land, that they might do with them as they would. And they took strong cities, and a fat land, and possessed houses full of all goods, wells digged, vineyards and oliveyards, and fruit trees in abundance: so they did eat, and were filled, and became fat, and delighted themselves in Thy great goodness. Nevertheless they were disobedient, and rebelled against Thee, and cast Thy law behind their backs, and slew Thy prophets which testified against them to turn them to Thee, and they wrought great provocations. Therefore Thou deliveredst them into the hand of their enemies, who vexed them: and in the time of their trouble, when they cried unto Thee, Thou heardest them from heaven; and according to Thy manifold mercies Thou gavest them saviours, who saved them out of the hand of their enemies. But after they had rest, they did evil again before Thee: therefore Thou didst leave them in the land of their enemies, so that they had the dominion over them. Yet when they returned, and cried unto Thee, Thou heardest them from heaven; and many times didst Thou deliver them according to Thy mercies; and testifiedst against them, that Thou mightest bring them again unto Thy law. Yet they dealt proudly, and hearkened not unto Thy commandments, but sinned against Thy judgements (which if a man do, he shall live in them); and withdrew the shoulder, and hardened their neck, and would not hear.

"Yet many years didst Thou forbear them, and testi-

fiedst against them by Thy spirit in Thy prophets: yet would they not give ear. Therefore gavest Thou them into the hand of the people of the lands. Nevertheless for Thy great mercies' sake thou didst not utterly consume them, nor forsake them; for Thou art a gracious and merciful God.

"Now, therefore, our God, the great, the mighty, and the terrible God, who keepest covenant and mercy, let not all the trouble seem little before Thee that hath come upon us, on our kings, on our princes, and on our priests, and on our prophets, and on our fathers, and on all the people, since the time of the kings of Assyria unto this day. Howbeit Thou art just in all that is brought upon us; for Thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly. Neither have our kings, our princes, our priests, nor our fathers, kept Thy law, nor hearkened unto Thy commandments, and Thy testimonies, wherewith Thou didst testify against them. For they have not served Thee in their kingdom, and in Thy great goodness that Thou gavest them, and in the large and fat land which Thou gavest before them, neither turned they from their wicked works. Behold, we are servants this day; and for the land that Thou gavest unto our fathers to eat the fruit thereof and the good thereof, behold we are servants in it. And it yieldeth much increase unto the kings whom Thou hast set over us because of our sins: also they have dominon over our bodies, and over our cattle, at their pleasure, and we are in great distress. And because of all this we make a sure covenant, and write it; and our princes, Levites, and priests, seal unto it."

Thus the people promised that they would walk in God's law, as given by Moses, and that they would not intermarry with the people of the land, nor buy and sell on the Sabbath day. They promised also to observe what had been

commanded regarding the seventh year, and to set apart one-third of a shekel yearly for the service of the house of God. The yearly first-fruits also they promised to bring to the house of God, also their first-born sons, and the first-lings of their herds of flocks, and the tithe of their ground they would give to the Levites.

It was decided that the rulers of the people should dwell at Jerusalem, while the rest of the people cast lots, to bring one of ten to dwell in Jerusalem, and nine parts to dwell in other cities, and the people willingly offered themselves to dwell at Jerusalem. And the dedication of the walls was held with gladness, with thanksgivings, and singing and cymbals, psalteries and harp.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE STORY OF QUEEN ESTHER

WHILE these events were taking place in Jerusalem, there were some who had chosen to remain in the foreign land to which their fathers had been taken captive by King Nebuchadnezzar, and amongst these was a Jew named Mordecai, a Benjamite, who had brought up his cousin Esther, a beautiful orphan maiden.

Now Ahasuerus, the king of Persia, made a great feast in Shushan his palace, to which he invited all the people of the palace, great and small, and all the princes and nobles of the provinces, who had been his guests for many days, and to whom he had shewn all the riches of his kingdom. The feast lasted for seven days, and was held in the court of the garden of the king's palace, where were white, green, and blue hangings, fastened with cords of fine linen and purple to silver rings and pillars of marble: the beds were of gold and silver, upon a pavement of red and blue and white and black marble.

The guests drank also out of vessels of gold, each vessel being of different workmanship, and there was abundance of costly wines, although no man was pressed to drink beyond his pleasure. At the same time Vashti the queen made a feast for the women in the royal house.

On the seventh day of the feast King Ahasuerus sent

messengers to the queen, commanding her to come and appear before the people and princes, and shew them her beauty, for she was fair to look on. But Queen Vashti refused to come at the command of the king's chamberlains, wherefore the king was very angry.

He asked the wise men who sat near him what should be done, and one of them answered that inasmuch as Vashti had not only wronged the king, but had also wronged all the princes and people of the provinces; for that all the women of the kingdom, when they heard that Vashti had disobeyed her husband, would also disobey their husbands and despise their wishes; the king should make a decree that Vashti should be banished from his palace and be no more queen. This advice pleased the king, and he caused proclamation of the same to be made throughout the kingdom.

The king's advisers told him, furthermore, that it would be well to appoint a queen in place of Vashti, and search was made accordingly throughout the king's dominions. The officers appointed to select a maiden who should be worthy of the king's throne, brought unto him Esther, the beautiful maiden whom Mordecai had brought up, and in due time the king set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti.

Now Mordecai had charged Esther that she should not tell the king that her people were Jews, and Mordecai himself sat in the king's gate to see what would happen.

Thus it came to pass that Mordecai heard of a secret conspiracy against Ahasuerus, and he told it to Queen Esther, who informed the king. The matter was inquired into, and was found to be as Mordecai had said, whereupon the conspirators were put to death, and record was made of the event in the king's chronicles.

After these things the king promoted a certain man named Haman above all the princes, and commanded that all the servants that were in the king's gate should bow before him and do him reverence. But Mordecai did neither, wherefore the king's servants asked him, "Why transgressest thou the king's commandment?" But he would not listen to them, so they told Haman, and informed him also that Mordecai and his people were Jews. Then Haman was very angry, and being of revengeful spirit he sought how he might destroy the Jews throughout the whole kingdom.

To achieve this purpose Haman went in unto the king and told him that he ought no longer to suffer the Jews to dwell in his land, seeing that their laws differed from those of the other people, and that they kept not the king's decrees.

So he prevailed upon the king to send letters to the governors over every province, commanding them to kill and cause to perish all Jews, young and old, little children and women, in one day, and take their goods as spoil.

When Mordecai heard what the king had done, he rent his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes and went out into the city, crying with a loud and bitter cry. Throughout all the provinces also, after the coming of the king's decree, there was great mourning and fasting and wailing among the Jews.

Esther's maids soon brought her tidings of Mordecai's grief, and she sent raiment to him, but he would not receive it. Then she sent a messenger to ask him why he was so grieved, and Mordecai told the messenger all that had happened, and gave him a copy of the decree to show to Esther, and begged him to charge the queen to go to the king and make a request for the life of her people. Then Esther sent

again to Mordecai and told him that she had not been called to the royal presence for thirty days, and she reminded him that any man or woman who came into the king's inner court without being called did so under penalty of death, unless the king held out to him the golden sceptre in token that he might live.

Then Mordecai returned word to Esther: "Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape because thou livest in the king's house. If thou holdest thy peace, deliverance may come for the Jews from some other source, but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed. Who knoweth whether God hath not placed thee upon the throne for such a time, that thou mightest deliver His people?"

This message stirred up the spirit of Esther, and she bade her messengers say unto Mordecai, "Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day. I also and my maidens will fast likewise, and at the end I will go in unto the king, even if it be to my death. If I perish, I perish."

Accordingly on the third day Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the king's house, and the king sat upon his throne. And when the king saw Esther standing there, she obtained favour in his sight and he held out to her the golden sceptre, whereupon she drew near and touched the top of the sceptre.

Then the king said: "What wilt thou, Queen Esther? and what is thy request? it shall be given thee even to the half of the kingdom."

And Esther answered: "If it seem good unto the king, let the king and Haman come this day unto the banquet that I have prepared for him."

So the king commanded Haman to haste to the ban-

quet, and they went together. When they were seated the king again asked Esther what request she had to make. She answered, " If I have found favour in the sight of the king, and if it please the king to grant my petition, and to perform my request let the king and Haman come to the banquet that I shall prepare for them, and I will do tomorrow as the king hath said."

Now because he had been bidden to the queen's banquet, Haman went home with a joyful heart; but when he saw Mordecai standing in the gate, and noted that he neither stood up nor moved for him, he was full of indignation. He said nothing, however, and when he went home he called his wife and his friends, and spoke with them of all his great riches and honours, and how he had been advanced above the princes and other servants of the king. He told them, moreover, that he had been the only one invited with the king to Esther's banquet, that he was also invited again for the next day. " Yet," said he, " all this availeth me nothing so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate."

Then his wife and his friends advised him to have a gallows made, fifty cubits high, and to persuade the king to have Mordecai hanged on it, after which he could go to the banquet with a merry heart.

And the thing pleased Haman, and he ordered the gallows to be made.

Now it came to pass that sleep forsook King Ahasuerus that night, and in order that the hours should not seem weary to him he ordered the Book of Records to be read before him. And he found written therein how Mordecai the Jew had discovered a secret conspiracy against him, and had so saved his life. And it came into his mind to ask, " What honour and dignity hath been done to Mordecai for this? "

His servants answered him that nothing had been done, wherefore the king asked who was without. Now Haman had come into the outer court to petition the king to have Mordecai hanged, so the servants of the king told him that Haman was there, and the king commanded that he should come in. "What shall be done with the man whom the king delighteth to honour?" asked the king, when Haman had entered.

Now Haman thought that of course the king must mean himself, so he answered at once, "For the man whom the king delighteth to honour, let the royal apparel be brought which the king useth to wear, and the horse that the king rideth upon, and the crown royal which is set upon his head: and let this apparel and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king's most noble princes, that they may array the man withal whom the king delighteth to honour, and bring him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaim before him, 'Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour.'"

Then the king ordered that all that Haman had said should be done to Mordecai, for that he was the man he had in mind: and he ordered Haman to take the apparel and the horse and bring Mordecai on horseback through the street of the city, proclaiming before him, "Thus shall it be done with the man whom the king delighteth to honour."

After these things Mordecai came again to the king's gate, but Haman went to his house mourning, with his head covered, and when his wife and friends heard what had befallen, they felt that Haman could no longer prevail against the Jew. Even while they talked together, Haman was summoned to the queen's banquet.

So the king and Haman came together to the banquet,

and when the king again asked Esther to make known her request, she said, " If it please the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request," and she told the king all the evil that had been prepared for the Jews.

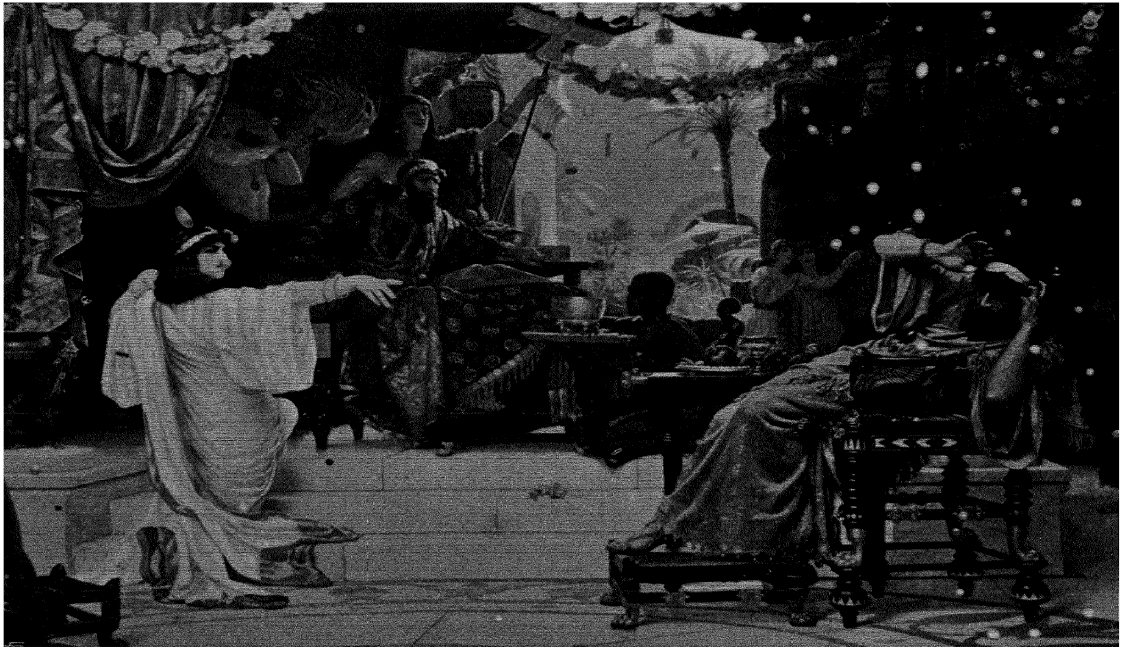
Then said the king, " Who is he, and where is he, that durst presume in his heart to do in this evil manner? "

" Behold in Haman the adversary and enemy of my people," answered Esther.

Then the heart of Haman quailed before the terrible countenance of the king, and he fell at the feet of Esther and pleaded for his life. But the queen would not listen to his supplication, nor did he find any friend at that moment to speak for him unto the king. But there was not wanting one to cry: " Behold the gallows, fifty cubits high, which Haman had made for Mordecai." The words sealed the wretched man's fate, and by command of the king he was taken forthwith from the royal banquet and hanged upon the gallows he had intended for the Jew.

After these things Esther told the king her relationship to Mordecai, and when Mordecai came before the king, he took off his ring and gave it to him, and Esther set him over the house of Haman. Then Esther again pleaded for her people with the king, that he should reverse the letters devised by Haman which had been written to destroy the Jews, " For," said Esther, " how can I endure to see the evil that shall come unto my people? or how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred? "

Then the king commanded that letters written in the king's name, and sealed with the king's signet, should be sent in great haste into all the provinces, granting to all the Jews that on the day that had been fixed for their destruction they should stand up for their lives and slay



Esther Denouncing Haman
Ernest Normand

or cause to perish any who should assault them or do them hurt.

When the Jews heard this decree, they had light and gladness, and joy and honour, and on the day appointed they stood for their lives and resisted their enemies and overcame them. Two days the slaughter continued, and it was ordered that these two days should always be kept as a festival by the Jews, because in those days their sorrow had been turned into joy.

Mordecai the Jew was made next to Ahasuerus in power, and was clothed in royal apparel of blue and white, with a great crown of gold, and a garment of fine linen and purple. He was accepted of the multitude of his brethren, seeking the wealth of his people, and speaking peace to all his seed.

CHAPTER XIX

THE STORY OF JUDITH[1]

NABUCHODONOSOR, king of the Assyrians, made war upon Arphaxad, the king of the Medes.

Arphaxad had built a great wall round his city, with towers upon the gates thereof, but the king of the Assyrians overthrew his horsemen and chariots, and became lord of his cities, and Arphaxad himself he took captive and slew with darts.

Proud of his achievements, and angry with the nations which had refused to help him, Nabuchodonosor now determined to make himself lord over the whole earth, and to destroy all who would not obey him. So he called Holofernes his chief captain, and commanded him to cover all the face of the earth westward with chariots, horsemen and footmen, and to slaughter and spoil all who resisted.

Holofernes therefore mustered a great army, and with him also went forth a multitude from other countries, without number, like unto locusts and the sand of the earth.

This destroying army went into the hill country, through Mesopotamia and Cilicia and the country of the Midianites, casting down the cities and killing all who resisted. When

[1] The Story of Judith is retold from The Apocrypha.

tidings of its approach reached the men of the sea coasts they, being sorely afraid, sent to Holofernes ambassadors of peace, saying that they would be the king's servants and would give him all their possessions. So Holofernes set garrisons in their cities, and cut down the groves wherein they worshipped their gods, for he had decreed that all nations should worship Nabuchodonosor only.

Now when the children of Israel, who had newly returned from the captivity, heard these things, they feared exceedingly and were troubled for the safety of Jerusalem and for the temple of the Lord, and for the vessels and the altars which had been sanctified after the profanation.

So they possessed themselves of all the tops of the high mountains and fortified the villages in them, and laid up victuals for the time of war. Also Joakim the priest charged the people to keep the passages of the hill country, for by them there was an entrance into Judea, and it was easy to stop them that would come up, the passages being only wide enough for two men at most.

When these things were done, the people cried to God earnestly with one consent that He would look graciously upon them and would not give them as a prey to their enemy.

Then was it declared to Holofernes that the children of Israel had prepared for war, and he was angry, and demanded to know who these people were who had fortified the tops of the high hills. Whereupon Achior, the captain of the Ammonites, told him the history of the Israelites, and advised him to leave them alone, for that their God would fight for them and make their enemies a reproach before all the world. This enraged Holofernes the more, and he declared that there was no God but Nabuchodonosor, lord of all the earth. Moreover, he said that Achior should be sent into the cities of the Israelites, and should

remain there until he should perish in the day when they should be put to the sword by the Assyrians. Then Achior was bound and carried to the foot of the hill, where the Israelites found him and took him to Bethulia. Holofernes also commanded his men to camp against Bethulia, and to seize all the fountains of water at the foot of the mountains, so that the Israelites, whom he feared to attack in the mountain heights, might die for lack of water

These things were done, and the Assyrians encamped against the children of Israel four-and-thirty days, until all their vessels of water and cisterns were empty. Then did the people cry out unto the Lord, but when they fainted for thirst they reproached Ozias, the chief of the city, because he had not made peace with the enemy, and they desired him to deliver up the city. But Ozias made answer: " Brethren, be of good courage, let us yet endure five days, in the which space the Lord our God may turn His mercy toward us."

Now Judith, the daughter of Merari, heard the words that Ozias spake to the people. This Judith was a widow, her husband having been dead for three years, during which time she had mourned for him. She was of goodly countenance, very beautiful to behold. Her husband also had left her great wealth, gold and silver, menservants and maidservants, cattle and lands, and there was none that gave her an ill word, for she feared God greatly.

So Judith sent her waiting-woman to call Ozias and Chabris and Charmis, the ancients of the city, and she told them that they were wrong to fix a limit of time, for that God had power to defend them when it pleased Him. "God is not as man that He may be threatened; . . . therefore let us wait for salvation of Him, and call upon Him to help us, and He will hear our voice if it please Him."

Ozias thanked Judith for her words of wisdom and begged her to pray to the Lord for them that He would send rain to fill the cisterns.

Then Judith told them to stand that night in the gates, for that she would go forth with her waiting-woman to do a thing which would be spoken of through all generations, but they were not to inquire what she would do. Ozias and the others then left her, and she prayed to God, the God of the afflicted and saviour of those without hope, that He would bless and bring to success the plan that she had made to save her people.

When Judith had made an end of her prayer she took off the sackcloth which she had worn since the death of her husband, washed and anointed herself, braided her hair, and put on the garments of gladness she had worn when she was a happy wife. Also she placed sandals upon her feet and put on all her ornaments, bracelets, chains, rings and ear-rings. To her maid she gave a bottle of wine, a cruse of oil, a bag of parched corn, figs and fine bread, and together they went forth to the gate of the city of Bethulia.

When Ozias, Chabris and Charmis saw Judith so attired, they stood amazed at her great beauty, and they commanded that the gates should be opened for her to go through. So she went out, and they watched her until she had passed down the mountain and through the valley, where they could see her no more. Soon she reached the outposts of the Assyrians, who asked her from whence she came and whither she was going. She answered that she was a Hebrew woman, and that she wished to go to Holofernes that she might show him a way to win the hill country without losing the lives of any of his men.

Now Holofernes was resting on his couch under a canopy woven with purple and gold and emeralds and precious

stones, but he came out of his tent with silver lamps going before him to meet his beautiful visitor.

When Judith saw him, she bowed to the ground, but Holofernes bade her fear nothing, for that none would hurt her.

Then Judith began by flattering his vanity: she told him that she had heard of his great wisdom and knowledge, and wonderful feats in war. Nevertheless, the children of Israel could never be overcome except they sinned against God, which, being faint from want of water, they were about to do, by consuming things forbidden in the Book of the Law, and by spending the first fruits of the corn and the tenths of wine and oil which were for the use of the priests alone. Through these things they would incur God's wrath, and He would give them an easy prey into the hands of Holofernes. Knowing this, and being, as she said, a religious woman, she had fled, and she now begged Holofernes to let her remain with him, and go out by night into the valley to pray to her God. God, she said, would tell her when the Israelites committed their sin, and she would in turn tell Holofernes and would lead him to Jerusalem, so that he might drive the people before him as sheep that had no shepherd.

At these words Holofernes was greatly pleased, and he marvelled at the wisdom and beauty of this woman, declaring that if she did as she had promised, her God should be his God. He commanded that meat and wine should be set before her, but she said that she had brought with her enough provisions to last until her mission was fulfilled. The ancient ideas of hospitality were so strict that had she accepted food from her enemy it would have gone against her conscience to carry through her plot. So Judith abode in the camp three days, going out by night to pray, and she

besought the Lord God of Israel that He would direct her how to save the children of her people.

On the fourth day Holofernes made a great feast to his own servants only, and commanded that Judith should be brought in to drink wine with them and to make merry. Judith replied that it would be a great joy to her to do this. So she decked herself with her apparel and went in and sat on the ground on soft skins laid for her beside Holofernes; and she ate and drank with him of the food which her own maid prepared. Holofernes was so greatly pleased with her that he was moved to drink more wine than was his custom, wherefore he was quite overcome at the end of the feast, and he laid himself down on his bed. Being wearied after the long feast his servants then retired, and left Judith alone with him in the tent.

Then, praying to the Lord God of Israel to help and strengthen her, Judith came near to the bed whereupon lay Holofernes in his drunken sleep, and taking down the scimitar which hung on the pillar of the bed, she smote twice upon his neck with all her might, and took away his head from him, tumbling his body down from the bed, and pulling down the canopy from the pillars.

Then going forth from the tent she gave the head to her maid, who put it in her bag, and together, as though going out as usual to pray, they passed through the camp and the valley and up the mountain, until they came to the gates of Bethulia.

And as they drew near Judith cried to the watchmen at the gate: "Open, open now the gate. God is with us, to shew His power yet in Jerusalem, and His forces against the enemy, as He hath even done this day." The people were greatly astonished when they beheld Judith with the head of Holofernes, and they worshipped God and blessed

Judith for her brave act, which, said they, should be for ever remembered.

Then Judith told them to take the head and hang it upon the highest place of the walls, and in the morning to take weapons and go forth as if they meant to attack the Assyrians. She said that the Assyrians, seeing this, would rouse the captains of their army, and would go to the tent of Holofernes, and finding him dead would be overcome by fear and would flee.

These things fell out as Judith had foretold, for fear and trembling fell upon the Assyrians when they found the dead body of Holofernes, and learned that the Hebrew woman had brought shame upon them. They fled into every way of the plain and of the hill country, and the children of Israel pursued them, and there was a great slaughter.

After these things Joakim, the priests and the ancients of the children of Israel came to Judith to salute her, and said unto her: "Thou art the exaltation of Jerusalem, thou art the great glory of Israel, thou art the great rejoicing of our nation: thou hast done all these things by thine hand: thou hast done much good to Israel, and God is pleased therewith: blessed be thou of the Almighty Lord for evermore." And all the women of Israel ran together to see her, and blessed her, and put a garland of olives upon her and upon her maid, and Judith took branches and gave to the women, and went before them in the dance, the men following in their armour, with garlands and songs. And Judith sang a song of thanksgiving, and all the people sang after her a song of praise.

> Assur came out of the mountains from the north,
> He came with ten thousands of his army,
> The multitude whereof stopped the torrents
> And their horsemen covered the hills.

He bragged that he would burn up my borders,
And kill my young men with the sword,
And dash the sucking children against the ground,
And make mine infants as a prey.

But the Almighty hath disappointed them by the hand of a woman.
For the mighty one fell not by the young men,
Neither did the sons of the Titans smite him,
But Judith the daughter of Merari weakened him,
And the scimitar passed through his neck.

When they came to Jerusalem they worshipped the Lord, and offered burnt offerings, and Judith dedicated to the Lord all the stuff belonging to Holofernes which the people had given to her. The canopy also which she had taken out of his bedchamber she gave to the Lord.

Judith lived on her own land to a great age, increasing more and more in honour, and while she lived, and for a long time after her death, there were none that made the children of Israel any more afraid.

THE STORY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

By the General Editor of the Series

WE often think of the Bible as "a book," but it is a collection of prose and poetry of various kinds written by different authors in many different ages. It contains, therefore, many different "books." That portion which is known as the "Old Testament" comprises the Sacred Literatures of the ancient Jewish people, and it is equally accepted by later generations as a revelation of "the word of God." The word "testament" in earlier times meant "covenant," so that "Old Testament" implies a covenant between God and His people.

The word "Bible" is derived from the name of a reed called "biblos," which grew profusely in the shallow waters of Egypt, and from which the material commonly used for ancient manuscripts was made, but the history of the Old Testament goes back to a time in far distant ages, when this particular material, called "papyrus," was unknown to, or, at all events, was not used by, the Children of Israel. We cannot say in what form these ancient books were first written. In the time of Moses the Egyptians were making their records upon papyrus, the people of Mesopotamia were using clay, and in all probability the Hebrews wrote upon the skins of beasts. We read that Moses brought down from Mount Sinai tables hewn of stone upon which he had written the commandments, and

all the nations and tribes in those regions seem at that time to have used stone for their important inscriptions. These Tables were placed by Moses in the Ark, where also, or by the side of which, copies of the Sacred Books were deposited. The latter could not have been carved upon stone, as the Ark had to be continually transported from one place to another; and it is likely, therefore, as we have said, that the manuscripts were written upon skins which were put away in rolls, as in the Book of Ezra we read: "And there was found in the palace a roll, and therein was thus written for a record." The word "manuscript means, of course, "written by hand."

No doubt much which is contained in the Books of the Law had been known to the Hebrews in an earlier form of literature and in what is called "oral tradition" long before these books took form. Looking back from the period of Moses there is a vast abyss of time in which we can imagine the stories of the creation, of Noah, of Joseph, as being told from father to son through countless generations, and scholars tell us that ancient records shew that some of the stories in the Hebrew Scriptures formed part of the traditions of other races also, so that we know of their existence long before the period of Hebrew records.

We are dealing with an age so remote that we cannot expect to obtain clear answers to our questions concerning the origin of the Old Testament. The mists of antiquity have gathered thick about those ancient days, and though modern scholarship has often succeeded in piercing the gloom, we can only speak doubtfully regarding the rise of the Hebrew Scriptures to the position of sanctity which they occupy in the history of the Jewish race.

What led to the selection of the Books? We can only surmise that either the name of some great teacher or the

high spiritual quality of the "writing," or "scripture," led to the acceptance of each particular one, and many generations would pass ere the choice would be finally confirmed.

There were three great divisions:

1. Books of the Law, that is, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. This collection is known as the Pentateuch, from a Greek word meaning "five-volume book." It is very uncertain when these books became fixed as we know them. Some scholars think they took their present form soon after the death of Moses, others place the date as late as between 400 and 500 years before Christ, while others suggest a period about midway between the two.

However this may be, a considerable time elapsed before the next section came to be regarded as worthy of a place beside the Sacred Books of the Law. Some scholars believe the date to be between 200 and 300 B.C. This section was termed "the Prophets," and comprised:

2. Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekial, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

At least another century passed ere the final section became accepted as a part of the Sacred Scriptures. This is known as the "Holy Writings," and includes:

3. Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Chronicles.

The entire collection is known as "the Canon," from a Greek word meaning "a carpenter's rule"; that is, it had been tested and had been accepted as conforming with the standard required. It is thought that this Canon received the formal sanction of a Jewish Synod about the year

90 A.D., but long ere this it had been firmly established in the position officially assigned to it by the Synod, and more than 200 years before, it had been mentioned as a collection of writings in a Greek translation of Ecclesiasticus.

With some unimportant exceptions the language in which the Old Testament is written is Hebrew, and the earliest manuscripts known to us present a most unattractive appearance. They are of an age long before arrangement of the structure of a writing was invented and we feel that it must have been a painful and difficult task to read the Scriptures when the words were written in capital letters without spaces in between, and with useless letters inserted for no other reason than to fill up the lines. It was quite late in the history of the Bible that such details as chapter or verse divisions and punctuation were thought of, although the Hebrew Scriptures were divided in a way. The Books of the Law, for example, had fifty-four greater divisions, and were further divided into six hundred and sixty-nine subdivisions. Chapter divisions were introduced for the first time during the twelfth century, and these chapters were further divided into verses four centuries later, in 1560.

The structure of the Old Testament suffered greatly during the many centuries of its history, and gradually all differences in the original forms of the Books became lost. Readers are often surprised to learn that large portions of the Scriptures which are printed as ordinary prose are in their original forms dramas, songs, lyrics, etc.

The history of *the structure* of the Old Testament is still in the making, and although much has been done by scholars like Dr Richard Moulton to restore the ancient forms of the Hebrew Literatures, no doubt much remains to be accomplished in this comparatively recent field.

A reduced facsimile from an old Hebrew Biblical Manuscript.

The Jews were very anxious to free their manuscripts from error, and so through some twelve or thirteen centuries from about the time of Ezra, the devoted labour of Hebrew scholars was patiently applied to the work of purifying and refining the Scriptures. At length the task was finished, and some one thousand years ago the Hebrew Scriptures reached their present final form. During the process of revision the old manuscripts would be collected for comparison, and it is probable that the incorrect copies were destroyed. This, no doubt, provides one reason for the scarcity of old Hebrew manuscripts, and it helps to explain the astonishing fact that the oldest known Hebrew Biblical manuscript dates only as far back as the end of the ninth century, and there are very few Hebrew Biblical manuscripts older than about the time of the Norman invasion of England.

Another reason is perhaps to be found in the fact that there were few manuscripts other than those public copies used in the synagogues, and as these became worn they were not specially valued, and no attempt was made to preserve them, excepting that it was customary to build them into the walls of the synagogue because of the veneration of the Jews for their sacred character.

The existing Hebrew manuscripts are regarded by scholars as on the whole very reliable, and they have the greater confidence in them because of the especial veneration of the Jewish Scribes for the Word of God. The Scribe was a professional copyist who acted, also, as guardian and expounder of the Law of Moses. The office dates back to about the time of Hezekiah. The Scribe was so scrupulous that if he met with a manifest error in a manuscript from which he was copying, he would not alter the wrong word but would draw attention to the mistake

in the margin. He considered himself as bound to transcribe without variation, and he would faithfully reproduce from his copy in the minutest detail. He would also record the number of verses in each book, the middle verse, the number of verses beginning with particular letters, and so on. All this very much lessened the likelihood of errors, and is one of the chief grounds for the confidence reposed by modern scholars in the Hebrew version of the Holy Scriptures.

There is little to add to the history of the original versions of the Old Testament. No other nation has produced a literature of equal importance to its religious life, but so far it is the peculiar property of the Jew, and we are now to trace the progress of the events which have removed it from its position of merely local importance and made it equally the heritage of Christians of all nationalities and tongues.

The first translation of the Old Testament seems to have been undertaken to meet the needs of a colony of Jews at Alexandria. Their ancient language had perhaps become difficult to understand on account of the use of Greek in their dealings with their neighbours, or it may be that they desired that these neighbours should know the grounds for their religious customs and beliefs. However, bit by bit between the third and second centuries B.C. the Greek version called the Septuagint, from a word meaning "seventy," was made. This title probably took its name from a legend that the translation had been made by seventy-two Jews who were shut up in cells until their work was completed. The earliest existing manuscript of the Septuagint dates back to the fourth century A.D.

The next translation of first importance was a Latin version by St Jerome at the end of the fourth century.

At the outset Jerome undertook to revise an older Latin version, probably made about the second century A.D., and of which only fragments are now known. This had been translated from the Septuagint, and Jerome soon found many inaccuracies, which led him to abandon his first intention, and his translation was therefore made from the original Hebrew. It is known as the Vulgate, and is the authorized version of the Latin Church and the father of our great English versions.

The English history of the Old Testament begins with some translations into Anglo-Saxon verse at the end of the seventh century, and with an Anglo-Saxon version of the Psalms early in the eighth century. Then we read that King Alfred translated the Ten Commandments and a portion of the Psalms, and that a Saxon Archbishop also translated parts of the Bible about 1023.

Then came the Norman invasion, and all the important Church offices fell into the hands of men who had no sympathy with the people of the country, and whose traditions were opposed to a Bible which could be read by the common people. Accordingly there is a long gap of three-and-a-half centuries before another translation appears. Then amidst the darkness of the fourteenth century the glorious light of the Word of God was bestowed upon the people of England by the great reformer, John Wycliffe, in the first complete English Bible. The people welcomed it gladly, and it was eagerly read by rich and poor, although the Church expressly forbade its use.

And now we come to the great event which has done so much to familiarize every man, woman and child with the Bible. Hitherto every copy of the Holy Scriptures made through the long period which we have outlined has been written by hand. Patiently and with loving care

the precious manuscripts have been duplicated, letter by letter, but how slow the process! There is in existence a copy of the Old Testament which was written in five weeks, and a note on the manuscript exhibits the pride of the author in the quickness of the work. The copyist of Wycliffe's Bible took ten months to prepare a single copy, and the cost was about equal to £40 of our money. The common people could not, therefore, hope to possess the Sacred Book, and it was difficult for them even to borrow a copy. It is recorded that a load of hay was given for permission to read it one hour each day for a given period. The poor could only hope to hear the Holy Word when publicly read to them, and long even after the age of printing, public copies of the Scriptures were kept chained in the churches.

If, however, the Bible was to be read only by the exercise of self-denial, it was prized in a way that puts the carelessness of these days to shame. The history of our land contains the record of men and women burned at the stake for no other crime than that of reading the Bible, or teaching it to their children, and we read that possessors of Wycliffe's Bible were hunted down like wild beasts.

The day had dawned when the Bible should be brought within the means of ordinary people, and about the year 1450 a German named John Gutenberg sent forth as the first-fruit of the printing-press a copy of the Latin Bible. This great event marked the beginning of a new era in the history of the Bible, and although many weary years of persecution were to pass before men and women were to be free to take open advantage of the blessing thus brought to them, it was destined to be the death-blow to prejudice and intolerance, and to the old unhappy view of the Scriptures as unfit for the common people.

From this time the Scriptures began to circulate; first in many feeble streams, which were sore let and hindered by the numberless dams constructed by the Church of that mistaken period, but gradually in increasing volume, until carrying all obstructions before them, they united in a mighty flood whose tributaries penetrate to every dark corner of our land and whose main tide goes its majestic way to ocean, bearing upon its bosom the religious life of the nation, and carrying to other continents the priceless blessings of the Word of God. There have been other and better English translations since the time of Wycliffe, but it is not necessary to deal with these. Wycliffe brought the entire Bible for the first time within the reach of every man, woman, and child who could read the English language, and later scholars could but follow in his steps. They have, however, improved and purified the text to such a degree of excellence that in the opinion of many great English scholars the English versions of the present day are the most accurate and faithful of the numberless translations which in modern times have made the Bible accessible to almost all of the nations and tribes of the world.

PRONOUNCING LIST OF NAMES

The pronunciations and meanings in this List are compiled from the *Helps to the Study of the Bible*, by courteous permission of the Oxford University Press.

Aaron, a'ron (*light* ?)
Abana, a-ba'nah (*stony*)
Abednego, a-bed'ne-go (*servant of Nebo*)
Abel 1, a'bel 1, *vanity*, 2, *a meadow*
Abiathar, ab-ia'thar (*father of plenty*)
Abigail, a-bi-ga'le (*father of exultation*)
Abihu, a-bi'hoo (*God is my father*)
Abimelech, a-bi'me-lek (*father of the king*)
Abinadab, a-bi'na-dab (*father of nobility*)
Abinoam, a-bi-no'am (*father of pleasantness*)
Abiram, a-bi'ram (*father of loftiness*)
Abishag, a-bi'shag (*father of error* ?)
Abishai, a-bi'shai (*father of a gift*)
Abner, ab'ner (*father of light*)
Abram, ab'ram (*a high father*)
Abraham, a'bra-ham (*father of a great multitude*)
Absalom, ab'sa-lom (*father of peace*)
Achior, a'ki-or (*brother of light*)
Achish, a'kish (*angry* ?)
Adam, a'dam (*red*)
Adonijah, a'do-ni'jah (*Jehovah is my Lord*)
Adullam, a-dul'am (*justice of the people*)
Agag, a'gag (*flaming* ?)
Ahab, a'hab (*uncle*)
Ahasuerus, a-haz-u-e'rus (*king* ?)
Ahaz, a'haz (*possessor*)
Ahaziah, a'haz-i'ah (*whom Jehovah upholds*)
Ahijah, a-hi'jah (*brother of Jehovah*)
Ahimaaz, a-hi-ma'az (*brother of anger*)
Ahimelech, a-hi'me-lek (*brother of the king*)
Ahithophel, a-hi'tho-fel (*brother of impiety*)
Ai, a'i (*a heap of ruins*)
Amasa, a-ma'sa (*burden*)
Amaziah, a'maz-i'ah (*Jehovah strengthens*)
Ammonite, am'on-ite (*descended from Ammon*)
Amorite, am'or-ite (*a mountaineer*)
Anath, a'nath (*an answer to prayer*)
Aphek, a'fek (*strength*)
Arphaxad, ar-fax'ad
Artaxerxes, ar'ta-xerk'ses (*honoured king* ?)
Asa, a'sah (*physician*)
Asahel, a'sa-hel (*whom God made*)
Ashdod, ash'dod (*a strong place*)
Asher, ash'er (*fortunate, happy*)
Assyria, as-ir'y a (*the land of Asshur*)

Ath liah, ath'al-i'ah (*afflicted*)

Baal, ba'al (*lord, master, owner*)
Baalzebub, ba'al-ze'boob (*lord of flies*)
Babel, ba'bel (*confusion*)
Babylon, bab'il-on (*the gate of God*)
Balaam, ba'la-am (*destruction* ?)
Balak, ba'lak (*to make empty*)
Barak, ba'rak (*thunderbolt*)
Barzillai, bar-zi'l-ai (*of iron*)
Bashan, ba'shan (*soft, rich soil*)
Bath-sheba, bath'she-bah (*daughter of the oath*)
Beer-sheba, be'er-she'bah (*well of the oath*)
Belial, be'li-al (*worthless*)
Belshazzar, bel-shaz'ar (*Bel protects*)
Belteshazzar, bel'te-shaz'ar (*preserve his life*)
Benjamin, ben'ja-min (*fortunate*)
Bethel, beth'el (*house of God*)
Bethlehem, beth'le-hem (*house of bread*)
Bethshemesh, beth'she'mesh (*house of the sun*)
Bethulia, beth-ool'ia
Bezaleel, be-zal'e-el (*in the shadow of God* ?)
Bezer, be'zer (*ore of precious metal*)
Boaz, bo'az (*fleetness*)

Cain, kane (*possession*)
Caleb, ka'leb (*a dog*)
Canaan, ka'na-an (*low region*)
Canaanites, ka'na-an-ites (*inhabitants of Canaan*)
Carmel, karm'el (*a park*)
Chabris, ka'bris
Charmis, kar'mis (*attached to a vineyard*)
Chilion, kil'yon (*wasting away*)
Cilicia, si-lish'ya
Cushi, koosh'i (*black*)
Cyrus, si'rus (*the sun*)

Dagon, da'gon (*fish*)
Dan (*judge*)
Daniel, dan'yel (*God's judge*)
Darius, da-ri'us (*governor* ?)
David, da'vid (*beloved*)
Deborah, deb'or-ah (*bee*)
Delilah, de-li'lah (*delicate*)
Dothan, do'than (*two wells or cisterns*)

Ebed, e'bed (*servant*)
Eden, e'den (*pleasantness*)
Edom, e'dom (*red*)
Egypt, e'jipt (*black*)
Ehud, e'hud (*joined together* ?)
Ekron, ek'ron (*eradication*)
Eleazar, el'e-a'zar (*whom God aids*)
Eli, e'li (*height*)
Eliab, el-i'ab (*whose father is God*)
Eliakim, el-i'a-kim (*whom God establishes*)
Elijah, el-i'jah (*my God is Jehovah*)
Elimelech, el-i'me-lek (*to whom God is king*)
Elisha, el-i'shah (*to whom God is salvation*)
Elkanah, el'ka'nah (*whom God possessed*)
Endor, en'dor (*fountains of Dor*)
Engedi, en'ged-i (*fountain of the kid*)
Ephraim, ef'ra-im (*fruitful* ?)
Esau, e'saw (*hairy*)
Esther, es'ter (*star*)
Eve (*life*)
Evil-Merodach, e'vil-me'ro-dak (*man of Merodach*)
Ezra, ez'rah (*help*)

Gaal, ga'al (*loathing*)
Gad (*a troop*)
Galilee gal'il-ee (*circuit*)
Gath, (*wine-press*)
Gedaliah, ged'a-li'ah (*whom Jehovah has made great*)
Gehazi, ge-ha'zi (*valley of vision*)
Gerizim, ge-rize'im (*persons living in a desert*)
Gibeon, gib'e-on (*pertaining to a hill*)
Gideon, gid'e-on (*one who cuts down*)
Gilboa, gil-bo'ah (*bubbling fountain*)

Gilead, gil'e-ad (*hill of witness*)
Gilgal, gil'gal (*a circle*)
Girgashite, gir'gash-ite (*dwelling in a clayey soil*)
Golan, go'lan (*exile*)

Hagar, ha'gar (*flight*)
Haggai, hag'ai (*festive*)
Ham (*warm*)
Hananiah, han'an-i'ah (*whom Jehovah graciously gave*)
Hannah, han'ah (*gracious*)
Haran, ha'ran (*mountaineer*)
Hareth, ha'reth (*thicket*)
Hazael, ha'za-el (*whom God watches over*)
Hazeroth, haz-e'roth (*villages*)
Hazor, ha'zor (*castle*)
Heber, he'ber (*the region beyond*)
Hebron, heb'ron (*alliance*)
Heshbon, hesh'bon (*counting*)
Hezekiah, hez'ek-i'ah (*the might of Jehovah*)
Hilkiah, hil'k-i'ah (*portion of Jehovah*)
Hiram, hi'ram (*noble ?*)
Holofernes, hol'o-fer-nees (*destroying brilliance*)
Hophni, hof'ni (*pugilist*)
Hor (*mountain*)
Horeb, ho'reb (*desert, mount*)
Huldah, hool'dah (*weasel*)
Hushai, hoo'shai (*hasting, loyalty*)

Isaac, i'zak (*laughter*)
Ish-bosheth, ish-bo'sheth (*man of shame*)
Ishmael, ish'ma-el (*whom God hears*)
Israel, iz'ra-el (*prince, or soldier, of God*)
Issachar, is'ak-ar (*he is hired ?*)
Ithamar, i'tha-mar (*island of palms*)

Jabin, ja'bin (*whom God considered*)
Jacob, ja'kob (*supplanter*)
Jael, ja'el (*wild she-goat*)
Jair, ja'er (*God enlightens*)
Japheth, ja'feth (*extension*)
Jehoahaz, je-ho'a-haz (*whom Jehovah holds fast*)
Jehoiachin, je-ho'ya-kin (*Jehovah has established*)
Jehoiada, je-ho'ya-dah (*Jehovah knoweth*)
Jehoiakim, je-ho'ya-kim (*Jehovah has set up*)
Jehoram, je-ho'ram (*Jehovah is high*)
Jehoshaphat, je-hosh'af-at (*whom Jehovah judges*)
Jehovah, je-ho'vah (*the Eternal One*)
Jehu, je'hu (*Jehovah is He ?*)
Jephthah, jef'thah (*God opens*)
Jeremiah, jer'em-i'ah (*whom Jehovah has appointed*)
Jericho, jer'ik-o (*a fragrant place*)
Jeroboam, jer'ob-o'am (*whose people are many*)
Jerusalem, je-roo'sa-lem (*founded in peace ?*)
Jesse, jes'sy (*gift ?*)
Jethro, jeth'ro (*excellence*)
Jezebel, jez'e-bel (*unmarried*)
Jezreel, jez're-el (*God scatters*)
Joab, jo'ab (*Jehovah is father*)
Joakim, jo'a-kim (*the Lord will set up*)
Joash, jo'ash (*whom Jehovah supports*)
Johanan, jo-ha'nan (*Jehovah is gracious*)
Jonah, jo'nah (*dove*)
Jonathan, jo'na-than (*whom Jehovah gave*)
Joppa, jop'ah (*beauty ?*)
Jordan, jor'dan (*flowing down*)
Joseph, jo'sef (*he shall add*)
Joshua, josh'you-ah (*Jehovah is salvation*)
Josiah, jo-si'ah (*whom Jehovah heals*)
Jotham, jo'tham (*Jehovah is upright*)
Judah, joo-dah (*praised*)
Judith, joodith (*Jewess*)

Kadesh, ka'desh (*consecrated*)
Kedar, ke'dar (*black-skinned*)

Kir‸th-arba, kir'jath-ar'bah (*city of Arba*)
Kirjath-jearim, kir'jath-je'ar-im (*city of woods*)
Kish (*bow*)
Kishon, ki'shon (*tortuous*)
Korah, ko'rah (*bald*)

Laban, la'ban (*white*)
Leah, le'ah (*languid*)
Lebanon, leb'an-on (*the white mountain*)
Lot (*veil*)

Machpelah, mak-pe'lah (*a doubling*)
Mahanaim, ma'han-a'im (*two camps*)
Mahlon, mah'lon (*a sick person*)
Mamre, mam're (*fatness*)
Manasseh, ma-nas'ay (*one who causes to forget*)
Manoah, ma-no'ah (*rest*)
Marah, ma'rah (*bitter*)
Megiddo, me-gid'o (*place of troops*)
Mephibosheth, mef-ib'osh-eth (*destroying shame*)
Merari, me-rah'ri (*bitter*)
Mesopotamia, mes'o-pot-a'mi-ah (*amidst the rivers*)
Methuselah, me-thoo'se-lah (*man of the dart?*)
Michal, mi'kal (*brook*)
Michmash, mik'mash (*treasured*)
Midian, mid'yan (*strife*)
Millo, mil'lo (*a mound*)
Miriam, mir'yam (*rebellion?*)
Mizpah, miz'pah (*a look out*)
Moab, mo'ab (*progeny of a father*)
Mordecai, mor'dek-ai (*worshipper of Merodach?*)
Moriah, mor-i'ah (*provided by Jehovah*)
Moses, mo'zes (*saved from the water*)

Naaman, na'am-an (*pleasantness*)
Nabal, na'bal (foolish)
Naboth, na'both (*fruits?*)
Nabu hodonosor, nab'u-kod-on-o-sor (*Nebuchadnezzar*)
Nadab, na'dab (*liberal*)
Nahor, na'hor, (*snorting*)
Naomi, na'o-mi (*pleasant*)
Naphtali, naf'tal-i (*my wrestling*)
Nathan, na'than (*gift*)
Nebat, ne'bat (*aspect*)
Nebo, ne'bo (*a lofty place*)
Nebuchadnezzar neb'u-kad-nez'ar (*Nebo protect the crown*)
Necho(h), ne'ko (*conqueror*)
Nehemiah, ne'hem-i'ah (*Jehovah comforts*)
Nimshi, nim'shi (*discloser?*)
Nineveh, nin'ev-ay (*dwelling?*)
Nisroch, nis'rok (*eagle?*)
Noah, no'ah (*rest*)
Nun, noon (*fish*)

Obed, o'bed (*worshipping God*)
Og (*circle?*)
Olivet, ol'iv-et (*place of olives*)
Orpah, orp'ah (*hind?*)
Othniel, oth'ni-el (*powerful man of God*)
Ozias, o-zi'as (*might of Jehovah*)

Paran, pa'ran (*cavernous*)
Peor, pe'or (*point*)
Perizzites, per'iz-ites (*belonging to a village*)
Pharaoh, fa'roh (*the sun*)
Pharpar, far'par (*swift*)
Phinehas, fin'e-as (*serpent's mouth*)
Potiphar, pot'i-far (*belonging to the sun*)
Puah, poo'ah (*splendour*)

Rabbah, rab'ah (*capital city*)
Rabshakeh, rab'sha-kay (*chief of the cup-bearers*)
Rachel, ra'chel (*ewe*)
Rahab, ra'hab (*broad*)
Ramah, ra'mah (*high place*)
Ramoth, ra'moth (*heights*)
Rebekah, re-bek'ah (*a noose*)
Rehoboam, re'hob-o'am (*who enlarges the people*)
Reuben, roo'ben (*behold a son?*)

Rezin, re'zin (*firm*)
Riblah, rib'lah (*fertility*)
Rimpah, rim'pah (*hot coal*)
Ruth, rooth (*friend. hip ?*)

Samaria, sa-ma'ri-ah (*guard*)
Samson, sam'son (*like the sun*)
Samuel, sam'u-el (*heard of God*)
Sanballat, san-bal'at (*Sin, the moon, giveth life ?*)
Sarah, sa'rah, (*princess*)
Saul (*asked for*)
Seir, se'ir (*hairy*)
Sennacherib, sen-ak'er-ib (*Sin, the moon, multiplies brethren*)
Shamgar, sham'gar (*destroyer ?*)
Shaphan, sha'fan (*coney*)
Sheba, she'bah (*an oath*)
Shechem, she'kem (*back, shoulder*)
Shem (*name*)
Sheol, shay'ol (*tumult*)
Shiloh, shi'lo (*rest*)
Shimei, shim'e-i (*my fame*)
Shishak, shi'shak (*illustrious*)
Shittim, shit'im (*acacias*)
Shobi, sho'bi (*taking captive*)
Shunem, shoon'em (*two resting-places*)
Sihon, si'hon (*brush*)
Simeon, sim'e-on (*a hearkening*)
Sisera, si'ser-ah (*binding in chains ?*)
Sodom, sod'om (*burning*)
Solomon, sol'om-on (*peaceable*)

Taanach, ta'a-nak (*castle ?*)
Tarshish, tar'shish
Tebez, the'bez (*brightness*)
Tiglath-pileser, tig'lath-pil-e (*the son of the temple of Sarra is a ground of confidence ?*)
Timnath-serah, tim'nath-se'rah (*portion of the remainder*)
Tishbite, tish'bite (*inhabitant of Tishbe*)
Tubal-cain, too'bal-kane (*producer of weapons ?*)
Tyre, tire (*rock*)

Upharsin, oo-far'sin (*and dividers*)
Uriah, oo-ri'ah (*light of Jehovah*)
Urijah, oo'ri-jah (*light of Jehovah*)

Vashti, vash'ti (*beautiful*)

Zadok, za'dok (*just*)
Zebulun, ze-bool'on
Zechariah, zek'ar-i'ah (*whom Jehovah remembers*)
Zedekiah, zed'ek-i'ah (*justice of Jehovah*)
Zerubbabel, ze-roob'ab-el (*scattered in Babylon*)
Ziba, zi'bah (*planter*)
Zimri, zim'ri (*celebrated*)
Zion, zi'on (*sunny*)
Zipporah, zip-or'ah (*bird*)
Zoar, zo'ar (*smallness*)