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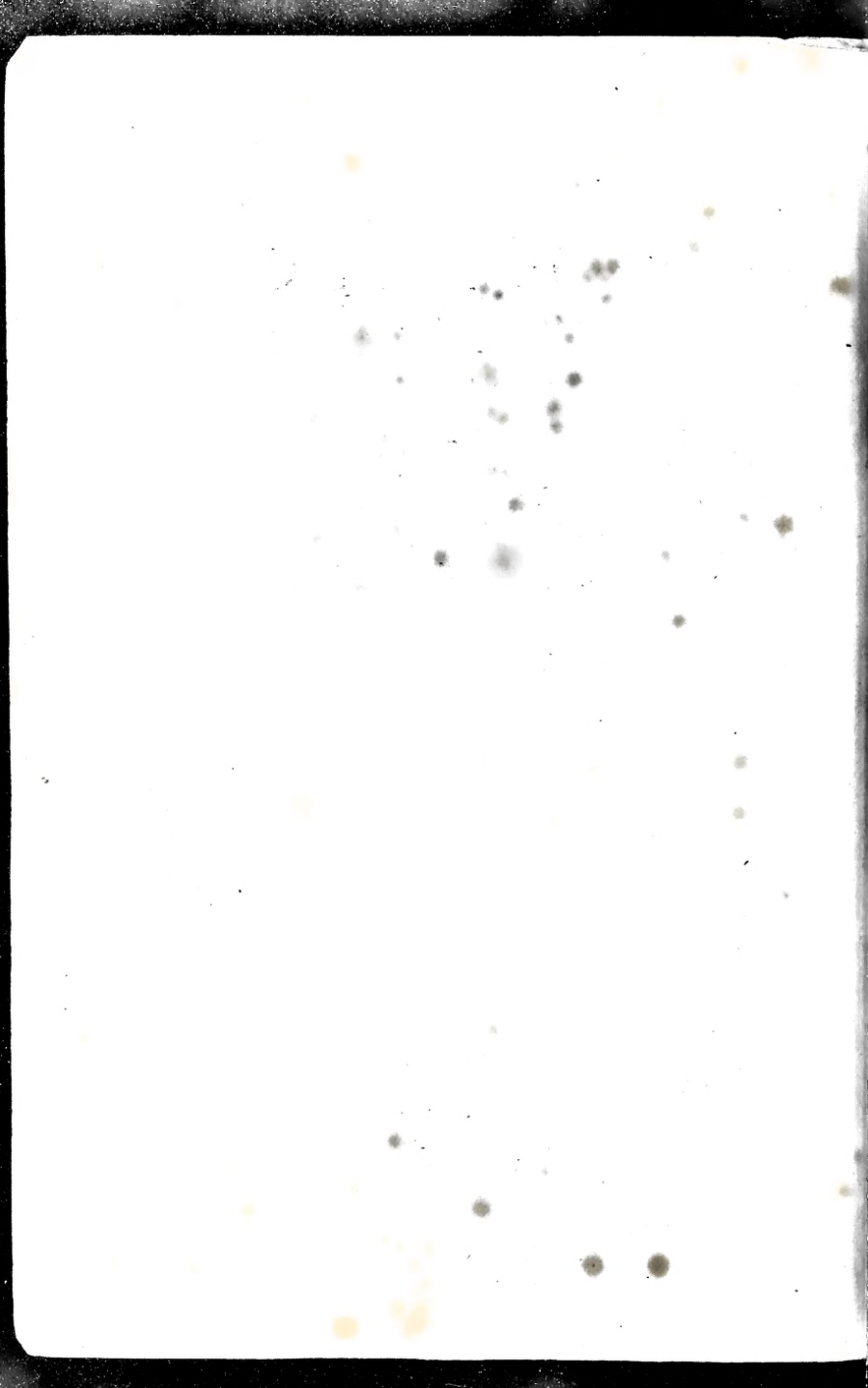
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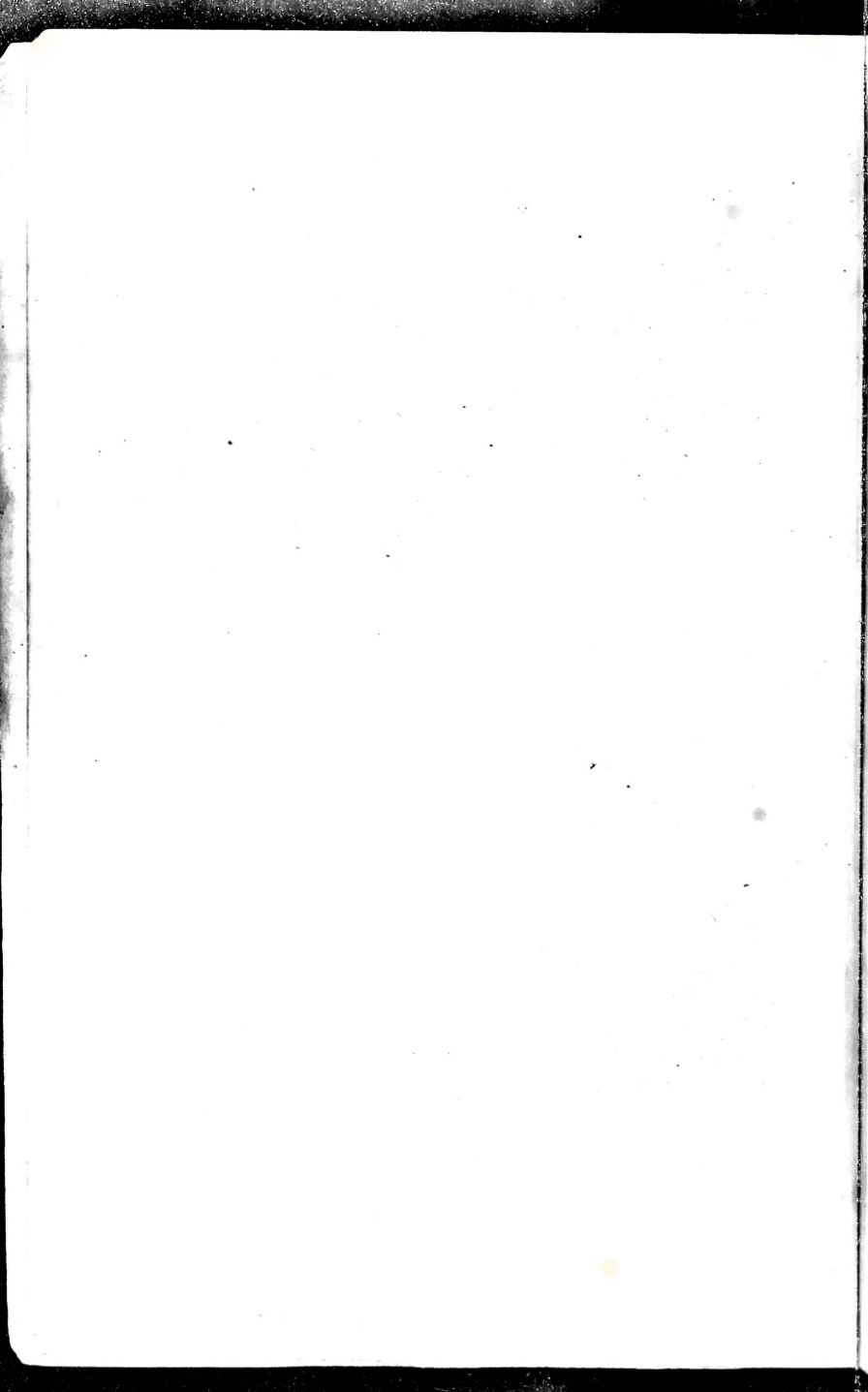
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MR. ADAM.

SCIENCE tells us that the human race has existed on this planet, ruder in form and character the further we go back, for hundreds of thousands of years. Long before "the grand old gardener," as Tennyson calls him, was cultivating his green peas and asparagus in Eden, there were millions of civilised men in Egypt and India, and probably in Assyria and China; and long before that, in the obscurity of prehistoric ages, the earth was peopled by barbarians. These also were preceded by savages who, in their turn, had succeeded the ape-like progenitors of mankind.

Science and the Bible, however, disagree on this, as on so many other points. According to the book which Christians treasure without studying, and venerate without following, Mr. Adam was the first man that ever lived; and he was born, or rather manufactured, less than six thousand years ago. There are, indeed, a few Christians who believe that the world was inhabited before Jehovah made a clay man, hung him up to dry, and finally blew the breath of life into his nostrils. The theory of Pre-Adamite races was started in 1655 by Isaac de la Peyreira, a converted Jew, who argued that the beings created in the first chapter of Genesis were different from those created in the second. From the first set all the Gentiles have descended, while the Jews have issued from the loins of Mr. Adam. Noah's flood was only a partial deluge, and it was only the antediluvian Jews who perished in that catastrophe. But Peyreira's book was burnt in Paris by the executioner, and he himself narrowly escaped the same fate. Since then his theory has always had some adherents, yet they have been an insignificant minority.

Some Orientals also hold that there were men before Mr. Adam. One race of these were the "flat-heads" of Ceylon, who submitted to him when he fell on their island after his expulsion from Paradise; and they really must have been flat-heads to truckle to such a nincompoop. Bishop South says that "An Aristotle was but the rubbish of an Adam." In other words, Mr. Adam was perfect. So he was—a perfect fool. Like Charles the Second, in Rochester's epigram, Mr. Adam never did a wise thing; and, unlike the merry monarch, he never said a wise one either. A collection of his utterances, throughout a long life

extending to nearly a thousand years, would be the smallest and baldest treatise to be found in the whole world. It seems an insult to the deity to allege that he was unable to turn out a better specimen of his handiwork after six days' apprenticeship on such a gigantic scale.

Mr. Adam was made out of clay, or dust, or something of that kind, by Jehovah, who was his spiritual father. Carnally, the poor fellow was an orphan from birth. He never felt a mother's kiss on his brow. He never climbed on his father's knee. God was the only father he had, and *his* legs were too long; for if, as Jesus tells us, heaven is his throne and earth his footstool, there must be a frightful distance between his feet and the part he displayed to Moses on Mount Sinai.

That the first man was made from earth is a very natural superstition. The Peruvians, Collas, Caribees, and North American Indians, believed that the first human beings sprang from the ground. In Egypt, India, China, and Mexico, they were believed to have been fashioned of earth by some superior power. According to the Chaldeans, man was made by the mixing of the blood of Belus with the dust of the ground; while the Persians held that he grew from the soil which was impregnated with the seed of the man-bull Kaiomorts.* Aristophanes, in *The Birds*, calls men "creatures of clay."† According to Apollodorus, the first man and woman were formed of clay by Prometheus. It is absurd to suppose that these ancient and widely sundered peoples borrowed their notions of man's origin from the Jews, especially when we know that Genesis is not an early, but a very late portion of the Hebrew scriptures, dating only a few centuries before Christ.

The Mohammedans say that Mr. Adam's body was made of clay brought by the archangels, Gabriel, Michael, Israfiel, and Asrael, from the four quarters of the earth. According to the Talmud the dust was collected from all parts. Rabbi Hoshea says his trunk was made of dust from Babel, his head of dust from Palestine, and the rest of his limbs from the soil of other countries. Rabbi Acha adds that his seat of honor was made of clay from Acre.‡ When he was finished there was some dust left over, and of this God made locusts.

Didron§ prints a copy of an Italian miniature of the thirteenth century, in which an angel is represented as modelling the rough figure of a man, while God Almighty is standing by, waiting to give it the finishing touches. God is also depicted as consulting the angels about the matter in a series of figures in the north porch of Chartres cathedral.

* Prialux's *Questiones Mosaricæ*, p. 64.

† So Frere and Poyard. Hickie translates "figures of clay."

‡ Baring Gould, *Legends of Old Testament Characters*, vol. i., pp. 9, 13.

§ *Christian Iconography*, vol. ii., p. 14.

When God furnished his clay man with a soul, it entered his mouth and passed down into his belly, where to this very day the soul of many of his descendants continues to reside. His first motion was to sneeze and say "Praise be to God." Then he tried to get up and eat, but the soul had not yet animated his extremities, so Gabriel said "O Adam, don't be in a hurry."

We may here mention a curious idea referred to by Gerald Massey, who says that "Epiphanius represents Elkesi, the Ebionite prophet, as teaching that Christ was the first created Adam, who returned as the second Adam. Photius also says Origen maintained that the soul of Jesus was the soul of Adam."*

Jehovah was not likely to turn out a mannikin, particularly as, according to Philo, he spent sixty days over the job. Besides, so long-lived a gentleman as Mr. Adam was naturally a good height. The Rabbis say that the tree of life was so big that it took a good walker five years to march round it, and Mr. Adam's proportions were in keeping with this mighty bole. When he laid down his body stretched from east to west, and when he stood up his head reached to the seventh heaven. Subsequently he became shorter. According to one Rabbinical story, the angels were afraid of him, and to abate their terror God put him asleep and pared him down; or, as others say, placed his hand on Mr. Adam's head and flattened him down to a thousand cubits. Another story says that he shrank with horror at the death of Abel, and was never able to stretch himself out to his original dimensions. The Mohammedans assert that he lost his primitive size in yearly pilgrimages to Mecca, and finally retained the height of sixty ells. According to a fourth story, when Mr. Adam was all alone on a peak in Ceylon, he was so tall that the sun burnt his hair off. God mercifully ordered Gabriel to shadow the poor fellow's head with his wings, and Mr. Adam dwindled under that curious umbrella till he was only ninety feet high.

Saint Augustine thought Mr. Adam was thirty years old when he was born.† The Rabbis say he was superlatively beautiful. It is generally believed by the Jews that he was born circumcised, although he did his utmost to conceal the fact.‡ Therefore, if he was made in God's image, God must be circumcised too. Both Mr. Adam and Mrs. Eve are drawn in pictures with navels. Yet as they were not born in the ordinary way this "cannot be allowed," says Sir Thomas Browne. His editor Ross, however, says that navels were given them as an ornament, in support of which opinion he cites the second verse of the seventh chapter

* *The Natural Genesis*, vol. ii., p. 329. 1 Cor. xv., 45-47.

† Sir Thomas Browne's Works, (Bohn) vol. ii., p. 382.

‡ Calmet's *Dictionary of the Bible*, and Bayle's *Dictionary*.

of Solomon's Song, where the hero describes that feature in his sweetheart as "a round goblet."

That Mr. Adam was created an hermaphrodite is a widely received opinion. Gould reads Genesis I., 27 as "male-female created he them." As Butler says :

" Man was not man in Paradise,
 Until he was created twice,
 And had his better half, his bride,
 Carved from th' original his side,
 T' amend his natural defects,
 And perfect his recruited sex ;
 Inlarge his breed at once, and lessen
 The pains and labor of increasing,
 By changing them for other cares,
 As by his dried-up paps appears."

Hudibras, Part III., Canto I., 761-770.

Man's rudimentary mammæ are now explained by Darwin. They point back very much farther than the origin of the human race. Yet in more ignorant ages they naturally lent a color to the superstition in Butler's verses. Many Jewish writers have asserted that "man and woman were created in one body, united by the shoulders, having four feet, four hands, and two heads, alike throughout excepting sex; and that God having cast this compound figure into a deep sleep, divided it, and made two persons of it."* Browne says that Marcus Leo, a learned Jew, affirmed that "Adam in one *suppositum*, without division, contained both male and female."† Antoinette Bourignon, the mystic, held that Adam contained both sexes, and was able to produce his like without connection. Paracelsus maintained that the generative organs only appeared in our first parents after their sin. Some Rabbis have held that Adam was an elaborate Janus, male one side and female the other; Jeremiah Ben-Eleazer supporting this view by the text "Thou hast fashioned me before and behind."

A similar legend is expounded in Plato's *Banquet*, far more beautifully than in any Hebrew writings. It also appears in the mythology of India, China, Persia and Phœnicia. Everywhere men and women seek their joy in marriage, and out of this yearning grew the fancy of two divided halves of an original whole striving after their pristine unity.

Mr. Adam being made in the image of God, it follows that Jehovah is androgynous too. This explains how he procreated his only begotten son without a wife; for the Holy Ghost can scarcely stand to him in that capacity, seeing it was the father of the Virgin Mary's baby.

Mr. Adam was a smooth-faced gentleman until he fell. After

* Calmet.

† Works, vol. i., p. 308.

that event he sprouted a beard. According to the Mohammedans, it was the result of excessive grief, but they do not explain the effect of sorrow upon the hair-follicles of the chin. Mr. Adam was an exception to the rule that grief has a tendency to make people bald.

Tabari says that Mr. Adam remained five hundred years in Paradise, but several Rabbis assert that events moved far more rapidly. He was created on a Friday. God gathered the dust in the first hour; in the second he formed the embryo; in the third the body was developed; in the fourth it was endowed with a soul; at the fifth it stood upright; at the sixth Mr. Adam named the animals; at the seventh he married Mrs. Eve; at the eighth Cain and his sister were born; at the ninth he was warned against the forbidden fruit; at the tenth he fell; at the eleventh he was "over the garden wall"; and at the twelfth hour he was toiling and sweating outside. This was a remarkably quick dispatch of business. During those eventful twelve hours poor Mr. Adam must have been puzzled to tell whether he was on his head or his feet.

Mr. Adam was probably christened by his maker. But Priaulx points out that there is a sort of pun in the Hebrew—God formed Adam out of *Adamah*, which according to Josephus means red earth. The Chinese say that the first man was kneaded of yellow earth, because they are yellow themselves, and other people assert different colors according to their own skins. Sale says that *Adamah* is Persic, meaning primarily red earth; and that in all the oriental languages it means *man* in general, but eminently the *first man*. Parkhurst tries to derive the word from a Hebrew noun signifying likeness, but this is only to bolster up the theory of Mr. Adam's being created "in the likeness of God." Gerald Massey says that "the name of *Adam* occurs often enough in Inner Africa, to show whence came the primal pair who were personified as the typical parents in Egypt, and continued in the sacred writings brought out of that land by the Hebrews."* He gives a striking list of several African languages in which the word *Adam*, with slight variations, means Male or Father in the generic sense like the Latin *Vir*. There is a curious corroboration of his theory in the remark of a writer cited by Eusebius, who says that *Protogonos*, or the *first made*, is a translation into Greek of the Egyptian title of *Adam*, taken from the pillars of *Thoth*.†

However Mr. Adam obtained his name, it is certain that he had it engraved on his card and cut on his brass-plate. "Mr. Adam, Gardener," was properly exhibited on the gate of Eden. But where Eden *was* is another matter. According to Genesis it was "eastward," which is not very precise. Commentators

* Vol. ii., pp. 16, 17.

† Calmet's *Dictionary*.

advance all sorts of theories, their only point of agreement being that Eden was *somewhere*.

Boss of this large establishment, Mr. Adam bustled proudly about. He was monarch of all he surveyed, and his right there was none to dispute; except, perhaps, a big-maned lion with hot carnivorous jaws, a long-mouthed alligator, a boa-constrictor, a stinging wasp, or an uncatchable flea. Surveying his subjects, he saw that all the lower animals had partners. Some of the males had one wife, and some had a fine harem, but there was none without a mate. He watched the amorous couples frisking about, and the doves billing and cooing, and his solitary heart filled with an ineffable yearning. Lifting up his hands to the sky, from which his heavenly parent occasionally dropped down for a conversation, he cried aloud, in the words that were afterwards used by poor diddled Esau, "Bless me, even me also, O my father."

Poor Mr. Adam pined away. He lost several tons in less than a month, and the Devil had serious thoughts of offering to purchase him as a living skeleton for his show in Pandemonium. At last God took pity on him. Forgetting that he had pronounced everything good, or not foreseeing that Moses would be mean enough to record the mistake, he said it was not good for Mr. Adam to be alone, and resolved to make the orphan-bachelor a wife. But how to do it? God had clean forgotten her, and had used up every bit of his material. All the nothing he had in stock when he began to make the universe was exhausted. There was not a particle of nothing left. God was obliged to use some of the old material over again. Putting Adam into a deep sleep, he carved out one of his ribs. It was the first surgical operation under chloroform.

With this spare rib God manufactured the first woman. Mr. Adam woke up minus a rib and plus a wife; an awkward, yet after all a pleasant exchange. He had never seen a woman before, but he put his arm round her waist at once, and said "You're my wife;" and Mrs. Eve blushed her consent to the engagement. It was the shortest courtship on record.

Before Mrs. Eve appeared on the scene, it seems that God passed all the lower animals in review before Mr. Adam, expecting him to choose a partner from some agreeable species. But not a single female made any impression on him. All he did was to give them their proper names. Mr. Adam was certainly a wonderful naturalist. He knew more than the Royal Society or the British Association. He excelled Buffon, Cuvier, and Darwin. It is a pity he did not write a Zoological Dictionary. Several writings are ascribed to him, such as the Book of the Generations of Adam, the Apocalypse of Adam, and the hundred and fourth Psalm. Why did he not leave us some more instructive productions?

How Mr. Adam got on with his wife, and how she got on with

him, will be treated at length in my *Bible Women*. I also reserve for that volume the curious Rabbinical stories of Lillith, who is said to have been his real first wife before Mrs. Eve was created. The whole story of the Fall is already discussed in my *Bible Romances*. I shall therefore confine myself to Mr. Adam's personal exploits.

Having eaten of the forbidden fruit of the tree of knowledge, he proved himself a miserable coward by throwing all the blame on his wife. He was hardly the sort of man a woman could trust in the hour of danger. If Mrs. Eve had said to him "Adam, my dear, there's a noise in the passage; take the poker, and go down and see who's about," he would have carefully locked the door and covered his head with the bed-clothes. God Almighty should at least have turned out a *man*. A fellow like Adam was only fit to clean boots and carry slops.

Certain Rabbis say that when Mr. Adam was cast out of Eden he fell right into Gehenna, but escaped to earth again by pronouncing the mystic word "Laverererereri." According to the Mohammedans he fell upon mount Serandib, in Ceylon, while Mrs. Eve fell at Dgidda, a port of the Red Sea, near Mecca. Tabari says that the male apple-eater lay where he fell for a hundred years, bemoaning his dreadful fate. After another hundred years he met his wife again, and then they cried together. Mrs. Eve's tears changed into pearls, and Mr. Adam snivelled so much that his briny drops formed the Tigris and the Euphrates.

Defoe, in his witty and amusing *History of the Devil*, tells us that after Cain set up as a family man, Mr. Adam dwelt on "the plains of Mecca in Arabia Felix." The Mohammedans say he lived in Ceylon. Michaelis supposes that India was first peopled, and the reader in his turn can suppose anything else he pleases.

When God told Mr. Adam that he should "eat the herb of the field" the poor fellow trembled all over, and exclaimed, "O Lord of all the world! I and my beast, the ass, shall have to eat out of the same manger!" But Gabriel gave him lessons in cooking, and the poor fellow got on very well at length, although at first, his badly-baked new bread gave him a frightful belly-ache.

Mrs. Eve being a good breeder, he had a numerous progeny. Before he died, his children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren, numbered something between twenty and seventy thousand, so that he was obliged to bless them in the lump when he shuffled off his mortal coil.

Calmet's English editor thinks the forbidden fruit poisoned Mr. Adam's blood, and wonders what an extraordinary age he might have reached if he had never eaten it. As it was he lived 960 years, which is an age we shall never attain to, though we refrain from apples all our days. Mr. Adam's longevity is

obviously mythological, for after the Deluge man's life is shortened, and as we approach the historical period it dwindles to three score years and ten. "According to the traditions of the Lamaic faith," says Priaux, "the first men lived to the age of 60,000 years." Buckle tells us of two early Hindu kings, Yudhisther and Alarka, who reigned respectively 27,000 and 66,000 years. Both these unfortunate princes were cut off in their prime! Another king was 2,000,000 years old when he came to the throne; he reigned 6,300,000 years, and then resigned his empire, and lingered on for 100,000 years more. That tough old monarch took over a hundred of Mr. Adam's lives to die in. Compared with him Mr. Adam was a chicken.

Mr. Adam's last will and testament, according to the Arabs, was dictated to the angel Gabriel, and sixty-two million angels were required to bring the pens and parchments from heaven. Seth was left as his sole executor.

There is no account of Mr. Adam's funeral, though it must have been a big affair, and considering his height, his coffin must have been a fine line for the undertaker. Some ancient writers say he was buried at Hebron. Origen held that he was buried at Calvary, where Christ was crucified. Jerome, however, doubted it, though it was soothing to the popular ear. The Persians say he was buried in Ceylon, where his tomb used to be shown. Jewish traditions assert that his body was embalmed. It was taken into the ark by Noah, and afterwards buried at Jerusalem by Melchizedek. The skull was found in later ages, and hence the spot was called Golgotha. Mr. Adam's skull must have been pretty thick.

Tatian and the *Encratites* were positive that poor Mr. Adam went to hell after all, but the Church condemned this opinion. The Fathers and the Rabbis say he did very hard penance and went to glory.

Thus endeth the history of Mr. Adam. He was very little credit to his maker, and although the first of Bible heroes, the sects all agree that his example is to be shunned. The *Adamites* of the second century imitated him by going to church naked, and the Anabaptists were accused of similar extravagance. But sane people do not emulate his conduct, for what little the Bible records of him shows that he was a great booby, and it is really wonderful that God Almighty exhausted his strength over such a wretched production.

CAPTAIN NOAH.

MR. ADAM'S early posterity included two remarkable persons. One was Methusaleh who lived 969 years, and was thus older than the grand old gardener himself. The other was Enoch, who never died at all, for he was so good that God had him conveyed to heaven by a special messenger. He appears to have ascended to glory, like Jesus Christ, body and soul together; and probably, as Jesus Christ sits at the Father's right hand, Enoch sits on his left; unless the Holy Ghost occupies that seat, instead of perching on the Father's shoulder.

The next person of distinction is Captain Noah. Lamech, his father, was 182 years old when he begat our hero, who was probably his first-born, for no other child is mentioned, and gentlemen who lived nearly a thousand years did not marry as early as we do. The word *Noah* means *repose* or *rest*. Perhaps Mrs. Lamech had a bad time in her confinement, and they called the bantling by that name to express their comfort that the job was over. Or may be it was a lazy baby, who sucked his thumb, stared into vacancy, and sat still wherever they placed him. Unfortunately the Bible is silent on these interesting points. Captain Noah lived 950 years in all, yet our record only covers one of them, during which he acted as a navigator. What he did in the first 600 years of his life, or what he did in the last 350 years, is an inscrutable mystery. God and Noah only know, and it is difficult to find either of them nowadays.

Captain Noah became a navigator in his six hundredth year in this way. The Devil had so effectually planted the seeds of original sin in man that "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Things were so bad that God, who is unchangeable, "repented that he had made man on the earth." The Lord resolved to put all his business in this world into liquidation. It was a case of universal bankruptcy. All that was saved out of the catastrophe was a consignment of eight human beings, and an unknown number of elephants, crocodiles, horses, pigs, dogs, cats, and fleas. In short, God determined to drown all his living creatures except some specimens of each variety to start afresh with. Rabbi Johanan says that the very animals were demoralised as well as the men; but

neither he nor any other theological doctor explains why the Lord kept samples of the old stock to breed from, instead of creating a brand-new set.

Our hero was the only person who "found grace in the eyes of the Lord." He was "a just man and perfect," and he "walked with God." Yet we shall find that his history does not contain a single good action, while it contains at least two bad ones. If the Lord could not have selected a better man than Captain Noah the world must have been in a frightful condition indeed.

Let us pause to inquire how it was that Noah was the only passable specimen of the human race. Original sin does not account for all their depravity, for he had it as well as they. Some divines have found the explanation in the words "the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair." Reckoning ministers as sons of God, the fondness has continued ever since. The deluge itself could not wash out the amatory feelings with which they regard those sweet creatures who were supposed to be the Devil's chief agents. Even to this day it is a fact that courtship goes on with remarkable briskness in religious circles. Churches and chapels are places of harmless assignation, and many matches are made in Sunday-schools, where Alfred and Angelina meet to read the Scripture and flirt. The clergy are notorious for their partiality to the fair sex. They purr round the ladies like black tom-cats. Some of them are adepts in the art of rolling one eye to heaven and letting the other languish on the fair faces of the daughters of men. It is also noticeable that the Protestant clericals marry early and often, and generally beget a numerous progeny; while the Catholic priest who, being celibate, *never* (well, *hardly* ever) adds to the population, "mashes" the ladies through the confessional, worming out all their secrets, and making them as pliable as wax in his holy hands.

Who the original "sons of God" were is a moot point. Many theories have been advanced by Jewish and Christian divines. According to some, the sons of God were the offspring of Seth, who was born in succession to righteous Abel, while the daughters of men were the offspring of wicked Cain. Among the oriental Christians it is said that the children of Seth tried to regain Paradise by living in great austerity on Mount Hermon, but they soon tired of their laborious days and cheerless nights, and cast sheep's-eyes on the daughters of Cain, whose beauty was equal to their father's wickedness. Marriages followed, and the Devil triumphed again.

According to the Cabbalists, two angels, Aza and Azael, complained to God at the creation of man. God answered, "You, O angels, if you were in the lower world, you too would sin." They descended on earth, and directly they saw the ladies they forgot heaven. They married and exchanged the hallelujahs of

the celestial chorus for the tender tones of loving women and the sweet prattle of little children. Having sinned, or to use the vile language of religion, "polluted themselves with women," they became clothed with flesh. Trying to regain Paradise, they failed and were cast back on the mountains, where they continued to beget giants and devils. The latter were the Jins of Mohammedanism. Very soon the world was completely in their power. They ruled everywhere, and built colossal works, including the pyramids.

The "giants" have been cleared out of our Revised Version. Probably the translators thought these mythical personages were too suggestive of Jack and the Beanstalk, so they have left the original *Nephilim* in the text. They know, as well as we do, that every nation on the face of the earth has similar legends of "mighty men which were of old, men of renown." They are conspicuous in the mythologies of Greece, India, China, and Scandinavia, and we find them also in the mythologies of America. Greybeards talk of the wonderful times when they were young, and nations prattle about the youth of mankind. Skies were bluer, the sun was brighter, the earth was more fertile, the men were bigger and braver and the women more lovely and loving, in the golden age. Boccaccio gravely relates, in his *Genealogia Deorum*, that in his own time some Sicilian peasants discovered the body of a giant in a cave, and the staff of this wonderful being was fifteen hundred-weight! Girolamo Maggio affirmed that while he was a prisoner in Africa he actually saw the head of a giant, which was eleven palms in circumference!* No doubt the fossil remains of large extinct animals gave color to the general superstition as to the enormous size of primitive men.

God told Captain Noah that he was going to drown the world, and ordered him to build a ship for his own family and a large menagerie. The "ark," as it is called, was to be 300 cubits long, 50 cubits broad, and 30 cubits high. Reckoning the cubit, which was the length of a man's forearm, as eighteen inches, this would be 450 feet long, 75 feet broad, and 45 feet high. Anxious to make Captain Noah's vessel as large as possible, Cruden says that "Some are of opinion that the cubit which Noah made use of when he built the ark was equal to six common cubits."† But why *six*? Why not sixty, or six thousand? Where there is absolutely no information, one man's *opinion* is as good as another's.

Captain Noah must have been a first-rate shipwright to build a vessel of these dimensions. Did God inspire him for the purpose? And how is it that Captain Noah, who lived 350 years after the deluge, and his immediate descendants, lost the art of

* Priaulx, *Questiones Mosaicæ*, pp. 180, 181.

† *Concordance*, article "Cubit."

shipbuilding, which had to be rediscovered by their posterity? The ancient vessels in eastern stone-pictures were small, nearly always open, and rowed with oars, though sails were used in addition. Even in the days of Rome and Carthage very much the same kind of vessel was employed, and when Julius Cæsar crossed from Gaul to Britain he required a tremendous fleet to convey his little army. Fifteen centuries later the Spanish galleons were floating castles, but the English ships were still small. Men like Drake and Raleigh crossed the Atlantic and fought naval battles in crafts of thirty, forty, and fifty tons.

Hebrew is a curious language, being all consonants. The vowel points are a modern invention. The word translated "ark" therefore is spelt *tebeh*, *thebeh*, or *thebet*. It only occurs twice in Scripture. The second time it is given to the ark of bulrushes, in which little Moses was concealed. It means something *closed up*, like a trunk. From the pictures of the ark in Calmet's *Dictionary*, it seems to have been a floating house. Calmet's English editor argues that it *must* have been flat, for if it were a keeled ship, its draught would have exceeded the fifteen cubits of water that covered the highest mountains, and it might have stranded on some rocky peak.

Peter calls Captain Noah "a preacher of righteousness," and no doubt while he was building the ark he gave his neighbors many sermons, warning them to flee from the wrath to come. But they only mocked him, say the Mohammedans. "They took their evening walks," says Defoe, "to see what he was doing,"* and laughed at his big boat that was to float over the hills. Euty chius, of Alexandria, who wrote in the tenth century, and probably quoted from apocryphal writings that are now lost, says that Captain Noah made a bell of plane wood, about five feet high, which he sounded every morning, noon, and evening to warn his neighbors that the deluge was coming.† Still they laughed at him, as we should do to-day; but when the deluge *did* come, they rushed to the ark in such multitudes that they would have crowded and sunk it, if the lions, tigers, and other ferocious animals had not fought them off the gangway.

There was no room for these people. All the space, and a great deal more, was needed for the menagerie. Two of every species of beast, bird, and insect, went into the ark, according to the sixth of Genesis; or two of all unclean animals and seven of the clean, according to the seventh chapter. There are already known at least 1,600 species of mammalia, 12,500 of birds, 600 of reptiles, and of insects and other inferior creatures at least 1,000,000. Captain Noah's menagerie was unique. It was absolutely complete, down to the smallest midge and the last variety of flea. Whether he collected them from all parts of the earth, or whether they came to him of their own

* *History of the Devil*, chap. viii. † Gould, vol. ii., pp. 109, 110.

accord, is an open question, for either view is favored by the text. I have dealt with this, and the general scientific aspect of the deluge, in my *Bible Romances*, and I will not repeat myself here. But it must be stated, as a fact in Captain Noah's career, that he was expressly told to "gather" food for his passengers, and of course he obeyed the divine command. What a tremendous task this was may be easily imagined. For the rest I must refer the reader to the above volume; only adding that if, as legend says, it took sixty-two million angels to bring the materials for Mr. Adam's last will, it must have taken all heaven, including the Trinity, to collect twelve months' provender for this floating Zoo.

Captain Noah, his wife, his three sons Shem, Ham and Japheth, and their three wives, were the only human beings who got into the ark and escaped the fate of drowning. But according to Eastern traditions, there was a ninth person who effected an entrance, namely our old friend the Devil. He caught hold of the donkey's tail as that sedate quadruped stepped on the plank, and of course Neddy could not make much headway. "Come in quick, you cursed one," cried Captain Noah, who was anxious to weigh anchor and set sail. The donkey and the Devil were soon inside. But when the patriarch caught sight of Old Nick he exclaimed, "Holla, what right have you in here?" Whereupon the Devil replied, "You said 'Come in, you cursed one,' and here I am."*

Some Rabbis declare that the rhinoceros was too big to be admitted. Its head was taken on board, but its body swam astern. The rhinoceros was very much larger in ancient times, for Rabbi Jannai says he saw a young one, only a day old, whose neck was three miles long, and the river Jordan was actually choked by its excretions.

Not only was the human race destroyed, but the giants also perished, with the single exception of Og. He was so tall that he stopped "the windows of heaven" with his hands, or the water would have risen over his head. The other giants took to swimming, but God made the water so hot that they were boiled to death. Og, however, swam beside the rhinoceros, where the water was kept cool. According to the Midrash, he climbed upon the roof, and when they tried to dislodge him he swore that if he were allowed to remain he and his posterity would become the captain's slaves. Such a capital bargain was soon clinched, and Og's daily rations were passed through a porthole. After the deluge Og must have been a more valuable servant than "the drudging goblin" of Milton's *L'Allegro*.

Considerable interest attaches to the fate of another character. According to our English Bible, Methusaleh died in the very year of the flood. The Midrash says that he expired seven days

* Gould, vol. i., . 112.

before it began, but Eusebius admits that "according to all editions" of the Septuagint he "lived fifteen years after the Deluge, but where he was preserved through it is uncertain."* Perhaps our ancient friend, like the Irishman's ancestor who survived the flood, paddled his own canoe on that occasion.

Captain Noah's voyage could not have been a pleasant one. Some say he made the circuit of the globe, but he never touched at a port or sighted land, and the monotony must have been stupefying. Disgusting is a mild word for the stench, from which there was no escape. The huge ship had only one window and one door, and apparently both were closed, for "the Lord shut them in," and perhaps the precaution was necessary to keep them from committing suicide. Surely the stoutest heart and the stoutest stomach would succumb in a twelve-months' trip under such loathsome conditions.

Where all the water came from is unknown, and it returned to the same place. Five months before Captain Noah got ashore, his ship "rested upon the mountains of Ararat." Scripture does not say upon how many of them. The highest peak of this range is 17,210 feet high, 14,320 feet above the plain of the Araxes. The people of the neighborhood point to a step on the mountain side, covered perpetually with snow and glacier, where they say the ark stranded. Josephus† said that the remains of this wonderful craft were to be seen in a good state of preservation. The Christian Fathers told the same fine story. Benjamin of Tudela says that the wood was all carried away by the Caliph Omar, in A.D. 640, and placed in a mosque he erected on an island of the Tigris. But Johann Strauss, in 1670, said he saw the ark grounded on the snow. Prévoux, another traveller, saw a large building at Chenna, said to have been built by Captain Noah, and a piece of the ark was exhibited through an iron grating. One of the beams is shown in the Lateran at Rome, and no doubt it is quite as authentic as other relics of Holy Mother Church.

Captain Noah and all his menagerie, including the elephant, got down somehow. The animals all dispersed, after bidding each other an affectionate farewell. There was no food for them of course; and how long the lion left the lamb at large, every true believer must settle for himself.

Shem, Ham, and Japheth, with their three wives, whose names are not recorded (for women in the early part of the Bible are only regarded as breeding machines), "overspread the whole earth;" that is, they peopled the whole world. Shem is thought to have appropriated Asia, Ham took Africa, and Japheth settled in Europe. America and Australia were not discovered when the Bible was written, or Captain Noah would have had five sons instead of three. In religion, as in other things, we live and learn.

* Cited in Gould, vol. i., p. 105.

† *Antiquities*, I., 3.

John P. Robinson, he

Says they didn't know everything down in Judee.

God Almighty chose Hebrew to write in, for some purpose best known to himself; but it is so curious, or so obscure, that it often means anything or nothing. Shem is said by the doctors to mean—name, or renown, or he that places, or he that is placed. The reader pays his money and takes his choice. Japheth means—he that persuades, or is handsome. Either will do. Ham or Cham, means brown or black. More than once in the Psalms, Africa is called the land of Cham; and Plutarch, in his *De Iside et Osiride*, calls Egypt *Chemia*.

Christians, who laugh at Darwinism, and assert that every species was created separate, should explain how the three sons of one father and mother have peopled the world with white men, yellow men, red men, and black men. The black races are so distinct that the Talmud tried to account for them by saying that Ham turned sooty in the ark through incontinence. Orientalists say his skin darkened when his son was cursed. Any theory is better than the cowardice of silence.

The Bible does not inform us whether Captain and Mrs. Noah had any children after the flood. Perhaps they did, and perhaps they didn't. Mrs. Noah was called *Noriah* by the Gnostics, and *Noerna* or *Tethira* by some ancient Rabbis. She is called *Nuraito* in Syro-Chaldee. This name comes from a word signifying *fire*. Curiously this is the very meaning of *Pyrrha*, the name of the wife of Deucalion, who was saved from the flood sent by Jupiter, in a skiff which stranded on the top of Parnassus.*

Being a very religious man, otherwise he would not have been spared in the deluge, Captain Noah's first business on reaching *terra firma* was to pay his devotions to the Lord. He "buildd an altar"; that is, probably, he made a heap of stones; on which he sacrificed of "every clean beast, and of every clean fowl." It was the biggest holocaust on record. Never was there so much meat, venison and poultry dressed for cooking; and if the animals were all slaughtered before they were roasted (let us hope they were), those eight butchers must have taken many days cutting their throats or wringing their necks. The "burnt offerings" were very acceptable to Jehovah, who "smelled a sweet savor," sniffing up the odor of this extensive *cuisine* with the greatest relish. His tough old heart mollified under the sweet influence, and he said "I will not curse the ground any more, neither will I again smite everything living, as I have done." Perhaps he thought that if he gave way to his temper again, and made a clean sweep, there would be no more "sweet savor" for his holy nostrils.

The next thing Captain Noah did was to make a vinery, and as soon as he brewed he drank deep of that liquor which, as the

* Lucian, *De Dea Syria* and *Timon*. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Bk. I.

Bible says, "cheereth God and man."* The result was that the "just man and *perfect*" got beastly drunk. According to the Bible, this *perfect* performance went on in "his tent." The Hebrew word is *ahelah*, and Parkhurst† says it was "a tent consecrated to divine worship," so that Captain Noah was drunk in the synagogue. Parkhurst adds that the old salt had probably "retired thither in expectation of a prophetic dream." Perhaps the oracle did not work, and Captain Noah sought inspiration in the winecup. No doubt Bacchus gave him a prophetic dream, but it seems to have been something like a nightmare, for he awoke in a most abominable passion, and imitated his God by damning a third of his own posterity.

Loosely clad in his flowing robe, the patriarch fell back in his inebriation, and was guilty of indecent exposure. Ham dropped in promiscuously, and witnessed this edifying spectacle. He went out and told Shem and Japheth, who took a garment and covered their father's nakedness, walking backwards in order not to see his shame. When his booze was over, Captain Noah was wild at learning what had happened. Commentators say that Ham had scoffed at his governor, but the Bible does not corroborate them. Anyhow Captain Noah swore, but he damned the wrong party. "Cursed be Canaan," he cried, "a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren." Michaelis hints that the text is corrupt, and that it should read "Cursed be Ham, the father of Canaan." But as the curse was clearly to be fulfilled through the children, the emendation does not alter its iniquity. It is supposed that the Canaanites were the descendants of Canaan, and that when the Jews dispossessed them by wars of unparalleled ferocity, the chosen people were only fulfilling the just curse of an offended father on his son's posterity! Negro slavery has also been justified on the same foolish and wicked principle.

Drunkenness, swearing, and injustice, are the only things recorded of this *perfect* man during the 350 years he survived the flood. There is not a single good deed or sensible word placed to his credit. He is the second Bible hero, but his example is better honored in the breach than in the observance.

Captain Noah was probably buried. His tomb is shown at Mount Lebanon. It is an old aqueduct, over sixty feet long. Large as this is, they say the old fellow could not be buried at full length but had to have his legs doubled under his thighs.‡ And there we will leave him, like the dull old folio in Browning's poem, to "Dry-rot at ease till the Judgment Day."

* Judges ix., 13.

† Hebrew Dictionary.

‡ Thomson, *The Land and the Book*, vol. i., p. 353

FATHER ABRAHAM.

ALTHOUGH the "false prophet" Mohammed asserts that Abraham was neither a Christian nor a Jew, but an orthodox Mussulman, it is perfectly clear, according to the Bible, that he was the founder of the chosen people. God selected him from all the inhabitants of the world, four centuries after the Flood, to be the father of a special nation. Abraham begat Isaac, Isaac begat Jacob, Jacob begat a dozen from Reuben to Benjamin, and so they went on begetting each other to the end of the chapter. Yet it is highly probable that such a person as Abraham never existed. Not only the Jews, but almost all the tribes and barbarous nations on earth, trace their descent to a common ancestor.* This useful fiction serves as a social bond, by giving a sense of kindred to members of the same community. But although Abraham is a myth, he is none the less a Bible hero. He enjoyed the proud and unique distinction of being *the friend of God*.† His character, therefore, should be as perfect as human frailty will allow. But, alas, Abraham was like other Scripture worthies, and the most consummate sophistry cannot make him a pattern of excellence.

This hero's original name was Abram, which means "high father." After bearing it over a hundred years, he had it changed to Abraham, which means "the father of a multitude." His wife's name was also changed from Sarai (*my princess*) to Sarah (*the princess*).

Father Abraham is first mentioned at the end of the eleventh chapter of Genesis. He appears to have been the eldest son of Terah, who set up as a father at the age of seventy, and died at the ripe old age of two hundred and five. When Terah had joined the majority, the Lord called Abraham out from his kindred to the land of Canaan. He was then seventy-five years old.‡ But if his father was dead he must have been a hundred and thirty-five. St. Jerome and St. Augustine give up this difficulty as insoluble.§ Calmet, however, cuts the gordian knot. He surmises that Abraham was Terah's youngest son, although Genesis names him the first, and therefore as the eldest.

* Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, vol. i., page 402; vol. ii., p. 235.

† 2 Chronicles xx., 7; Isaiah xli., 8; James ii., 23.

‡ Genesis xii., 4.

§ Voltaire, *Philosophical Dictionary*, "Abraham."

Among the Jews and Mohammedans there are many traditions of Abraham's youth. Holy Scripture passes over his first seventy-five years at a single bound, but there must have been some remarkable incidents in the youth of such an extraordinary person. It is related that his birth was heralded by a star; that King Nimrod sought the young child's life; that the baby was hidden by his mother, and protected by the angel Gabriel; that he was nourished in his concealment by milk, butter, honey, and date-juice, which flowed from his fingers as he sucked them; that he foiled all the armies that were sent to capture him; that he had an interview with Nimrod, when all the idols in the palace fell, and the king rolled from his throne in convulsions. As he grew older he played havoc with his father's trade. Terah kept an idol-shop, and Abraham cried stinking fish to all the customers. One day he smashed all the paternal stock except the biggest god, in whose hands he placed the stick, and when the old man returned home to empty the till and found his business bankrupt, the pious young shopman swore that the surviving deity had demolished all the rest. Subsequently he refused to worship Nimrod's gods, and was ordered to be cremated, but he remained in the fire for three days and nights without the slightest inconvenience.*

When the Lord called Abraham into the land of Canaan, he made him many fine promises, all of which have been broken, although they were ratified again and again. "I will make of thee a great nation," said Jehovah. But the Jews never were a great nation, nor has Abraham's seed become as "the dust of the earth" for number. The Jews are more numerous now than they ever were before, yet they boast only seven of the fourteen hundred millions on the globe.

Jehovah also entered into an offensive and defensive alliance with Abraham, saying, "I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee." The natural laws of morality were henceforth to be suspended, and people were to be judged according to their sympathy or aversion for the Jews. A further promise was, "In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." What a splendid piece of impudence! Surely the Jewish historians must have strutted like turkey-cocks as they gloated over this passage.

God *promised* Abraham the land of Canaan, but as he could not take possession of that fine property, he was glad to run down to Egypt to escape a famine. According to Jewish tradition, as he reached the river of Egypt, he for the first time in his life noticed the beauty of Sarah. His wonderful features reflected in the water! † Fearing that her marvellous loveliness would set men's hearts aflame, and that he might fare badly as

* Gould, vol. i., pp. 171—186.

† Gould, vol. i., p. 189.

the Menelaus of this Helen, he persuaded her to pass herself off as his sister.

Here is courage for you! Surely the Lord might have found a braver friend. Abraham's solicitude was all about his own skin, his wife's honor being a secondary consideration. The natural result was an infernal mess. The princes of Egypt went mad over Sarah's beauty, and Pharaoh put her in his seraglio. What happened there the Lord only knows, but if Sarah had returned to her cuckold with a cracked reputation, he would have had no one to blame but himself. Pharaoh acted naturally. He admired beauty, and saw no harm in marrying another man's sister. But Abraham's friend was of a different opinion. The Lord "plagued Pharaoh and all his house with great plagues," and the poor king was glad to pack the precious couple out of Egypt by the next mail.

How old does the reader think Sarah was? Sixty-five at least. She was a second Ninon de l'Enclos. Or rather she resembled the Madame de Valentinois of Brantome,* who, at the age of sixty-six, retained the beauty, the freshness, and the attraction of her thirtieth year, and was loved and served by a great and valiant king.

Pharaoh gave Abraham a good scolding before he expelled him, but the lesson was lost on this friend of God. Twenty-five years later he passed his wife off as his sister a second time. Sarah was then ninety and pregnant, but her youthful charms fascinated Abimelech the King of Gerar, who "took" her, but in the elegant language of Scripture, was not allowed to "touch" her. The Lord not only watched over Sarah's chastity, but as a punishment for the king's folly in believing that the friend of God could speak the truth, he "fast closed up all the wombs of the house of Abimelech," and their sterility was only removed at Abraham's intercession. The unfortunate monarch was naturally angry with the old fellow. "Why," he asked, "did you not tell me she was your wife? Why did you say she was your sister?" Thereupon the unvenerable hypocrite replied that she *was* his sister as well as his wife, being the daughter of his father by another mother. It is obvious, however, that he deliberately arranged with Sarah to pretend that they were not husband and wife; and, although the commentators have expended a good deal of ingenuity in palliating the offence, they cannot explain away the damning fact.

This little trick appears to have run in the blood, for Isaac, who in this respect was a true chip of the old block, passed off Rebekah as his sister for a similar reason, namely to keep himself out of danger.† On all three occasions the godly liars were rebuked by the persons they deceived. But the Lord never reproached them, and it seems that morality was in a more

* Discours V.

† Genesis xxvi., 6-11.

flourishing condition among the "heathen" than it was among God's elect. Abraham was not even above profiting by his arrangement with Sarah. Pharaoh and Abimelech gave him sheep, oxen, asses, camels and slaves, while they were courting his "sister," and he was too much of a Jew to return those nice little presents when they discovered their mistake.

Yet this cowardly huckster suddenly developed into a full-blown hero when his nephew was taken captive in a big battle. Hastily arming three hundred and eighteen trained servants, he pursued the victorious armies of five great kings. Falling upon them by night, he smote them hip and thigh, rescued Lot with all the other captives, and recovered every bit of the spoil. Profane history furnishes no parallel to this heroic feat. Even the three hundred Spartans, who defended the pass of Thermopylæ against the hosts of Xerxes, were less successful, for with the exception of one man they were all slain, while Abraham does not appear to have lost a single warrior. We must go to Scripture itself for similar prodigies of valor; where we find Gideon, who defeated a whole army with three hundred men armed with pitchers and lamps; and Samson, who slew a thousand Philistines with the jaw-bone of an ass.

According to the Jewish legends, Abraham was deserted by his servants as they approached the enemy, but the patriarch fell upon the five armies alone, and with God's assistance he polished them all off before daybreak.*

On returning from the fight, Abraham met a gentleman named Melchizedek, who was "priest of the most high God." This worthy sky-pilot gave Abraham his blessing, and Abraham "gave him tithes of all." Melchizedek is described by Paul as "without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life."† Whenever we meet anyone who answers to that description, we will pay him tithes too. Probably the priests inserted this passage to give the highest antiquity to the ten per cent. business. Yet we need not go to the Jews for the origin of tithes, for the custom is widespread. The Greeks generally dedicated a tenth of their spoils to Apollo, but the Athenians to Minerva, and the Samians to Juno. The Carthaginians sent a tithe of their Sicilian spoils to Hercules, and the Arabians offered a tenth of their frankincense to Sabis.‡ The Persians, the Scythians, and the Romans also paid tithes to their gods.§ Superstitious people give presents to their deities to purchase their favor, and the priests of every religion have found a way to turn devotion into a duty.||

* Gould, vol. i., p. 194.

† Hebrews vii., 3.

‡ Selden, *History of Tythes*, iii.

§ Calmet, *Tythes*.

|| Hooker's reason why a "tenth of our worldly profits" is the proper amount to give to the Church is very curious. *Three* is the number of the Trinity, *seven* the number of our spiritual perfections, and *ten* the

Another part of religion which the Bible traces back to Abraham is the rite of circumcision. "Ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin," says Jehovah, "and it shall be a token of the covenant between me and you."* This was rather an obscene token, but the Lord's ways are not our ways. Abraham circumcised all the males of his household on one day. He was ninety-nine years old, and the surgical operation must have been trying at his time of life.

Circumcision is no token of a covenant between Jehovah and Abraham, nor is it a special mark of the chosen people. Herodotus tells us that circumcision was practised by the Colchians, Egyptians, Ethiopians, and Syrians, nearly five centuries before Christ, when it was beginning to be discontinued by the Phœnicians.† The rite obtains among the Arabs, the Abyssinians, and the Kaffirs; it was found by Captain Cook among the South Pacific islanders; a similar practice prevailed in Mexico‡, and it existed among the aborigines of Australia.§ Such a widely prevalent rite, found in parts of the world that have no intercourse with each other, must have had a general origin. It is simply a relic of primitive superstition. The ancient priests of Rhea amputated their genitals altogether in honor of their goddess. What wonder, then, that a milder form of mutilation should have survived among whole nations. Both among the Jews,|| and among every other people, circumcision was effected with a stone implement.¶ No doubt the use of this article, in accordance with the intense conservatism of religion, had survived with the rite itself from the Stone Age.

All authorities agree in stating that circumcision was obligatory on the priestly caste in Egypt. This is a further proof of its religious character. But many of the people also submitted to it, as a mark of purity and holiness. That the Jews, who had been in Egypt, should have borrowed this rite, is not surprising;** but that the Egyptian priests, the hierophants of a hoary creed and the leaders of a haughty civilisation, should have condescended to borrow it from their slaves, is absolutely incredible.

Let us return to Abraham. His wife Sarah was barren, like all the other Bible women who were to give birth to miraculous children. She was anxious, however, that Abraham should have children by somebody, so she gave him her handmaid Hagar to breed from. Nothing loth, he "went in unto Hagar,

number of nature's perfections as well as "the highest we can rise unto, without iteration of numbers under it." Here be reasons!—*Ecclesiastical Polity*, bk. 5, chap. lxxix., 6, 7.

* Genesis xvii., 11. † Bk. II., 104. ‡ Prialx, pp. 381-9.

§ Tylor, *Early History of Mankind*, p. 219.

|| Exodus iv., 25; Joshua v., 2. ¶ Tylor, pp. 216-219. ** Joshua v., 9.

and she conceived." Eighty-five was his age; but there was life in the old boy yet. Hagar being in the family-way by her master, Sarah was expected to sing small; but the good lady's temper was none of the tamest, and she bothered Abraham till he exclaimed, "Do as you like with her." Sarah took full advantage of the permission, and Hagar ran away; but an angel persuaded her to return, and in due course Abraham was presented with a bouncing boy named Ishmael, who is supposed to be the father of the Arabians.

Thirteen years later "the Lord appeared to Abram," and said, "I am the Almighty God." Our hero fell on his face, and "God talked with him." This was no angel, but the great I Am himself. What a pity there was no photographer handy to take his likeness! Oh, the joy it would be to have a portrait of God Almighty over the mantel-piece! But, alas! that pleasure is denied us. Photography was not invented then; and since the advent of modern science Jehovah has kept carefully out of the way. No Abraham has a chat with him, no Moses sees his back parts.

Before leaving, the Lord promised that Sarah should be "a mother of nations." God said it, but Abraham thought his maker was joking. He "fell upon his face, and laughed." But the Lord paid him another visit, and ratified the promise. As he sat at his tent door in the heat of the day three men appeared. Either one of them was God, or God was with them, for all the conversation went on between Abraham and "the Lord." We are told that, after the three men went, "Abraham stood yet before the Lord." The text is very confused; but God was evidently there, and it has been suggested that the three visitors were Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

With Bedouin hospitality, Abraham said, Stop to dinner, and they accepted the invitation. Sarah baked cakes, while he prepared the roast veal, which was served up with butter and milk. Fortunately Genesis preserves the bill of fare at God Almighty's dinner. Should he ever favor us with a call, we shall know what to put on the table.

Dinner being over, the Lord was in a good humor, for dyspepsia is unknown to his omnipotent stomach. Rubbing his hands together genially, he said to himself, "I must do something for Abraham. Poor old fellow, he wants a boy, and hang it he shall have one, a real son and heir." Certainly it did not look a very promising case. Abraham was a hundred, and Sarah was ninety. But, as the poet says, "God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform." Turning to his "friend," the Lord said, "Sarah, thy wife, shall have a son." The old lady overheard this promise, but she was old enough to know better, so she "laughed within herself." The Lord has long ears, however, and he heard her smile. "Abraham," said his Godship, "what is the old woman laughing about? Does she fancy I

can't manage it?" Sarah overheard this too, and being a bit frightened, she said, "I didn't laugh." "You did though," said the Lord, and the matter dropped. But when nine moons had rolled by Sarah had a baby, and they christened it Isaac. Many other barren women had babies at the same time, according to tradition, while the blind saw, the dumb spake, the deaf heard, the lame walked, crazy people recovered their senses, and the sun shone with forty-eight times his usual brilliancy.* Altogether it was a fine old time, and we daresay there was a good deal of wetting the baby's nose.

Having one child, and perhaps thinking she was in for a good family, Sarah concluded that Hagar was *de trop*, so when the weaning feast came on she complained that the young minx laughed at her, and asked Abraham to turn her adrift. "The son of this bondwoman," said she, "shall not be heir with my son." Abraham was reluctant to turn the girl out of doors, but the Lord told him to obey Sarah, and early one morning he sent Hagar and Ishmael packing with some dry bread and a bottle of water. The poor mother and boy "wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba," their provisions were soon spent, and the pathetic picture of Hagar weeping over the imminent death of her child is enough to melt a heart of stone. An angel came to their assistance, but that does not diminish Abraham's crime. Even if a man seduces a woman, and withdraws himself from her society afterwards to avoid further sin, he is bound to protect her from want and its many perils; and the obligation is, if possible, still deeper if she is the mother of his child. Theologians, who seek to whitewash Abraham, and to justify Jehovah's advice, have played fast and loose with the primary laws of morality; but every honest heart will feel that the "father of the faithful" was a contemptible scoundrel, or a hen-pecked fool, or a damnable mixture of both.

Having turned Ishmael out of house and home, to live or die, it is not surprising that Abraham readily obeyed the Lord when he was told to offer up Isaac as a burnt-offering. An altar was built, the wood laid in order, and Isaac bound as a victim for the sacrifice. Already the father's hand, holding the fatal knife, was raised to strike death into the heart of his son, when the tragedy was averted by a voice from heaven, telling him to spare the lad. "Now I know that thou fearest God," said Jehovah, "seeing that thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me." Abraham was ready to commit a murder for his "friend." Not in act, but in intention, he had slain his son. And this readiness to perpetrate any crime at God's instigation is hailed as a sovereign proof of his piety. Even in the New Testament, Paul† commends Abraham's faith in offering up Isaac, and James declares that by such "works" his "faith"

* Gould, vol. i., p. 206.

† Hebrews xi., 17.

was "made perfect."* When such frightful atrocities are sanctioned by the Bible, it is a sin to put it into the hands of children, and a scandal to call it the infallible Word of God.

Neither Abraham nor Jehovah could dispense with a sacrifice of some kind, so a ram was immolated in Isaac's stead. Tradition says that this opportune animal was brought from Paradise, and ever since the Lord God planted the Garden of Eden it had fed under the Tree of Life, and drunk of the river that waters its roots; and the Last Trumpets of the Day of Judgment will be made from its wonderful horns.†

Sarah died at a hundred and twenty-seven, and after seeing Isaac settled, Abraham married Keturah, who with or without his assistance was the mother of six sons. Dr. Giles observes that Abraham had laughed at the notion of his being a father at a hundred, yet when he is thirty-seven years older he marries again and has six children. He surmises that Abraham was a polygamist, like Jacob, David and Solomon; that he had children by Keturah during Sarah's lifetime; and that a late compiler "ranges in successive dates events which really were contemporaneous."‡

Abraham died at a hundred and seventy-five, and was buried in Sarah's grave. The Mussulmans say he was the first man who ever had a white beard, and that God kissed him, and he gave up the ghost.§ His tomb was "discovered" ever so many centuries after the funeral, in a cave near Hebron. Isaac and Jacob were buried in the same hole, and all three bodies were in a fine state of preservation. The Christians built a church over the spot, but the Turks have changed it into a mosque, and forbidden Christians to approach it.|| Several books have also been ascribed to Abraham. They were mentioned by the Rabbis, by Athanasius, and by Origen. Probably the old fellow would be as astonished as anybody to learn that he wrote them.

We now take leave of this Friend of God. He was a liar, a coward, and a would-be murderer. His proper place would be in the Chamber of Horrors. But Jesus Christ tells us that he is in heaven, with Lazarus the sore-legged beggar in his bosom. May it never be our fate to pig with such company, for although Abraham *was* and probably *is* God's friend, we decidedly object to spending our eternity inside the shirt-front of an elderly Jew.

* James ii., 21, 22.

† Gould, vol. i., p. 228.

‡ Rev. Dr. Giles, *Hebrew Records*, p. 233.

§ Gould, vol. i., p. 236.

|| Calmet.

JUGGLING JACOB.

GOD was particularly fond of this Bible hero. Abraham was his *friend*, but he *loved* Jacob. How much reason there was for this affection will appear in the course of our narrative. Jehovah himself was a desperately sharp shaver at a bargain, but Jacob beat him hollow in that line. He is the father of the great race of Jeremy Diddlers. He diddled everybody he ever met, including God himself. His life was an uninterrupted career of *jewing*, save for one little affair, in which his uncle Laban diddled *him*.

But, before we follow Jacob's adventures, we wish to say a few words about our old friend Captain Noah. According to Scripture, Noah lived fifty-eight years after the birth of Abraham, while Shem lived a hundred and ten years after the birth of Isaac, and fifty years after the birth of Jacob. How was it that neither Abraham, Isaac, nor Jacob knew either of them? They were the most interesting and important men alive at that time; they had seen the world before the Flood; and one of them had seen people who knew Mr. Adam. Both of them had lived through the confusion of tongues at Babel, and were well acquainted with the history of the world. Yet they are never once mentioned during all the centuries they survived their exit from the Ark. Why is this? Simply because the whole story is a myth. Each character plays his part, and when he is no longer wanted he is quietly dismissed from the stage. Up to a point, like the hero of one of Bret Harte's poems, they are all alive and kicking; afterwards they still resemble that gentleman, who was knocked down in the spree, and "the subsequent proceedings interested him no more."

Isaac married at forty. His wife Rebekah was barren (of course), and Isaac had to pray hard before she got into the family-way. Naturally the result was twins. "The children," we are told, "struggled together within her." Rabbi Eliezer says that they carried on a theological discussion there.* Another Rabbi asserts that when Rebekah passed before a synagogue, Jacob tried to get born; and when she passed before an idol temple, Esau tried to do the same. Poor Rebekah "went to

* Gould, vol. ii., p. 16.

inquire of the Lord" about the matter. The answer was "Two nations are in thy womb." What a prospect! The poor young woman found to her cost that "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth *much*."

Esau was born first. He was red, and "all over like a hairy garment." Jacob followed quickly; in fact "his hand took hold on Esau's heel," and hence his name. Jewish traditions explain Esau's redness in various ways. One says he was born under the ruddy planet Mars, another that he liked his meat underdone, and another that he was red-haired. Rabbi Isaiah says he had a serpent coiled in his bowels, and surely that was enough to make him red in the face.*

Isaac was seventy years old when the twins came to light. We presume, therefore, that he had been nearly thirty years praying for them. Scripture does not say whether Rebekah, according to the pious fashion of the age, lent him a handmaiden or two to try his luck with.

"The boys grew," says Scripture. Of course they did. All boys, except Tom Thumbs, manage to do that. Esau became "a cunning hunter." The Rabbis say that he wore the leather suit which God made for Mr. Adam.† This outfit was stolen by Ham from Noah. Ham gave it to Cush, and Cush to Nimrod. Esau killed Nimrod and secured the God-made raiment, which gave him success in hunting.‡ Jacob dwelt in tents and minded sheep. He was "a plain man," and also "a smooth man." Smooth-skinned, smooth-tongued, and smooth-faced; plain and unsophisticated as the Heathen Chinese.

One day this plain, smooth man was making lentil pottage, when Esau came in from the hunt, faint and weary, and ready to die of hunger. The starving hunter besought a little food of his twin-brother. Any man with a spark of natural feeling would have said, "Eat, my brother, there is enough for both, and if not we will share it." Sir Philip Sidney, mortally wounded on the field of Zutphen, was about to drink some water his friends brought him to appease his intolerable thirst; but seeing a poor soldier writhing in agony beside him, he put the precious draught aside untasted, saying, "Give it to him; his necessity is greater than mine." But Jacob was not a Sidney, although God loved him. Not even a brother's necessity touched his selfish heart. His only thought was "How can I make a profit out of his extremity?" Turning to Esau, he said, "I'll give you some of my pottage, but on one condition. Let me have your birthright, and you may take a spoon." The condition was hard, for it meant that Esau was to resign all his rights of seniority to Jacob. But a perishing man cannot be fastidious. Esau was obliged to close with the offer. Yet, even then, Jacob

* Gould, vol. ii., p. 17.

† Genesis iii., 21.

‡ Gould, vol. ii., p. 18.

would not let him eat until he had confirmed the bargain with an oath. "Thus Esau despised his birthright," says the Bible. "Thus Jacob despised the common instincts of humanity," says every honest reader.

Isaac grew old, and "his eyes were dim, so that he could not see." Some Rabbis say that his eyes were dimmed by the tears of the angels falling in them when he was stretched on the altar; others say that he was dazzled by looking on the throne of God; and others that he went blind through crying over Esau's marriage with a Canaanitish woman.* The old patriarch thought his end was approaching, and having a weakness for venison, he sent Esau out to hunt some game, so that he might have a thorough good feast and give up the ghost on a full stomach. While the hairy man was away on this expedition, the smooth man played him a very dirty trick. Having sharpened Esau out of his birthright, Jacob proceeded to cheat him of his father's blessing.

Rebekah, who was the worthy mother of such a son, put Jacob up to the contrivance. She cooked a kid to taste like venison, and put the skin upon Jacob's hands and neck, to make him feel like Esau. Juggling Jacob took in the savory mess to his poor old father, who asked him how he had caught the game so quickly. This was a poser, but Jacob was equal to the occasion. "Because," said he, "the Lord thy God brought it to me." The rascally hypocrite mixed his piety with his cheating in the most exemplary manner. He was a fellow who could pick a pocket and say a prayer in the same breath.

Being somewhat sceptical, Isaac said "Come near that I may feel thee." The blind old father felt him, or rather the kid skin, and was a little reassured. Still, he noticed that the voice was the voice of Jacob; so he asked him "Art thou my very son Esau?" And Jacob, rolling up the whites of his eyes like a negro preacher, and in a tone that would have struck envy into the soul of Mr. Pecksniff, answered "I am." That was enough. Isaac tucked into the dinner, and afterwards gave Jacob the blessing he intended for Esau. "Be lord over thy brethren," said Isaac, "and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee." In patriarchal societies a father's blessings and curses are "registered in heaven," and this was equivalent to giving Jacob's offspring a perpetual superiority over Esau's.

Presently Esau returned from the hunt, cooked his game, and invited his father to eat. "Who art thou?" said Isaac. "I am thy son, thy firstborn Esau," was the reply. Isaac "trembled very exceedingly," told Esau what had occurred, and added that he could not retract Jacob's blessing. When Esau heard this, he "cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry." What a picture of anguish! The poor fellow was heart-broken. He pleaded

* Gould, vol. ii., p. 15.

hard for a blessing too. "Bless me, even me also, O my father," he cried, and then he "lifted up his voice, and wept." The story is told with terrible pathos, and the Jews must have been blinded with the spirit of nationality not to feel that Esau sustained a shocking injury, and that Jacob was a contemptible scoundrel.

Naturally "Esau hated Jacob," nor is it surprising that he promised to slay this treacherous brother after their father's death. Jacob was too cowardly to face Esau's wrath, so by Rebekah's advice he fled to his uncle Laban's. During his journey he slept one night upon a pillow of stones. It was calculated to give him the nightmare, yet he had a heavenly dream. He saw a ladder reaching from earth to heaven. The Lord stood on top of it, and said "I am the Lord God." Angels were ascending and descending it, though it is difficult to understand why these winged creatures should climb a ladder. Perhaps they were moulting.

God shouted down from the top of that ladder all the fine promises he had previously made to Abraham, and when Jacob awoke he was in a very pious frame of mind. After saying his prayers he made this beautiful vow: "If God will be with me, and will keep me in the way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, So that I come again to my father's house in peace; *then* shall the Lord be my God." Jacob was a man of business. He was not going to worship any God for nothing. His terms were pretty high, however; and all he undertook to do, in addition to praising Jehovah, is expressed in this elegant offer. "Of all that thou shalt give me," said Jacob, "I will surely give the tenth unto thee." That is, if God provided him with unlimited capital, he would give God ten per cent. of the profits.

The Arabs say that Jacob's stone pillow is now at Jerusalem. It is also in Westminster Abbey. Somebody conveyed it to Scone, where it was used for the consecration of the Scottish king, and Edward I. brought it to London, where it remains till Jacob sends for it.*

Jacob settled down at his uncle Laban's, undertaking to serve him seven years for his younger daughter Rachel, with whom the runaway was desperately in love. When the term expired Jacob was married. There was a wedding feast, and he probably got fuddled. How else are we to explain his obtuseness? When he awoke he found himself in bed with the wrong woman. He had slept with Leah instead of Rachel. For once in his life he was done brown. Laban explained that it was against the custom of the country to wed the younger sister before the elder, but he told Jacob that he might have Rachel too. Having served seven years for the woman he did *not* want, Jacob had to serve another seven years for the woman he *did* want. His

* Gould, vol. ii., p. 21.

marrying two sisters is treated as perfectly proper. Yet the clergy say that marriage with a deceased wife's sister is incest. Evidently the incest consists in taking two sisters *in succession*. Taking them *both together* is the good old Bible plan.

Leah was fruitful, but Rachel was barren, like Sarah and for the same reason. "Give me children, or else I die," she exclaimed to Jacob. This put him in a passion, and he inquired whether he was God Almighty. Thereupon Rachel asked him to get children by her handmaid Bilhah. Soon afterwards Leah made the same request for her handmaid Zilpah, and Jacob obliged them both.

Rachel appears to have owned Jacob and farmed him out. Leah's eldest son found some mandrakes* in the field and brought them home. "Give me some," said Rachel to Leah, "and Jacob shall sleep with you to-night." The bargain was struck, and Leah posted off to meet Jacob. "Thou must come in unto me," she said, "for surely I have hired thee with my son's mandrakes." Holy Scripture adds that "he lay with her that night." This is a very pretty story for parents to put in the hands of their daughters! Surely the Word of an all-wise God might teach something more useful and decent than the lesson to be derived from the story of a woman hiring her own husband to sleep with her.

Thinking it high time to leave uncle Laban, Jacob asked for his discharge. Laban, however, desired him to remain on his own terms. Jacob stipulated that all the speckled and spotted cattle, all the brown sheep, and all the spotted and speckled goats, should be his, and all the rest his uncle's. This was agreed to, and Jacob proceeded to breed the flocks and herds, so that all the stronger ones were of his variety, and all the feebler ones of Laban's. How he did this is a wonderful specimen of Bible biology. When the animals were "in the doing of the deed of kind," as Shylock puts it, Jacob placed pilled rods with white streaks before the lustier ones, and this enabled the females to bring forth "cattle ringstraked, speckled, and spotted." Youatt, who is a high authority on breeding, attributes this result to "the power of the imagination in the mother, carried to an extent *the like of which is certainly not seen in the present day*," or to "some superior over-ruling agency." † St. Jerome, St. Augustine, and St. Isidore, who probably knew as much about sheep and cattle as about the Copernican astronomy, held that Jacob's method of breeding was perfectly natural; but St

* According to Calmet, mandrakes resembled the sexual parts of men, and were used as aphrodisiacs, especially in cases of barrenness. But, as Voltaire remarks (*La Bible Enfin Expliquée*) this was an error of ancient medicine, like the belief in satyrion and cantharides; and "such fancies were only credited in great cities where debauchery supported charlatans"

† Youatt *Sheep: their Breeds, Management, etc.*, p. 17.

Chrysostom, Theodoret and others, who were equally learned on the subject, held that it was "something above nature."* It is scarcely necessary to say that modern farmers are not in the habit of following Jacob's methods. Those were Bible days, and Bible sheep and cattle.

Jacob getting wealthy and Laban poor, they grew unfriendly, and our hero resolved to go home to Isaac. He had both Laban's daughters, and all his sheep, cattle, and goats worth having, and there was nothing more to remain for; so he levanted one night with all his belongings. But it was reserved for Rachel to put the finishing touch to Laban's misfortunes. She actually carried off his images (*teraphim*, household gods, like the Roman *penates*), and left her poor old father without a god to worship. This was more than flesh and blood could stand. Laban pursued the fugitives, and rated Jacob for sneaking off without saying good-bye; and "wherefore hast thou stolen my gods?" he inquired. Jacob denied the charge, told Laban to search for them, and vowed that whoever had them should be put to death. But Rachel had put the images in the camel's furniture in her tent, and she sat upon them—hatching! She excused herself from rising up on the ground that "the custom of women" was upon her. What a thievish, cunning slut this Rachel was! She and her husband were fit for the shadiest business in Petticoat Lane.

Twenty years had Jacob been away from home, and he was returning a rich and prosperous man. But his heart sank as he reflected that Esau's anger might still be hot against him, and when messengers came to say that Esau was coming out to meet him with four hundred men, he began to taste the very bitterness of death. His mercenary nature prompted him to try the effect of a bribe, so he sent forward "a present unto my lord Esau" of goats, sheep, camels, oxen, and asses. Injured, however, as Esau was, he did not cherish a spirit of revenge. He had forgiven Jacob, and only remembered that they were brothers. Putting aside the presents, with the generous remark, "I have enough, my brother; keep that thou hast unto thyself," Esau embraced Jacob, and "fell on his neck and kissed him." What a noble picture of generosity and brotherly affection! Esau was large-hearted and magnanimous, while Jacob was base and sordid. One was a hero, and the other a skunk. Yet the Bible God says, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated."†

While Jacob was in a funk at the thought of Esau's approach, he had a marvellous adventure. Being alone by night at Jabbok brook, somebody "wrestled with him until the breaking of the day." It was the longest and most stiffly contested

* Calmet, *Jacob*.

† Romans ix., 13; Malachi i., 2.

match on record. The mysterious person found he could not throw his man or shake him off. Jacob held on like grim death. His thigh was put out of joint, but he never relaxed his grip. "Let me go," said the stranger, "for the day breaketh." But Jacob refused to do so, unless he obtained a blessing. That was all the stranger had to give. Had he worn clothes, and kept any cash in his pockets, Jacob would have had that too. As it was Jacob got the blessing. His name was changed from Jacob to Israel. From a patriarch he became a prince. When the stranger departed, Jacob called the place Peniel, for, said he, "I have seen God face to face." Supposing he was right (and the other party has never contradicted him), Jacob wrestled with God Almighty. The match was "God *v.* Jacob." It lasted all night; there was only one round; and Jacob won the stakes.

This need not surprise the reader, for in a following chapter we are several times apprised that Jacob had interviews with his maker. God "appeared unto Jacob again," "God spake with him," "God said unto him, I am God Almighty."*

Calmet informs us that authorities—that is, gentlemen who are perfectly ignorant on the matter—are divided as to whether Jacob's thigh ever recovered from its dislocation. Some think he went about with a game leg for the rest of his days, and others that he passed over Jordan safe and sound in every limb.

Isaac died, some time after Jacob's return, at the ripe age of a hundred and eighty. Esau had several wives before, but after the old man was buried he took a fresh batch. Jacob, however, kept to Rachel and Leah. But as he enjoyed two of their hand-maids, and perhaps a few more, he had a first-rate harem all the same.

What became of Leah afterwards is not recorded. It is to be hoped she died, for she appears to have been buried.† Rachel died in giving birth to her second son, Benjamin. A tombstone was fixed over her remains, and "that is the pillar of Rachel's grave unto this day." The writer of this sentence should have been more precise. He ought to have put into the text, or a footnote, something like this—"This is the 24th of so and so, in the year of the world so and so." Then we should have known at what date the story was written, which is a great deal more than the cleverest commentators are able to say now.

The remainder of Jacob's life was chiefly spent in the land of Canaan, where he managed to set his own family by the ears through his doting fondness for Joseph, "the son of his old age." But that pretty story, and the strangely bestial doings of some of Leah's sons, must be reserved for our next chapter. Suffice it to say, that Jacob spent his last seventeen years in Egypt, where

† Gen. xxxv., 7, 9, 11, 15.

† Genesis xlix. 31.

Joseph had become Prime Minister; and that he died at the age of a hundred and forty-seven. On his death-bed he took to prophecy, foreshadowing in highly symbolical and oracular language the history of the future tribes of Israel. But as these prophecies were all written long after the events foretold, they were a remarkably easy form of composition. If Jacob uttered all that vaticination on his last feather-bed, we should like to know who took the shorthand notes.

Jacob's body was embalmed, and buried at Joseph's expense in the cave of Machpelah. The Bible informs us that "all the elders of the land of Egypt" went to the funeral, which we respectfully beg leave to doubt. Nor do we believe that the whole Egyptian nation mourned the loss of Jacob for seventy days. This is, in our opinion, simply a bit of Jewish brag. The chosen people always had a miraculous opinion of themselves, which they have never induced other people to share; and their historians constantly flattered their national vanity. When we remember that the Jewish army thought nothing of killing a hundred thousand in battle, we understand that the homage paid to Jacob by Pharaoh was all "gas."

According to the Bible, Jacob never did a generous action. We must go to tradition to discover the single benefit he conferred on mankind. Before his time sneezing was fatal. The strongest men were killed by a single shock. But Jacob induced the Lord to relax this law on condition that everybody who sneezed should say "God bless me."* That apocryphal blessing is all we owe to Jacob. Throughout his long life he furnished an unbroken example of the meanest vices. He was a liar, a sharper, a cheat, a hypocrite, and a thief. God's "love" did not save him from being a paltry wretch. As a Bible hero, he is contemptible. If he belonged to any other gallery of unhung scoundrels, he would be beneath our disdain.

¶ Jesus Christ was good enough to say that "many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven."† With all humility we beg to be excused. Everlasting life would be a burden in such detestable company. It would be an eternal round of suspicion. Abraham and Isaac would always be trying to impose on our credulity, and it would tax our utmost vigilance to preserve our harp and crown from Juggling Jacob.

* Gould, vol. ii., p. 29.

† Matthew viii., 11.

MASTER JOSEPH.

BIBLE heroes have thus far been found a shady lot. But Joseph, the hero of the present chapter, is lauded as a model of every virtue. It is difficult, however, to discover reasons for this eulogy. Even the chastity for which he is famous is inadequately established. That he resisted the importunities of an amorous woman is indeed recorded, but we are not informed that she was young and beautiful; on the contrary, her advances were made with such brazen brutality that it might be conjectured she was an old practitioner in sin, enamored of the fresh innocence of a pretty boy. Nor have we any means of judging the strength of the temptation on Joseph's side. Whether his constitution was warm or cold, as well as the plainness or fascination of his mistress, should affect our estimate of his character. But, on the other hand, we require no elucidations for a judgment on his conduct as Prime Minister of Egypt. According to the plain and circumstantial narrative of the Bible, he deliberately reduced a whole nation to slavery, which is the greatest crime that can be committed or conceived. The worst atrocities of war, the vilest deeds of the cruellest tyrants, sink into insignificance beside the premeditated villainy of Joseph, who used the knowledge he obtained from God to cozen the Egyptians of their property and liberty for ever.

Joseph was the first of Jacob's two children by Rachel. The favorite wife of Israel was long barren, like all Bible women destined to give birth to wonderful children, until at last, in the graceful and expressive language of the Holy Ghost, "God harkened to her, and opened her womb." When we next meet this child of promise, he is seventeen years old, and his father's favorite, "because he was the son of his old age." The old fellow doted on the lad, and "made him a coat of many colors," so that he looked a regular "masher." How many Sunday-school children have dreamt of that variegated garment! But, alas, the Revised Version robs it of all its romance by stating that it was simply "a long garment with sleeves."

Like other favorite children, Joseph was a bit of a sneak, and told tales of his brethren. When they remembered this, and saw him always in his best clothes, they "hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him." This feeling was exasperated

by his vanity. He dreamed that he and his brethren were binding sheaves in the field, and their sheaves made obeisance to his. In another dream "the sun and the moon and the eleven stars bowed before him." This was too much even for Jacob, as it seemed to include Joseph's father and mother among his inferiors. He therefore reproved the youngster, yet he treasured the dream in his foolish old heart.

Joseph's brethren detested him, and he certainly gave them cause for the sentiment. Presently their smoking hatred burst into flame. Jacob sent him to inquire after them and the flocks while they were pasturing at a distance, and when they saw him approaching they said to each other, "let us slay him." It was a cowardly proposal, for they were ten to one, Benjamin being probably at home; but their natures were fierce and bloody, and the ties of kindred were as straw to the fire of their passion. Their project was to kill him, fling his body into a pit, and tell Jacob he was eaten by a wild beast. But Reuben persuaded them not to shed his blood. He suggested that they should cast him into a pit alive, intending to release him afterwards. This was agreed to. They stripped poor Joey, and cast him into a pit, or probably a well, though "there was no water in it." An oriental tradition says there *was* water, but Joseph stood on a stone; while the Rabbis say it was dry, but full of scorpions and adders.* Perhaps it was a rock-hewn cistern such as abound in Palestine; from which, as they are shaped like a bottle, with a narrow mouth, a prisoner could not escape without assistance.†

Poor Joey being "in the belly of the earth," as Jesus says, to dream at leisure, his tender-hearted brethren sat down to luncheon. While they were feeding, and toasting Joseph's health, they spied a caravan of Ishmeelites going down to Egypt, and a bright idea immediately occurred to Judah. "Let us sell him to the Ishmeelites," he said. It was a capital notion, and worthy of the family. But what followed is very obscure. We had better give the text:—"Then there passed by Midianites merchantmen; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmeelites for twenty pieces of silver: and they brought Joseph into Egypt."‡ Who can make head or tail of this jumble? *They* drew Joseph up and sold him. *Who*, his brethren or the Midianite merchantmen? The second *they* would seem to refer to the Ishmeelites who bought him; yet the last verse of the chapter says that "the Midianites sold him into Egypt." Two chapters further on, it says that Potiphar bought Joseph "of the hands of the Ishmeelites."§ Later, when he reveals himself to his brethren, he says "I am Joseph your

* Gould, vol. ii., p. 32

† Rev. Dr. Thomson, *The Land and the Book*, p. 168.

‡ Genesis xxxvii., 28.

§ Genesis xxxix., 1.

brother, whom *ye* sold into Egypt."* The Midianites sold him, the Ishmeelites sold him, and his brethren sold him! God help us! Our brain is reeling. Would that the Holy Ghost had written plainer, for this episode is like the peace of God, it passes all (our) understanding; and, unfortunately, we have not the dexterous faith of Dean Milman, who airily evades the difficulty by saying that Joseph was sold to "a caravan of *Arabian* traders."†

It is usually held that Joseph's brethren did sell him, and as they were Jacob's sons it is highly probable. Josephus distinctly says they sold him for twenty pieces of silver.‡ The Hebrew and Samaritan give the same figure, but the Vulgate gives thirty, which brings Joseph and Jesus to the same price. The Septuagint gives twenty, but says the pieces were gold. According to the Targums, the brethren had two pieces each, with which they bought shoes.§ But Zabulun, in the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, denies that *he* shared the blood-money, though "Simeon and Gad, and six other of our brethren, took the price of Joseph, and bought sandals for themselves, their wives, and their children."

Jacob's sons were cunning villains. They dipped Joseph's coat in goat's-blood, took it to their father, and innocently asked what he thought of it. For their part, they had a notion it was Joseph's, but they would defer to his opinion. The old man saw it was his son's, and concluding that his favorite child was devoured by a wild beast, he grieved and wept, declaring that he would join his beloved in the grave. Thereupon the hypocritical scoundrels tried to comfort him. They had disposed of their brother for two "shiners" each, and now they wept crocodile tears over their father's bereavement. Reuben, however, must be exonerated for once. He tried to save Joseph by an artifice, but his strategy had failed.

Eastern and Rabbinical traditions assert that Joseph's face shone like the sun, and all the women and damsels ran out on the terraces to see the light, while the wealthy ladies of Heliopolis sent their husbands or relations to bid for the beautiful youth.|| According to Genesis, he was purchased by "Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard." Josephus and the *Testaments*, however, style this gentleman the chief cook. Dr. Kitto calls him "chief of the royal police," while Dr. Taylor renders the original Hebrew as "chief of the executioners."¶ Whoever wishes to know what Potiphar really was must pray for enlightenment from heaven.

Joseph gained his master's favor, and soon became his right-

* Genesis, xlv., 4. † *History of the Jews*, p. 23.

‡ Josephus, Book II, c. iii. § Gould, vol. ii., p. 35.

|| Gould, vol. ii., p. 35.

¶ Rev. W. M. Taylor, D.D., *Joseph the Prime-Minister*, p. 45.

hand man. Potiphar made him overseer of his estate, and "the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake." Now, Potiphar had a wife, and thereby hangs a tale. She also had a partiality for Joseph, who was "a goodly person, and well favored;" indeed, the Orientals say he was so beautiful that he was called the Moon of Canaan. His mistress did not beat about the bush. First she "cast her eyes upon Joseph," and next she said, "Lie with me." But *il casto Giuseppe* declined her frank invitation. He reproved her immodesty, reminded her that she was his master's wife, and refused to "sin against God." Dr. Taylor argues that, besides the gratification of appetite, Joseph might expect "this intrigue meant also for him the putting of Potiphar ultimately out of the way, and his own elevation, in an easy and speedy fashion, to his master's place."* But we beg to differ. Egypt was a highly-civilised country, women were allowed great freedom, marriage was held sacred, and life was secure. It no more followed then than it does now, that a married woman who intrigued with a young fellow would also murder her husband.

Josephus writes a long account of this wretched business.† The Arabs give it a romantic turn; Zuleika, in their story, being a very different character from the lustful queen in the Bible. The *Testaments* make poor Joseph groan "She was wont to bare her arms, and breasts, and legs, that I might fall before her." His mistress, then, was a thorough-going Lady Booby, and he was more sorely tried than Joseph Andrews. It is a great pity, however, that we have not Potiphar's wife's account of the affair. The poor lady is condemned unheard. She might give a very different version, showing that she played the Lucretia to his Tarquin. Joseph and the Jews have made their affidavits, while Zuleika and the Egyptians have never been examined.

Genesis, however, tells us that Potiphar's wife pressed Joseph to comply with her desires, and one day, when they were alone, she "caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me." Josephus says she "had a mind to force him." But Joseph fled, leaving his garment in her hands. Thus signally repulsed, her love soured to hate, and she accused poor Joey of having tried to violate *her*; whereupon Potiphar clapped the chaste youth in prison as a ravisher.

The Rabbis give many amplifications of this pretty story,‡ and there is a version of it in the Koran, where it is said that Joseph "would have resolved to enjoy her, had he not seen an evident demonstration of his Lord." This is explained by the learned Sale in a footnote to his translation.

"Some suppose that the words mean some miraculous voice or apparition, sent by God to divert Joseph from executing the criminal thoughts

* P. 52.

† Book ii. chap. 4.

‡ Gould, vol. ii., pp. 36, 37

which began to possess him. For they say, that he was so far tempted with his mistress's beauty and enticing behavior, that he sat in her lap, and even began to undress himself, when a voice called to him, and bid him beware of her; but he taking no notice of this admonition, though it was repeated three times, at length the angel Gabriel, or, as others will have it, the figure of his master appeared to him: but the more general opinion is that it was the apparition of his father Jacob, who bit his fingers' ends, or, as some write, struck him on the breast, whereupon his lubricity passed out at the ends of his fingers.*

A pretty little story also hangs by Joseph's garment. Potiphar's wife's cousin, who was then a baby in the cradle, cried out that if the garment was torn in front, the lady's version was correct, but if it was torn behind the young man's version was correct.† Potiphar obeyed the voice of the sucking child, and satisfied himself of Joseph's innocence; yet to gratify his wife, or to wean her from her passion, he still kept him in gaol.

Strange to say, this imprisonment was his first step to glory. He gained the good graces of his keeper, but that was little. "The chief cause of his rapid rise to fortune and dignity," as Milman observes, "was his skill in the interpretation of dreams." Joseph was a diviner, a walking dream-book. His skill was first tried on Pharaoh's chief butler and chief baker, who were in prison at that time. He interpreted their dreams with marvellous accuracy, predicting that the first would be restored to his post and the second hanged. Two years later Pharaoh had a wonderful dream, which troubled him greatly. All the magicians and wise men of Egypt were summoned to interpret it, but they could not, though they were very clever fellows, and could turn rods into serpents in a jiffy. Thereupon the chief butler, who was restored to his post, remembered Joseph, and recommended him to the king. Accordingly our hero was brought out of prison, and after shaving and putting on a clean suit, he stood before Pharaoh and told him to fire away. Pharaoh related his dream, which we will not, and Joseph interpreted it as meaning that Egypt was to have seven years of plenty, followed by seven years of famine. He also advised that a fifth part of the annual produce during the first period should be saved for the necessity of the second. Pharaoh was mightily pleased; he called Joseph a wise man, full of the spirit of God, and made him grand vizier of Egypt.

Joseph now rode in a chariot, clothed in fine linen, with a gold chain round his neck, and Pharaoh's ring on his finger. The king also gave him a new name, Zaphnath-paaneah, which Josephus writes as Psothom Phanech, or *the reader of secrets*. Pharaoh likewise "gave him to wife Asenath, the daughter of Poti-pherah, priest of On." Milman supposes that "as inter-

† Sale, footnote to the Koran, chap. xii.

† Koran, chap. xii.; Gould, vol. ii., p. 37.

preter of dreams, Joseph, no doubt, intruded into the province" of the priests, and the king married him to a priest's daughter to "disarm their jealousy."* According to Josephus the name of Joseph's father-in-law was Petephres, and Whiston says the notion that he was Joseph's old master is "common to Josephus, to the Septuagint interpreters, and to other learned Jews of old time."† Many, says Gould,‡ suppose that Asenath was the daughter of Joseph's old master Potiphar by Dinah! And she was as tall as Sarah, as comely as Rebekah, and as beautiful as Rachel. The Targums add that she was the daughter of Dinah by Shechem, and was adopted and brought up by Potipherah's wife.§ But, according to other Jewish and Mussulman traditions, Joseph married the Potiphar's wife who made love to him, after she became a widow; and the loves of Zuleika and Joseph are a popular subject for Eastern poets.||

Pharaoh's grand vizier began to save corn against the famine. Josephus says that the Egyptians had no expectation of the drought, though Whiston considers this incredible. According to the Bible, Joseph "gathered corn as the sand of the sea," and laid it up in granaries. The Jewish historian adds that he "took the corn of the husbandmen, allotting as much to everyone as would be sufficient for seed and for food, but without discovering to anyone the reason why he did so."¶

This virtuous Joseph was therefore a regrator, or, as the Yankees say, "a cornerer." He monopolised grain to sell at famine prices. Yet his action is approved and praised by men who ask for laws against the same thing being done now. In fact, the Yankees have passed a law against it, though Joseph is still treated as a perfect saint in all the churches and chapels in the United States.

When the famine came "the dearth was in all lands"; but we suspect it was like the darkness at the Crucifixion, which covered the whole earth, yet was invisible at a distance. The Egyptians were obliged to buy corn of Joseph, or else starve. At first he sold for money, but he soon had all their cash. Next he took their horses and cattle. Then he took all their land, and when the transaction was finished he said "Behold, I have bought you this day and your lands for Pharaoh."*** You and your *lands!* They had lost all their possessions, and had become slaves to boot; in other words, the poor Egyptians were thoroughly jewed.

Joseph supplied them with seed to sow the land, of which they were no longer proprietors, on condition that the fifth part of the produce should be paid to Pharaoh. Wishing to put a

* P. 25. † Footnote to Josephus, bk. ii., chap. 6. ‡ Vol. ii., p. 46.

§ Ante-Nicene Library, vol. xxii., p. 73, footnote.

|| Gould, vol. ii., pp. 40, 41.

¶ Josephus, Bk. ii., chap. 5.

* Genesis xlvi., 23.

good face on this affair, Josephus says that he "gave them back the land entirely," but Whiston is obliged to differ from his author. "It seems to me," he writes, "that the land was now considered Pharaoh's land, and this fifth part as its rent, to be paid to him, as he was their landlord, and they his tenants; and that the lands were not properly restored, and this fifth part reserved as tribute only till the days of Sesostris."* Dr. Taylor says that Joseph "also gave them back their cattle," but he draws on his fancy for the statement, as there is not a suggestion of it in the Scripture.

Dr. Taylor offers a curious apology for Joseph. He contends that if the Egyptians had obtained corn for nothing it "would only have demoralised them." So he sold it to them, to prevent their becoming *paupers*, and transformed them into *slaves*! But was not Joseph a wise man? Did not God grant him super-human knowledge? Surely, then, he might have hit upon a more humane device. Had the people been properly warned of the approaching drought, and provision made in the public granaries, they might have maintained themselves during the famine. It is infamous to trade on a natural calamity. A nation reduced to want by continued drought is like a starving crew. Despotism would be necessary for self-preservation; but what would be thought of a mercenary wretch who took advantage of the public starvation to reduce his fellows into a state of perpetual slavery or dependence? Yet that is what Joseph did, if there is any truth in the story. He was as cunning and unscrupulous a minion as ever basked in the smiles of a king.

Joseph dealt with the people he had "bought" in a high-handed manner. He "removed them to cities from one end of the borders of Egypt even to the other end thereof." Dean Milman insinuates that this was a method of protecting them from the overflow of the Nile, but he is obliged to allow that "This has been supposed by some an arbitrary measure, in order to break the ties of attachment, in the former possessors, to their native farms."†

Let it be observed that Joseph did not buy up the land of the priests, who were the highest caste, and in whom "one-third of the whole land of the country was inalienably vested."‡ They were all supported gratis during the famine, yet Dr. Taylor does not hint that *they* were pauperised. The fact is, the priests were the real rulers of Egypt. They were not only the ministers of religion, but public astronomers, geometers, surveyors, physicians, legislators, and judges; and the king was either selected from their body or enrolled in it before his coronation. They were too powerful even for Pharaoh's grand vizier. Joseph could not browbeat or swindle *them*. Yet these

* Footnote, Josephus, bk. ii., chap. 7.

† P. 29.

‡ Milman, p. 25.

priests, although they looked after themselves pretty sharply, seem to have connived at the spoliation of the people.

Among those who were driven into Egypt by the famine were Joseph's brethren. How he treated them roughly as strangers, and then revealed his identity; how he invited Jacob's household into Egypt, and induced Pharaoh to let them settle there; is a story familiar to all. It is related with exquisite pathos and simplicity, and merely as a story it may be compared with any domestic narrative in literature.

The number of Jacob's household is given as sixty-six and as seventy in two consecutive verses.* Josephus says seventy, without including Jacob. But Stephen, in the Acts of the Apostles, gives the number as seventy-five.† Probably he quoted from the Septuagint, which includes five descendants of Joseph not included in the Hebrew text. But the Holy Ghost should at least make the Old and New Testaments agree in their arithmetic.

Sixty-six, seventy, or seventy-five, they settled down in Goschen. It was a particularly fine land for shepherds, for the grass grew to the height of a man, and so thick that an ox might browse all day without rising.‡ According to Genesis it was "the best of the land." The beggars in this case were choosers too, and in the midst of their excessive humility they kept a keen eye on the main chance.

Nearly every Bible character has had some writing ascribed to him, and Joseph is no exception to the rule. Legend assigns him the authorship of *Joseph's Prayer*, and Trimethius speaks of a magical book attributed to him, called *Joseph's Mirror*.§ According to the Rabbis he had a tremendous voice, and would have made a fine open-air preacher. On one occasion his voice shivered a palace pillar into fine dust. Reuben's lungs were still more powerful, for when he roared all the inhabitants died of terror within a radius of a hundred miles.||

Joseph died at the age of a hundred and ten, and "they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt." According to the Targums, they sank the coffin in the Nile; but Exodus tells us that when the Jews left Egypt they carried Joseph's old bones with them.¶

Here endeth the history of Joseph. Fortunately for the honor of the human race, it is purely legendary. Egyptian history shows no trace of such occurrences. Joseph did not jew the Egyptians; and the story of a Hebrew slave lording it over the hereditary rulers of a mighty civilisation is simply a bit of Jewish brag.

* Genesis xlv., 26, 27.

† Acts vii., 14.

‡ Milman, p. 29.

§ Calmet, *Joseph*. || Gould, vol. ii., pp. 43, 44.

¶ Exodus xiii., 19.

JOSEPH'S BRETHREN.

JEHOVAH was always unlucky in the choice of his favorites, and the same misfortune attended his Son, for the twelve disciples of Jesus, when he was arrested, all "forsook him and fled." Probably the number of those valiant worthies was taken from the number of the sons of Jacob; in fact, their Master distinctly told them that, when he came into his Kingdom, they should sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.* That precious promise has not been fulfilled, nor has the Lord accomplished the blessings he prophesied for the descendants of Joseph and his brethren. Perhaps he has repented, found second thoughts best, and privately resolved to violate his pledge. Nor can anyone bring him to task for the dereliction. The Lord swears, as the Bible frequently informs us, but as he swears unto himself he can easily obtain a release from awkward engagements, without fearing a prosecution for perjury.

Considering the stock they came from, the character of Jacob's sons is not surprising. They possessed between them all the qualities which endeared their father, as well as Isaac and Abraham, to the God of Israel. Lying, theft, lust, incest, murder, and fratricide, appeared to run in the family. When Jacob lay on his death-bed, and dealt out his patriarchal blessings, he reminded his progeny of their crimes in magisterial tones; forgetting that what was bred in the bone would show in the blood. He blamed the branches, without reflecting that they shared the vices of the roots and stem.

Reuben was Jacob's eldest son by Leah. After Rachel died in giving birth to Benjamin, Jacob "journeyed, and spread his tent beyond the tower of Edar." While he was residing there, doubtless mourning over the only woman he loved, his first-born played him a very dirty trick. "Reuben," we are told, "went and lay with Bilhah his father's concubine."† What an incestuous beast! A concubine was not a harlot, nor even a kept mistress. She had a legal status, and was second only to the wife; indeed, she *was* a wife, though over the left shoulder. Calmet's *Bible Dictionary* justly remarks that the term concubine, "in Western authors, commonly signifies a woman who, without being married to a man, yet lives with him as his wife: but, in the sacred writers, the word *concubine* is understood in another sense;

* Matthew xix., 28; Luke xxii., 30.

† Genesis xxxv., 22.

meaning a lawful wife, but one not wedded with all the ceremonies and solemnities of matrimony; a wife of a second rank, inferior to the mistress of the house." The Roman law regarded concubines in a similar light. Even the Christian law of Justinian recognised the right of a concubine's offspring to a sixth part of the father's estate; and, as Gibbon informs us, "from the age of Augustus to the tenth century, the use of this secondary marriage prevailed both in the West and the East."* Priests were allowed concubines after they were forbidden to marry, and according to the canon law, which is still unrepealed, there is nothing to prevent a clergyman from taking a concubine in preference to a wife,† although his bishop would probably inhibit him for doing so.

Enough has been said to prove that Bilhah was a real, though an inferior, wife of Jacob's. Yet we must not neglect a conclusive piece of evidence. There is absolutely no distinction made between the children of his concubines and those of his legitimate wives. They all rank according to the succession of their births, whether they are born of Leah or Rachel, or of Bilhah or Zilpah.

Reuben's crime was disgusting. It is not suggested that he was the victim of an irresistible passion, like Marc Anthony, who threw manhood and empire away on Cleopatra, playing the great drama of "All for Love, or the World Well Lost." Bestial concupiscence moved him. He had more than the incontinence of Jack Falstaff, without a gleam of the fat knight's wit. Like an animal, to use the simple language of Scripture, he "went and lay with Bilhah." She was probably a good deal older than himself, and as in oriental countries women age quickly, she could scarcely have been a very fascinating object. Above all, she was his father's half-wife, and the mother of two of his own brothers. This Reuben was filthy and incestuous. Yet he was the eldest son of the man whom God loved, and the founder of the first twelfth of the chosen people. According to Revelation, there will be a hundred and forty-four thousand Jews around the throne in heaven, twelve thousand from each of the twelve tribes of Israel; every one a male, and every one a virgin. Surely, if there is any truth in heredity, it will be hard to find so many male virgins in the tribe of Reuben.

An apocryphal book, the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, makes Reuben give his own account of the transaction. The author of this curious work was perhaps a Jew, who, having been converted to Christianity, employed the names of the patriarchs of Israel to win over his countrymen to the new faith. Where and when it was written is unknown, but it was quoted by Tertullian and Origen in the second century. For many centuries afterwards its history is indefinite. There are

* *Decline and Fall*, chap. xlv.

† Rev. M. Davies, *Hagar*.

possible references to it in Jerome and Athanasius, and in the Canons of the Councils of Rome (A.D. 494) and Bracara (A.D. 563). In the middle of the thirteenth century it was brought to the knowledge of Western Europe by Robert Grosseteste, Bishop of Lincoln. Matthew Paris, the chronicler, said it was "hidden through the jealousy of the Jews" because it contained prophecies of Christ. He also called it "a glorious treatise," calculated to strengthen Christianity and confound the unbelieving Jews. Four Greek manuscripts of the *Testaments* exist. One is at Cambridge, one at Oxford, one at the Vatican, and another in the possession of Tischendorf, who discovered it in the island of Patmos.* We may add that this curious work, which we must draw from, is still regarded as canonical by the Armenian Church.

According to the *Testaments*, which we suspect to be as true as Gospel, Reuben delivered himself in the following manner on his little affair with Bilhah, just before giving up the ghost in his hundred and twenty-fifth year :

"Pay no heed to the sight of a woman, nor yet associate privately with a female under the authority of a husband, nor meddle with affairs of womankind. For had I not seen Bilhah bathing in a covered place, I had not fallen into this great iniquity. For my mind, dwelling on the woman's nakedness, suffered me not to sleep until I had done the abominable deed. For while Jacob our father was absent with Isaac his father, when we were in Gader, near to Ephrata in Bethlehem, Bilhah was drunk, and lay asleep uncovered in her chamber; and when I went in and beheld her nakedness, I wrought that impiety, and leaving her sleeping I departed. And forthwith an angel of God revealed to my father Jacob concerning my impiety, and he came and mourned over me, and touched her no more."†

This is a poor apology. Reuben offers, as a partial excuse, that he fornicated with his father's concubine when she was dead drunk. He does not, indeed, say *dead* drunk, but he says *drunk*, and her obstinate sleep warrants the double epithet. Nobody but a beast would indulge his sensuality with a woman in such a nauseous condition.

Waxing maudlin over his recollected sin, Reuben launches out into warnings against "the beauty of women," as though it were a snare to any but lascivious fools. Fra Lippo Lippi, in Browning's masterly poem, teaches a better philosophy :

"Suppose I've made her eyes all right and blue,
Can't I take breath and try to add life's flash,
And then add soul and heighten them threefold?
Or say there's beauty with no soul at all—
(I never saw it—put the case the same—)
If you get simple beauty and nought else,
You get about the best thing God invents."‡

* Ante-Nicene Christian Library, vol. xxii. † *Ibid.*, p. 15.

‡ Robert Browning, *Fra Lippo Lippi*.

So speaks a glorious poet. But the Reuben of the *Testaments* breaks into a fit of foul-mouthed fury at the whole sex; and, alas, his view of women is pure Jewish and Christian too, otherwise it would not have been written for the primitive Church. This is how he vomits his censure.

“Hurtful are women, my children; because since they have no power or strength over the man, they act subtilly through outward guise how they may draw him to themselves; and whom they cannot overcome by strength, him they overcome by craft. For moreover the angel of God told me concerning them, and taught me that women are overcome by the spirit of fornication more than men, and they devise in their head against men; and by means of their adornment they deceive first their minds, and instil the poison by the glance of their eye, and then they take them captive by their doings, for a woman cannot overcome a man by force. Flee therefore fornication, my children, and command your wives and your daughters that they adorn not their heads and faces; because every woman who acteth deceitfully in these things hath been reserved to everlasting punishment.”*

This grovelling, unnatural philosophy is fit for misogynists and eunuchs. To men it is an insult, and to women an outrage. Yet it might well satisfy a pious student of the Bible, wherein the “weaker vessel,” as Peter calls her, is systematically degraded. How long are we to cherish the abject teaching of polygamists and harem-keepers? Shall the Occident bow for ever before the worst features of the Orient? The Arab, in Girardin’s story, is what the Jews were of old, and what the Christians were in spirit, if not altogether in practice. This gentleman of Arabia, being asked by Girardin why the Easterns did not allow their women more liberty, replied, “You can look on them without perturbation, but *we!*”—adding in deeper tones, “The very face of a woman!” The inflammable Arab would understand the Bible and the *Testaments* on the subject of women, though he would probably shrink from the company of an incestuous brute like Reuben.

“Israel heard it,” says Genesis, adding with ludicrous haste “Now the sons of Jacob were twelve.” The old fellow apparently said nothing till he was *in extremis*, when he eased his mind on the subject. Addressing Reuben, he said, “Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel; because thou wentest up to thy father’s bed; then defilest thou it: he went up to my couch.”†

Jacob’s next sons were Simeon and Levi. The chief exploit of these worthies is circumstantially narrated in the thirty-fourth chapter of Genesis. Their sister Dinah is the only daughter of Jacob mentioned in Scripture, and she was the cause of a very pretty quarrel. She “went out to see the daughters of the land,” which the commentators construe as gadding abroad. But perhaps she only visited her female neighbors, and took five

* Ante-Nicene Library, vol. xxii., p. 16.

† Genesis xlix., 4

o'clock tea with them, for want of sisterly company at home. During her rambles she fascinated Shechem, son of Hamor the prince of the Hivites, who "took her, and lay with her." Courtship in those days was not prolonged. Holy Writ goes at once to the fifth act of the play.

Shechem's love was not blunted by possession. He proposed to marry the girl, and it was really a capital match for a shepherd's daughter. Hamor opened negotiations with Jacob, offering a heavy dowry for his consent to the union; but Jacob's virtuous sons protested against Dinah's marrying a man who had "defiled her." They hated their own sins in another, and resolved to punish Shechem for their own offences as well as his. We cannot give our sister, they said, to one that is uncircumcised; although, as Bishop Hall remarks, "Themselves had taken the daughters and sisters of uncircumcised men; yea, Jacob himself did so."* They pretended, however, that if Shechem and all his people would be circumcised, there would be no barrier to intermarriages of Israelites and Hivites. The hard proposal was accepted. Shalem, the city in which they dwelt, prepared for amputation, and on the selfsame day "every male was circumcised." It was a painful condition, and Shechem must have been very fond of Dinah, and the Hivites of Shechem, to undergo it.

What follows is comedy and tragedy in one. "On the third day, when they were sore," the inhabitants of Shalem could not resist the assault of Simeon and Levi, who "took each man his sword, and came upon the city boldly, and slew all the males." Fancy a whole city disposed of in this easy fashion! Though they were sore with circumcision, surely the men could have defended themselves against two assassins. But if not, the women could have fallen pell-mell upon the brace of bullies, and overwhelmed them with the kitchen furniture. The story is altogether too thin except for thickheads. We might say of Simeon and Levi, what the disciples said to Jesus about the two fishes that were to feed five thousand—"What are they among so many?"

Yet if their exploit was authentic, and not legendary, Simeon and Levi were a couple of scoundrels, guilty of treachery and murder. According to the sequel, they pillaged the Hivites' property, taking all their sheep, oxen, asses, and other moveables, and making captives of "their little ones, and their wives." What became of those poor creatures? Were they kept or sold as slaves, or subjected to the lust of Jacob's sons? The regard of Joseph's brethren for the honor of their sister was compatible with the greatest contempt for the rights of other women. Dinah, it seems, was ready to marry Shechem, but Simeon and Levi ravaged and massacred a whole city for a punctilio. No

* *Contemplations*, book iii., 3.

wonder that Jacob, on his deathbed, exclaimed that "instruments of cruelty are in their habitations."

According to the Targum of Jerusalem and the Rabbis, who are followed by some ancient Fathers, the scribes and lawyers were of the tribe of Simeon.* Probably they inherited the craft of their progenitors, which induced Jesus to exclaim "Woe unto you lawyers." Levi, on the other hand, was the progenitor of the Levites, who were chosen by God for the service of his tabernacle and temple, and provided by law with tithes of corn, fruit, and cattle; the tenth of which, again, was paid to the Aaronites who served in the sanctuary. Jacob's curse, therefore, that the posterity of Simeon and Levi should be scattered, was fulfilled in a very agreeable manner. Punishment, in this case, is remarkably like reward.

We come now to Judah, Jacob's fourth son, of whom the old fellow's valedictory words were, "thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise." Rising into prophecy, the dying patriarch exclaimed, "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a law-giver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be."† So runs the Authorised Version, but the Revised Version says that "until Shiloh come" may read "until he come to Shiloh." There are many other renderings—for Hebrew is a delightfully vague language—the principal ones being given in Calmet. Yet from this obscure, perplexed, and controverted passage, the Christians have derived a prophecy of Christ! He, they say, is Shiloh, and the sceptre departed from Judah after his advent; although the Jews, who should be the highest authority on the meaning of their own Scripture, strenuously repudiate this interpretation. Shiloh was, in fact, the name of a place and not of a person. Joshua assembled the people there to make a second distribution of the Land of Promise.‡ There the Tabernacle was set up when the Jews were settled in Canaan.§ At Shiloh Samuel began to prophesy,|| and afterwards the prophet Ahijah dwelt there.¶ It is highly probable that this sacred place was in the writer's mind when he penned the famous Shiloh passage in Genesis, although what he precisely meant by it will never be known till the Day of Judgment.

If the reader will turn to the first chapter of Matthew, he will find that the genealogy of Jesus is traced back through Joseph, who was not his father, to Judah who "begat Phares and Zara of Tamar." Now Phares and Zara were bastards, and their mother was a harlot, who committed incest with her father-in-law. Jesus, therefore, was descended from Judah (if he *was* descended) in a most unfortunate manner. There was a frightful bar sinister in the family escutcheon. For our part we should

* Calmet, *Simeon*. † Genesis xlix., 10. ‡ Joshua xviii., 8-10.

§ Joshua xix., 51. || 1 Samuel iv., 4. ¶ 1 Kings xiv., 2.

never think of prying into a man's family antecedents. Let every tub stand on its own bottom. But when an inspired biographer ostentatiously draws out a man's genealogy before our eyes, we can hardly refrain from remarking that "all is not sweet, all is not sound."

Some time after Joseph's brethren sold him, Judah left the family for a while, and lodged with an Adullamite gentleman named Hirah. Seeing there "a daughter of a certain Canaanite" who tickled his fancy, in the eloquent language of Scripture "he took her, and went in unto her." Whether he married her is an open question. She bore him three sons, Er, Onan, and Shelah. Er growing to man's estate, Judah found him a wife called Tamar; but Er was an erring youth, and "the Lord slew him." This was the first individual case of death from the visitation of God. According to the Jewish law,* as Tamar was left childless, her dead husband's next brother was bound to marry her. Judah, therefore, plainly told Onan, "Go in unto thy brother's wife, and marry her, and raise up seed unto thy brother." This order was obeyed in the letter but not in the spirit. Onan frustrated his father's intention by an unspeakable device, which is bluntly disclosed in the Bible; † and the name of Tamar's second husband, by whom she was as childless as by her first, has become synonymous with self-pollution. Onan's evasion displeased the Lord, who "slew him also." Thus two of the noble Judah's three sons were declared not fit to live.

Shelah was not yet old enough to marry, but Judah promised Tamar she should have him when he was "grown." But Judah was slack in fulfilling his promise, or he and Tamar differed as to Shelah's ripeness for matrimony. Anyhow, the young widow resolved to stand no more delay, and finding that Shelah was not given to her embraces, she made up her mind to become a mother by Judah. Having married two brothers in succession, and while expecting the third, she determines to commit incest with her father-in-law; being nearly, if not quite, as shameless as the daughters of Lot.

Hearing that Judah was going to Timnath to shear his sheep, she flung off her widow's weeds, dressed like a meretricious harlot, and sat "in an open place" by the way. Judah saw her, took her for a courtesan, and begged the hospitality of her tribe. Playing the prostitute to the letter, she asked his price for her favors, and he promised her a kid. But as the animal had to be sent on, she demanded a "pledge," having learned, Bishop Hall says, "not to trust him without a pawn." Judah gave her his signet, his bracelets, and his staff as security, and the precious pair adjourned to the nearest brothel. Scripture does not say so, but let us hope they had *that* decency.

Judah, in the *Testaments*, says he was drunk, and "recognised

* Deuteronomy xxv., 5.

† Genesis xxxviii., 9.

her not by reason of wine"—evidently considering this a palliation of his vice; and like Reuben, he launches into censures on the sex, as though they were not at least six to the women's half-dozen.

The articles in pawn being probably more valuable than the kid, Judah sent the animal on by his friend Hirah, who could not discover the woman; indeed, the people straitly denied that there was a harlot in the locality. But three months afterwards Tamar betrayed the consequences of her filthy frolic, and it was told Judah, "thy daughter-in-law hath played the harlot; and also behold, she is with child by whoredom." This is plain enough, and short if not sweet. It worked on Judah like a tarantula. He boiled with rage at the wanton. His indulgence was venial, but hers was a mortal sin. Sternly, like a virtuous implacable judge, he cried, "Bring her forth, and let her be burnt."

Tamar, however, quickly turned the tables on him. She produced the articles he left in pawn, and asked him whose they were. His guilt was then as obvious as hers. Did he straightway offer to share her pyre? Oh no. Judah loved his own skin, and to save it he was obliged to spare Tamar's too. He admitted, perhaps according to the tribal morality of the time, "She hath been more righteous than I," and then instead of punishing himself heavily and his accomplice lightly, he added, "I'll forgive us both."

Six months later the incestuous wanton gave birth to twins. Her confinement was a curious one, and Scripture relates it fully,* perhaps for the curiosity and amusement of children. The twins were named Pharez and Zarah, and from the first of this ill-begotten pair our Blessed Lord and Savior traced his holy descent; the illustrious line being also adorned by the chaste Ruth, the chaster Bathsheba, and apparently the still chaster Rahab, an ancient Mrs. Jeffreys of Jericho.

There is little information as to the rest of Joseph's brethren, except that they "burked" their own flesh and blood, and nearly brought their father's grey head in sorrow to the grave. The only one described by Jacob, besides the four precious rascals we have anatomised, was his sixth son. "Issachar," said Jacob, "is a strong ass."† The old fellow ought to know, and we believe him. The family were mostly rogues, but there was one strong ass to give it variety.

* Genesis xxxviii., 27-30.

† Genesis xlix., 14.

HOLY MOSES.

“THE history of Moses,” says Cardinal Newman, “is valuable to Christians, not only as giving us a pattern of fidelity towards God, of great firmness, and great meekness, but also as affording us a type or figure of our Savior Christ.”* Evidently, then, we have to do with a very important personage. It is a curious fact that Jesus and Moses are the only individuals in the Bible who are characterised by the epithet *meek*. Jesus said “I am meek,”† and although that is the last thing we should believe of a man on his own protestation, we are bound to credit the statement of Jesus, for he was God, and whoever disbelieves him will be damned. Fortunately Moses is not left to his own vindication; *his* meekness is vouched for by the Almighty himself, who informs us, with the indisputable authority of omniscience, that “the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.”‡ Yet the carnal mind would be slow to accept the description of either of these worthies if it were not dictated by infinite wisdom. It was a peculiar meekness which prompted Jesus to ride into Jerusalem like a theatrical conqueror on a couple of requisitioned donkeys, amid the plaudits of an ignorant and fanatical mob; which led him to assault the harmless money-changers and dove-sellers in the unsanctified precincts of the temple; and which inspired his scurrilous denunciation of his rivals. No less singular was the meekness of Moses, who commenced his public career by assassinating an Egyptian, and ended it by ordering the wholesale robbery, violation, and slaughter of the Canaanites. But when Deity commands our reason must submit. Moses *was* the meekest man on earth. We make the admission freely, as we hope for grace. Yet the imp of scepticism dances in our brain, despite our efforts to suppress him, and cries out—Oh yes, Moses *was* meek, as you say; meek with the meekness of Byron’s Lambro, who was

“the mildest manner’d man
That ever scuttled ship or cut a throat.”§

The life of our hero divides itself into three distinct chapters.

* *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. vii., p. 118. † Matthew xi., 29.

‡ Numbers xii., 3.

§ *Don Juan*, canto iii., 41.

He lived a hundred and twenty years in all. Forty years he spent in Egypt, the land of his birth; forty years he followed the avocation of a shepherd in Midian; and forty years he led the wandering Jews in the wilderness, where three millions of them coiled and uncoiled like an aimless serpent, taking a whole generation to complete a month's journey, and demonstrating once for all the asinine stupidity of making an excursion under the guidance of a missionary.

Before Jacob's favorite son had long been dead, a king arose in Egypt who "knew not Joseph." Regarding the Jews, who multiplied like rabbits, with the gravest apprehension, he appears to have withdrawn them from their pasturages and set them to task-work, which they have never relished from that day to this. According to their own account, which is probably a partial one, and certainly foreign to our historical notions of Egyptian manners, he served them "with rigor" and "made their lives bitter with hard bondage." Josephus says that he "set them also to build pyramids."* But this cannot be true, for the Bible states that they worked in brick, and the pyramids are built of stone. Pharaoh's object seems to have been to wear them out, but they continued to increase amazingly, and he had recourse to stronger measures. If we may believe the Jewish historian, he commanded that every male child among the Hebrews should be cast into the Nile as soon as it was born; and in order that his edict might be carried out effectually, he instructed the Egyptian midwives to see to its execution.† Milman follows Josephus on this point, and adds that "the midwives, in this land of hereditary professions, were most likely a distinct class under responsible officers."‡ But the Bible expressly says that Pharaoh gave the order to the *Hebrew* midwives.§ Nay more, it gives us their names, Shiphrah and Puah. Jewish tradition says they were mother and daughter.|| No others are mentioned, and we must therefore conclude that two midwives sufficed for a population of a million or so, among whom there could not be less than a thousand births a week!

According to the Rabbis, God came to the assistance of the Jewish mothers. They were delivered in sleep; angels attended on them, washed and dressed the babies, and smeared their little hands with butter and honey, so that they might, in licking them, be fed and kept from crying. When Pharaoh's emissaries followed their traces, the earth gaped and swallowed the little ones, who afterwards sprouted from the soil like flowers, and walked home unperceived.¶

In the midst of this extraordinary rumpus, "there went a man of the house of Levi, and took to wife a daughter of Levi."

* Book ii., chap. ix.

† *History of the Jews*, p. 32.

|| Gould, vol. ii., p. 67.

† Josephus, book ii., chap. ix.

§ Exodus i., 15.

¶ Gould, vol. ii., p. 70.

Their names, as we subsequently learn, were Amram and Jochebed.* She conceived and bare a son, and seeing "he was a goodly child, she hid him three months." Judging from the narrative this was their first child, yet Moses had a brother three years older than himself, and a still older sister.† The Rabbis affirm that Jochebed was a hundred and thirty years old at the birth of Moses, yet as fresh and beautiful as when she left her father's house.‡ According to Exodus (vi., 20) she was her husband's aunt! The same verse informs us that Amram lived to the age of a hundred and thirty-seven. All this is hard to believe, but the penalties of disbelief are still harder.

Josephus, no less than the Bible, dwells on the beauty of Moses. Fine and large as a baby, he grew up tall and handsome, and people turned to look at him in the streets.§ This marvellous child, say the Rabbis, was born at three in the morning, on the seventh day of the month Adar, in the year 2368 after the Creation, and 130 after Jacob's descent into Egypt. Some say his parents called him *Tobias* (God is good), but others say he was called *Jokutiel* (Hope in God).|| Clement of Alexandria, however, affirms that he was named *Joachim* at his circumcision, although it appears from Exodus¶ that Moses was never circumcised at all, while in heaven he passes under the name of *Melchi*.**

Bishop Hall indulges in the natural reflection that it was a wonder Amram thought of procreating "when he knew he should beget children either to slavery or slaughter." The Bishop's explanation is that Amram thought "his own burning" a still greater evil, and "he therefore uses God's remedy for sin, and refers the sequel of his danger to God."†† A most Christian and convenient philosophy!

Our little hero being three months old, his mother despaired of hiding him any longer, and therefore resolved to throw all further responsibility for his safety on the Lord. She took an ark of bulrushes, daubed it with slime and pitch to make it water-tight, put her baby in it, and launched it among the flags of the Nile, leaving her daughter Miriam to watch what would happen. As the river abounds with crocodiles it was a dangerous experiment; but no doubt those voracious creatures were warned off by the same God who "spake unto the fish" that swallowed Jonah.

Presently Pharaoh's daughter came to that very spot to bathe. "Those times," says Bishop Hall, "looked for no great state." But he is mistaken. Egypt was a mighty empire, Pharaoh was a powerful and splendid monarch, at once priest and king; and the supposition that his daughter, apparently his *only* daughter, would bathe among the water-flags of the Nile, at a spot which

* Exodus vi., 20. † Exodus vii., 7. ‡ Gould, vol. ii., p. 71.

§ Josephus, book ii., chap. ix. || Gould, vol. ii., p. 72.

¶ VI., 12, 30. ** Calmet, *Moses*. †† *Contemplations*, book iv., 2.

anyone was free to visit, and where a Hebrew slave could watch with impunity, is too absurd for serious criticism. Let the Jews believe it! as the Roman satirist exclaims. They were credulous enough for anything. But those who are acquainted with the manners and customs of the ancient Egyptians will regard the story with derision.

According to Josephus the princess was named Thermutis. The Rabbis say that she had been married for some time to Chenephras, prince of a territory near Memphis, but was childless, although she fervently desired a son who might succeed her father on the throne of Egypt.* Any reader with half an eye can see what is coming.

Exodus tells us that Pharaoh's daughter espied the floating cradle and sent a maid to fetch it. When it was brought the little urchin inside snivelled, and his tears touched her heart, although she saw it was a Hebrew baby. Thereupon Miriam came up and offered to fetch a nurse for the bantling. The offer was accepted, and of course Miriam fetched her own mother, who suckled her own offspring as a hireling. Josephus, who amplifies every Bible story, except those he prudently neglects, informs us that several Hebrew women were called before Jochebed, but the baby would not patronise their feeding apparatus. Miriam then saw her chance; she brought her mother, and "the child gladly admitted the breast."†

Jewish traditions furnish many wonderful incidents in this story. God was then afflicting Egypt with intolerable heat, and the people suffered from grievous boils. Thermutis herself did not escape the malady. She usually washed in the palace baths, but on this day she performed her ablutions in the sacred Nile. Seeing the ark, she bade one of her maidens to swim out and bring it to the shore, but the other servants told her it contained a Hebrew child, cast out by the royal command, and advised her not to oppose her father's will. For this interference they were immediately swallowed by an earthquake, opportunely wrought by the angel Gabriel, who was hovering around. Meanwhile the princess, in her eagerness, had stretched out her hand towards the ark; by a miracle her arm was lengthened to sixty ells, and she lifted the child out of the water. She admired his beauty, but her compassion was chiefly excited by his tears, the angel Gabriel having boxed his ears to make him weep copiously.‡

But the most astonishing part of this romance is to come. The Bible gravely informs us that when this precious child was grown (no age is stated) he was brought to Pharaoh's daughter "and he became her son." This is absurd enough, for Egypt was a land of castes, and the princess had no more power to break

* Gould, vol. ii., p. 73.

† Josephus, bk. ii., ch. ix.

‡ Gould, vol. ii., pp. 73, 74.

through them than the meanest of her father's subjects. But Josephus makes the monstrous addition that Thermutis adopted him as the "heir to her kingdom,"* a statement which evinces the grossest ignorance. Fancy the Princess of Wales adopting a child from the Foundling Hospital with a view to its becoming King of England! The fact is we are not dealing with history, although Christians deem it so, but with oriental romance. The Rabbis try to make the yarn more plausible by saying that Thermutis feigned a pregnancy, went through a fictitious confinement, and palmed off the little Hebrew as her own child! †

Let us pause for a moment to consider the change in our hero's name. Henceforth he was called *Moses*. According to Dr. Lee, learned men differ as to whether the word is Hebrew or Egyptian. ‡ Josephus says that "Thermutis imposed the name *Mouses* upon him, from what had happened when he was put in the river; for the Egyptians call water by the name of *Mo*, and such as are saved out of it by the name of *Uses*." § The Abbé Renaudot, however, affirms that *Mooou* signifies water, and *Si* to draw or take out. || The etymology is a little mixed, but near enough for any useful purpose.

From this time till he attained to the age of forty, ¶ the book of Exodus is silent as to his career. But Stephen says, in the Acts of the Apostles (vii., 22) that "Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians." The Rabbis also relate that as a boy he played on Pharaoh's knee, and one day he kicked over and danced upon the crown. All the king's councillors cried out for his immediate execution, but the angel Gabriel, assuming the form of a grave and reverend signior, advised Pharaoh to put before the lively youngster a bowl of precious stones and a bowl of live coals; if he took the jewels he would know what he was about, but if he took the fire he would be ignorant and innocent. Moses naturally thrust his hand towards the wrong bowl, but Gabriel, who had made himself invisible, directed it towards the red-hot coals. The poor boy burnt his fingers, and putting them to his mouth, he burnt his lips and tongue. ** Therefore he said in after years "I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue." ††

Josephus likewise informs us that Moses led an Egyptian army against the Ethiopians, signally defeated them, and married Tharbis their king's daughter, who was enamored of his beauty. †† But the Rabbis place these exploits after his flight from Egypt. They say that Moses assisted the king of Ethiopia against some rebels, and the monarch dying amidst the war, his subjects elected the valiant Hebrew as their king. He reigned over them

* Book II chap. ix.

† Gould, vol. ii., p. 76.

‡ *Hebrew Grammar*, p. 153.

§ Book II., chap. ix.

|| Calmet, *Moses*.

¶ Acts vii., 23.

** Gould, vol. ii., p. 77.

†† Exodus iv., 10.

‡‡ Book II., chap. x.

for forty years, and then resigned in favor of the legitimate heir to the throne.*

According to Josephus, the real cause of the flight of Moses from Egypt was the malice of the people, who envied the laurels he won in the Ethiopian war. They infected the king with their enmity, and Moses, on learning that his death was being compassed, "went away privately" to the city of Midian on the coast of the Red Sea. But this account is perfectly false, as Josephus must have known. The Jewish historian, whose honesty and accuracy were lauded by Scaliger as superior to that of the Pagan writers, composed his *Antiquities* with an eye to the Gentiles. He designed to give them an exalted idea of his countrymen, and to this end he deliberately omitted several striking incidents in the Jewish scriptures, which might excite a smile or a sneer at the expense of the heroes or the religion of his race. Josephus had the Book of Exodus before him; he knew that Moses fled from Egypt because he had slain a native; yet he never alludes to the circumstance, but throws the blame upon the Egyptians whose laws had been shamefully violated.

The Bible informs us, as it informed Josephus, that Moses "spied an Egyptian smiting a Hebrew." They may have been quarrelling, for Hebrews *could* quarrel as well as Egyptians. Either may have been right, or either wrong. But Moses sided with his countryman. In the expressive language of Scripture, he "looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no man, he slew the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand."† Like all savages he was both sanguinary and cautious. "He who commits such a deed," wrote Goethe, "approves himself a thorough barbarian."‡ Milman himself is constrained to admit that Moses was "guilty of a crime, by the Egyptian law, of the most enormous magnitude."§ He had incurred "the unpardonable guilt of bloodshed." Subsequently, in dealing with the first plague, Milman allows that the Egyptians viewed murder with the greatest abhorrence, and that "To shed, or even to behold blood, was repugnant to all their feelings and prejudices."||

Always ready to supply the deficiencies of Scripture, the Rabbis pretend that an Egyptian taskmaster concealed himself in the house of a Hebrew in order to debauch his wife, and on his being discovered Moses was appealed to. The meekest man on earth raised a spade to strike the Egyptian dead. While the fell weapon was poised aloft Moses consulted the Lord. Jahveh told him to smite and spare not; whereupon the spade descended on the Egyptian's skull, yet it did not kill him, for he fell dead at the sound of God's name.¶

Our "very meek" assasin thought his deed of darkness would

* Gould, vol. ii., pp. 83—86.

† Exodus ii, 12.

‡ Notes to *West-östlicher Divan*.

§ *History of the Jews*, p. 35.

|| P. 38.

¶ Gould, vol. ii., pp. 81, 82.

never be discovered. But he found, like many another homicide, that murder will out. The very next day he interfered between two quarrelling Hebrews, one of whom turned upon him, exclaiming, "Who made thee a prince and a judge over us? intendest thou to kill me as thou killedst the Egyptian?" Holy Moses, what a mess! Yesterday's crime was on the wings of the wind. Pharaoh heard of it and "sought to slay Moses." Here again the Rabbis step in, telling us that his execution was ordered, the headsman flashed the sword over his head, yet he was not slain, for the Lord turned his neck into marble. Some declare that Gabriel assumed the semblance of the executioner, transmogrified that worthy into the semblance of Moses, and cut off the headsman's own head with his own sword!*

Moses was off. He and Egypt had had enough of each other. Somewhere in "the land of Midian" he "sat down by a well." The priest of that country (had it only *one* priest?) had seven daughters, who were shepherdesses. They came down to this well to water their father's flocks, but the men drove them away, and Moses stood up and helped them. This piece of gallantry deserves notice, as such things are exceedingly rare in the Bible.

The girls introduced Moses to their father Reuel, who is afterwards called Jethro. Our hero took up his residence with the old man and married his daughter Zipporah. Had it been Jacob, he would have married the whole seven, and had a fresh wife for every day in the week, keeping the prettiest for Sunday.

Here Moses lived in clover, and as the years rolled by his memories of Egypt must have grown dim. But he was fated to return thither, and leave again after a butchery compared with which his assassination of the Egyptian was child's play.

The old Pharaoh was dead, a new Pharaoh reigned in his stead, and the Lord had work for Moses in Egypt. God appeared to him one day at Mount Horeb in the form of a conflagration. Moses saw a bush burning without consuming, and anybody who sees a bush in that condition may be sure the Lord is inside. Presently the divine voice shouted, "Moses, Moses!" and Moses said "Here!" Then the voice cried "Take off your shoes, for the ground is holy," and Moses was quickly unshod, which proves that people who converse with gods are soon bereaved of their understandings.

"Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God." although he afterwards became very familiar with the deity, who "spake unto Moses face to face, as man speaketh unto his friend."† Cardinal Newman asserts that Moses was the only person before Christ who enjoyed that honor, but he forgets our old friend

* Gould, vol. ii., p. 83.

† Exodus xxxiii., 11; Deuteronomy xxxiv., 10.

Jacob who had an equally close view of the divine countenance.*

This God in the bush informed Moses that he was to visit Egypt, bring the Jews out of bondage, and lead them to Palestine. This was a big undertaking. Moses viewed it with reluctance, and told the Lord he was unequal to the task. But the Lord persisted, and Moses tried another tack, "Who shall I say has sent me?" he inquired. "I Am that I Am," was the reply, and its exquisite definiteness was enough to raise a smile on the face of a jackass. But Moses was too frightened to grin, and he listened patiently while "I Am that I Am" sketched out the plan of campaign.

When Jahveh had finished Moses protested that nobody in Egypt would believe such a story. "Cast your rod on the ground," said Jahveh. Moses did so, and it became a serpent. Our hero scurried off, but he was ordered to take the reptile by the tail, and it turned into a rod again. "Now put your hand in your bosom," said Jahveh. Moses did so, and when he drew it out it was white with leprosy. He put it back, drew it out again, and it was perfectly sound. "There," said Jahveh, "do that brace of tricks in Egypt, and my word for it they'll believe you." Yet Moses still objected that he was very slow of speech, and desired the Almighty to send another messenger. Then the Lord grew wild, but he restrained himself, and promised Moses the assistance of his brother Aaron, who was a good speaker. "You shall be his god," said Jahveh, "and he shall be your telephone."†

Moses gave in. He said good-bye to Jethro, fixed his wife and sons on one poor donkey, and set out for Egypt. On the road he put up an hotel, where "the Lord met him, and sought to kill him." The Authorised Version calls it "an inn," and the Revised Version "a lodging house." But whether it was a drinking shop or a teetotal establishment, whether its sign was "beer and spirits" or "beds fourpence a night," God Almighty attempted there the life of his own missionary. How did he *seek* to kill him? Did Moses get wind of it and secrete himself? Did the Lord chase him from room to room? Did he poison the prophet's "nightcap," and was Holy Moses too robust to succumb? Such questions might be elaborated *ad infinitum*. Meanwhile the fact remains, unless the Bible lies, that Infinite Goodness designed a murder and Infinite Power failed in its execution.

The conclusion of this extraordinary business was that Ziporah took a sharp stone, cut off her son's foreskin, and cast it at his father's feet with the remark that he was "a bloody husband." Then, says the Bible, God "let him go." From this it would appear that the Lord was angry with Moses because he or his son was uncircumcised, but the deity knew that very well

* Genesis xxxii., 30.

† Exodus iv., 16.

when he despatched him on his mission. The Hebrew text, however, is very obscure,* though what glimpses we get of its meaning are most ludicrous. Perhaps the whole passage is an interpolation in the interest of circumcision. Let it be added that Josephus is silent on this absurdity, which would have excited the risibility of his Gentile readers.

Here again it should be noticed that Zipporah circumcises the boy with a stone implement. We have already indicated the significance of this fact (p. 21), and it only remains to add that a stone knife was also used by the Egyptian embalmers.

Calmet asserts that the rite of circumcision was not forgotten by the Jews in Egypt, but the statement is not warranted by the Bible. Moses distinctly tells God that he is "of uncircumcised lips." What can this mean but that he was uncircumcised? Had he attached a sovereign importance to the rite he would not have neglected to perform it on his sons. Why, also, did the Jews disregard this token of God's solemn covenant with Abraham in their forty years' wanderings? After the death of Moses they were all circumcised by Joshua. Does not this show that "the covenant" with Abraham was unknown to them? There can be little doubt that the story of Abraham's circumcision was got up by the priests, long after his time.

Moses was met in the wilderness by his brother Aaron. On reaching Egypt they called a meeting of the Jewish elders, who were soon convinced by the serpent and leprosy tricks, and then they paid Pharaoh a visit. "The kings of Egypt," says Milman, "probably held that sort of open court or divan, usual in Oriental monarchies, in which any one may appear who would claim justice or petition for favor."† Pharaoh was requested to let the Jews go into the wilderness for a feast, and the petition was preferred in the name of Jehovah. "Jehovah!" he sneered, "who the devil is Jehovah? I never heard of the fellow. Be off with you, and mind your business."

This rebuff was followed by fresh oppression. The Jews were ordered to make bricks as before, but to find their own straw, and their taskmasters were more rigorous than ever. This caused them to remonstrate with Moses for interfering, and he in turn remonstrated with God in very plain and disrespectful language. "Nonsense!" said the Lord; "now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh."

What God *did* do, how he afflicted the poor Egyptians with all sorts of filthy, disgusting, and terrible plagues, is related in my *Bible Romances*. The Ten Plagues were the work of Jehovah and not of Moses, who was only his instrument. Suffice it to say that Pharaoh was eventually glad to let the Jews go on their own terms, and Moses led them out of Egypt in one night. Three millions of people moved more rapidly than a disciplined

* Calmet, *Moses*.

† P. 37

army. Not only the sound in wind and limb marched off for the land of promise, which they never lived to reach, but also the blind, the lame, the paralysed, the bedridden, women just confined, and children newly born. What a wonderful troupe they must have been! Yet Moses, although he was eighty years old, headed them with the greatest alacrity.

Miriam was still alive and was now a prophetess. We read that she took a timbrel, followed by all the women of Israel with similar instruments, and dancing at their head, she sang a song of glory to the Lord for drowning Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea. What a lively old lady! She came of a long-lived family, and was juvenile and frisky when other women stoop and crawl.

We shall not follow the Jews through their idiotic wanderings in the desert, but merely deal with those incidents that affect Moses or exhibit his character, and those transactions in which he played a conspicuous part.

In some respects Moses had a hard time of it. Whenever anything went wrong the Jews grumbled lustily, abused him to his face, and frequently threatened to stone him. But he enjoyed many compensations. He still possessed the magical rod, with which he wrought miracles, such as bringing water out of rocks. He smote one rock at Horeb and produced enough water from it to supply three millions of people. Whiston, the translator of Josephus, says that "This rock is there at this day, as the travellers agree, and must be the same that was there in the time of Moses, as being too large to be brought thither by our modern carriages."* Simple Whiston! His logic is like that of the gentleman who proved the truth of his ghost-story by exclaiming "Why, there's the very house in which it happened!"

Moses also rejoiced in a most intimate communion with his Maker. When he suffered from hypochondria, when the Jews murmured against his leadership, or when he had any knotty point to resolve, he used to get assistance from the Lord. Several of these interviews are recorded, but they are too numerous for citation. We shall presently see that Moses had great influence over God; in fact, he played the part of a candid friend, and by judiciously reminding the Lord of his weakness he sometimes brought him down from a towering flight of passion.

The chief interview between God and Moses took place on Mount Sinai. Jehovah came down from everywhere to the top of this eminence,† a distance which has never been computed. His descent was made "in the sight of all the people." Moses received an invitation to come up and spend a few days with him, and they had so much to talk about that it was nearly six weeks before they separated. During this time the Jews were warned

* Josephus, bk. iii. ch. ii., footnote.

† Exodus xix., 11, 20.

off the mountain by thunders, lightnings, clouds, and clangorous trumpets; and whoever touched it incurred the penalty of death. Moses took with him "Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel," who for once in their lives had a view of the Almighty. "They saw the God of Israel: and there was under his feet, as it were, a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in its clearness. And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand: also they saw God, and did eat and drink."* This is a little mixed, yet it seems clear that seventy-three Jews took luncheon with God. Such a gross piece of anthropomorphism is very amusing. Still more amusing is Milman's attempt to explain away their view of God's feet as "symbolic fire" over "what appeared like a pavement of lapis-lazuli, or sapphire, or the deep blue of the clearest and most cloudless heaven."†

Moses went up to the top of Sinai, where he and God were wrapt in a cloud for forty days and nights. What God said to Moses may be found in Exodus, from chapter twenty-five to chapter thirty-one. Most of it is ecclesiastical stuff, of no interest except to priests and their dupes. At the finish Moses received "two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God." We are told that "the tables were written on both sides," and that "the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God."‡ This is supposed to have been the decalogue. God quarried the stones, chiselled and polished them, and graved the letters. Were they still in existence they would be the most precious objects in the world. But, alas, they were soon smashed. Something put the "very meek" Moses out of temper, and in his passion he eclipsed the greatest sinners on record, save himself, by flinging down the tables and breaking all the ten commandments at once. The Rabbis say that the holy writing flew away to heaven.§

While Moses was up in the cloud the Jews had resorted to idolatry, in circumstances which will be treated in our next chapter on Aaron. God saw their backsliding and boiled with rage. "Let me alone,"|| he said to Moses; "I'll kill the whole lot, and breed a fresh people from you." But Moses advised him to sprinkle cool patience upon the heat and flame of his dis-temper. "Remember your promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob," said he; "don't act rashly; above all think how the Egyptians will laugh at you." Then the Lord cooled down and said he was sorry he lost his temper. Nor was this the only occasion on which Moses pacified Jehovah, and restrained him from violating his own sixth commandment on the most tremendous scale. A similar scene occurred when the Jews were

* Exodus xxiv., 9-11.

† Milman, p. 53.

‡ Exodus xxi., 18; xxii., 16.

§ Gould, vol. ii, p. 105.

|| Exodus xxxii., 10.

terrified by the report of the spies who returned from Palestine* with stories of giants beside whom men were like grasshoppers.

When Moses descended from Sinai and saw what the Jews were doing he broke the tables he was carrying, and was obliged to go up again for facsimiles. But the Lord declined to supply the stone this time. Moses had to bring his own, and the Lord worked in the ten commandments again with his finger. This lumpy piece of literature was stowed away in the ark, and both have gone the way of other antiquities. They will be found when we discover the Twelve Tables of ancient Rome† and the gold plates of Joe Smith the Mormon. Yet their loss is grievous, for as Bishop Hall exclaims, "Any manuscript scroll, written by the hand of a famous man, is laid up amongst our jewels; what place then should we have given to the hand-writing of the Almighty!"‡

No passion distorted the face of Moses when he descended the second time from Sinai. His face shone so gloriously that even Aaron was afraid to come near him, and he was obliged to wear a veil. According to some Rabbis, he had seen the original light which God created, and by which Adam saw from one end of the earth to the other; others say he had seen the Shekinah,§ whose glory his face reflected as the moon reflects the sun's.

The Bible informs us that Moses had seen something more remarkable. "Show me thy glory," he said to Jehovah, who replied, "thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live." This flatly contradicts the statement in the previous chapter that "the Lord spake unto Moses face to face," but the Bible is full of such discords. According to *this* story God gave Moses a view of his "back parts." We are not told what Moses thought of them. Of course the story is as true as gospel, yet if it had not appeared in the Bible we should have laughed at the notion of God Almighty exhibiting his posteriors to a gentleman who wished to see his face.

During his two confabulations with the Lord on Mount Sinai, which Josephus cunningly runs into one, to avoid mentioning the golden-calf business, Moses "tasted nothing of food usually appointed for the nourishment of man."¶ So says Josephus, but the Bible says "he did neither eat bread nor drink water."¶¶ The reasonable inference is that he fasted altogether, and was miraculously supported. Elijah also went forty days and nights without food,** and the same feat is recorded of Jesus.†† But Moses takes the palm. He went through two periods of absti-

* Numbers xiv. † Maine's *Ancient Law*, p. 14.

‡ *Contemplations*, book v., § 6. § Gould, vol. ii, p. 108.

|| Josephus, book iii., chap. v.

¶ Exodus xxxiv., 28; Deuteronomy ix., 18; x., 10.

** 1 Kings xix., 8.

†† Matthew iv., 2.

nence, and beat all ancient and modern fasting-men hollow, by dispensing with liquids as well as solids.

Moses was so great a favorite with God that all who insulted or opposed him were badly punished. When he married an Ethiopian woman, Miriam and Aaron set their backs up, and sneeringly inquired whether the Lord had not spoken by them as well as by Moses. Scripture does not go to the bottom of this quarrel, nor tell us whether Zipporah was still alive. She may have been dead, or Moses may have taken another wife during her lifetime, for he was a lusty old fellow, and Zipporah's withered charms must have lost their attraction. Be that as it may, Miriam and Aaron took to nagging. This is a common incident in domestic circles, and it was scarcely worth the fuss God made about it. He was especially angry with the female sinner, and punished her with the loathsome and ghastly disease of leprosy, which was only removed at her brother's intercession.* Here, again, the Lord flies into a fury, and Moses has to cool him down.

Subsequently there was a kind of sedition raised by Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. The first of this trinity, say the Rabbis, was very wealthy. Moses had obtained the philosopher's stone from God. To use an Hibernicism, this stone was a plant which grew in abundance on the shores of the Red Sea. Moses revealed the secret to Korah, who used it to transform large quantities of base metal into gold. His wealth grew so prodigious that eventually it took sixty camels to carry the keys of his treasuries.† With his riches increased his pride, and when Moses ordered the Jews to wear blue, Korah habitated all his servants in scarlet and mounted them on red horses. So far the Hebrew old-clothes-men. According to the Bible, Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, headed an agitation against the tyranny of Moses. Followed by a number of the people, and two hundred and fifty princes, they expostulated with Moses and Aaron for "taking too much" upon themselves. Prime Ministers had, in those days, an easy method of disposing of the opposition. Moses appealed to God, and the judicious deity sent an earthquake which swallowed up all the ringleaders, as well as a fire which consumed two hundred and fifty men who presumed to worship in rivalry with Aaron.‡

Goethe held that these revolts, and the perpetual murmurings of the Jews, resulted from their leader's bad generalship. He maintained that Moses was as poor a military commander as he was a legislator, and that the preposterous wanderings of the Hebrews in the wilderness were occasioned by his lack of courage and address. Certainly our hero took care to keep out of danger. When the Jews fought the Amalekites, Moses left

* Numbers xii.

† Gould, vol. ii, pp. 120—123.

‡ Numbers xvi.

Joshua to lead the troops and repaired to the top of a hill to pray for their success. This significant fact is obscured by a cloud of supernaturalism. Moses, we are told, lifted his hands to heaven, and while he remained in that posture the Israelites won, but when he dropped his hands through weariness the Amalekites prevailed. Seeing this, Aaron and Hur set him on a stone, and held up his hands on either side.* Thus the Amalekites were routed and slaughtered, while, according to truthful Josephus, not a single Jew was lost in the engagement.†

During their wars the Jews fought with Og the King of Bashan,‡ whose subjects they exterminated without regard to age or sex. This king was the remnant of a race of giants. His bed was thirteen feet six inches long and six feet broad. According to the Rabbis, Og was much larger than this. The sole of his foot was forty miles long, and a chair was made out of one of his teeth. A single drop of sweat from his brow weighed thirty-six pounds, while at one meal he consumed a thousand oxen and a thousand firkins of liquor. This unparalleled giant was destined to feel the prowess of Moses. Seizing a hatchet, our hero made a prodigious jump in the air, and hit Og on the ankle. The battle concluded by Og getting his head imprisoned in a monstrous ant-hill, and exposing the rest of his person to the merciless hatchet of his enemy.§

But whether valiant or the reverse, Moses is credited in the Bible with extraordinary ferocity. His war policy was extermination. Men, women, and children, were all put to the edge of the sword, except when the virgins were reserved for a darker fate.|| When the Jews fought the Midianites, defeated them, killed all the males, and took the women and children captive, Moses was wroth with them for being so merciful. "Kill every male among the little ones," he sternly ordered, "and kill every woman that hath known man by lying with him. But all the women children, that have not known a man by lying with him, keep alive for yourselves."¶ What devil could exceed this barbarity? One's hand falters in transcribing the bloody text.

Holy Moses was a tough old fellow, and unless his days had been shortened by a miracle he might have lived till now. For one little slip he was doomed to die in the wilderness. Joshua was consecrated his successor, and Moses ascended Mount Nebo, whence the Lord gave him a bird's-eye view of the promised land. He was still vigorous, though a hundred and twenty years old; his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated.** Beginning his career at eighty, when most men who live so long

* Exodus xvii., 9-13. † Josephus, book iii., chap. ii.

‡ Numbers xxi.; Deuteronomy iii. § Gould, vol. ii., pp. 124, 125.

|| Deuteronomy xx.

¶ Numbers xxxi., 17, 18.

** Deuteronomy xxxiv., 7.

are decrepid, he bore the burden and heat of a forty years' leadership of the most stiff-necked race in history, and was still as game as ever. Surely he was the original Grand Old Man. But his time had come. Somewhere on that hill the Lord settled his hash. God "buried him in the land of Moab, over against Beth-peor: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day."* Josephus, however, says he disappeared in a cloud, but wrote in the holy books that he died, lest the Jews should say he had gone to God.†

The Rabbis say that Gabriel, Michael, Israfiel, and Azrael, who acted as sextons at the funeral of Moses, defend his grave till the Judgment Day.‡ Before or after the burial (God know which) the Devil appears to have put in a claim for the corpse, but he was defeated by Michael after a fierce dispute.§ This curious legend has been more useful than might have been expected, for it furnished Byron with the central idea of his splendid *Vision of Judgment*.

According to the Talmud, an attempt was once made, when the Persian empire was at its zenith, to discover the sepulchre of Moses. A host of soldiers ascended Mount Nebo, and when they reached the top they saw the sepulchre at the bottom, but when they descended to the bottom they saw it at the top. The search, therefore, had to be abandoned.||

Some, however, have maintained that Moses did not die, but shared the destiny of Enoch and Elijah. "Our masters," says Maimonides, "have assured us that our master Moses is not dead, but ascended into heaven, where he serves God to all eternity."¶ Curiously, in the Gospel story of the Transfiguration, Moses and Elijah are brought together with Jesus in a visible bodily form.** Sceptics have asked how the disciples, who saw the trio, recognised Moses and Elijah who had gone to glory so many centuries before. But the true believer regards this as hypercriticism, and answers that all things are possible with faith.

Like other Bible heroes, Moses has been credited with the authorship of several books. The passage about Michael and the Devil in *Jude* is from the *Assumption of Moses*, a work now lost, but which was quoted by Origen and other early Fathers. There were also an Apocalypse and a lesser Genesis ascribed to him, as well as the *Testament of Moses* and the *Mysterious Books of Moses*.†† The Jews, in addition, affirm that he wrote eleven of the Psalms (xc. to c.), and both Jews and Christians have always asserted that he wrote the Pentateuch. But modern scholarship

* Deuteronomy xxxiv., 6.

† Book IV., chap. 8.

‡ Gould, vol. ii., p. 135.

§ Jude, 9.

|| Gould, vol. ii., p. 136.

¶ Calmet, *Moses*

** Matthew xvii., 3; Mark ix., 4; Luke ix., 30

†† Calmet, *Moses*.

has justified the criticisms of Spinoza and Voltaire,* and the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch is now abandoned by every authority. Ministers still preach the falsehood from the pulpit, but they dare not defend it outside their churches. Every scholar knows that the Pentateuch is not the work of one hand, and that the Mosaic law cannot be carried beyond the time of Ezra, after the Captivity, when a mass of priestly teaching was incorporated with ancient legends and traditions, and presented as ordinances of Moses so as to give them the authority of antiquity which so imposes on the credulous conservatism of barbarians.†

Moses is probably a mythical figure. The Jews themselves, judging from their so-called historical books, never heard of him for nearly a thousand years after his death. Manetho, the Egyptian historian, who is "refuted" by Josephus, declares that the Jews were originally a band of Egyptian lepers who migrated under the leadership of a leprous priest. The Jewish historian resents the statement as an insult, but the Jewish scriptures reveal the most extraordinary precautions against leprosy, although Josephus denied their liability to the disease.

Whatever is the truth on this point, the Bible figure of Moses is unhistorical. Robert Taylor‡ is doubtless wrong in confusing Moses with Bacchus, but he is quite right in indicating their points of similarity. Both were of Egyptian origin, both were brought up in Arabia, both crossed the Red Sea, both carried a miraculous rod, both fetched water from the rock, both led armies through deserts, both were legislators, both were priests, both were soldiers, both were magicians, both were married, and, adds Taylor, both of them wore horns.

According to scripture, there arose not a prophet like unto Moses, and the Jews mourned for him thirty days. If he existed, and bequeathed the intolerant and bloody maxims of the Jewish law, mankind has mourned for more than thirty days on his account. From that law is derived the persecuting spirit of Christianity, as well as of Mohammedanism; a spirit which has destroyed the happiness of millions, built thousands of dungeons for honest thought, and lighted the fires of a myriad stakes for the glory and honor of God.

* Philosophical Dictionary, *Moses*.

† Dr. W. Robertson Smith, *The Old Testament in the Jewish Church*, gives a fair resumé of the conclusions of European scholarship, although he does not go to the full length of his own principles. He has been cast out as a heretic from the Scottish Church, but his opponents are too sensible to attempt a refutation of his teaching. Their weapons are persecution and silence.

‡ *Devil's Pulpit*, vol. ii., No. 20.

PARSON AARON.

THE Church, said Bishop Warburton, has been from of old the cradle and the nursery of the younger aristocracy. When a young fellow, belonging to the upper ten thousand, is under the necessity of making his own nest, they send him into one of the professions if he possesses a fair share of brains; if he has only a moderate quantity of that article, they send him into the army; and if he has none worth speaking of, they send him into the Church. A living is procured for him, preferment may be expected in time, and at the very worst he lolls at ease in the sleepy hollow of a parson's paradise.

Churches are the supports of privilege, and therefore it is not surprising that they are filled with scions of the nobility. The altar and the throne have always been in alliance. Priests and kings are excellent friends. Both are leagued against the people. One teaches and the other rules, one inspires credulity and the other practises oppression, one deludes and the other plunders, one works the confidence trick and the other walks off with the spoil. Without priestcraft, neither kingcraft nor aristocracy could exist. Minds must be devastated before bodies can be fettered. For this reason every true lover of his species will echo the prayer of Shelley—

“Oh that the wise from their bright minds would kindle
Such lamps within the dome of this dim world,
That the pale name of Priest might shrink and dwindle
Into the hell from which it first was hurled,
A scoff of impious pride from fiends impure.”*

Those who understand the immemorial alliance between the spiritual and the temporal powers for the subjugation of the people, will appreciate the congruity of Parson Aaron being the brother of Holy Moses. These worthies were bound together by the closest tie of blood, and therefore they understood each other thoroughly. Moses ruled and Aaron worked the oracle. Moses gave his orders like a despot, and Aaron blessed them and approved them with a text. Moses organised and Aaron preached; and whenever a big miracle was to be wrought the two brothers acted together, so as to impose effectually on their credulous slaves.

* “Ode to Liberty.”

Aaron's name signifies *lofty* or *mountainous*; or, according to Saint Jerome, a *mountain of strength*.* He was, indeed, a tower of strength to Moses, for he almost uniformly confirmed his brother's mandates in the name of God; but there was nothing very lofty in his character, and the only thing mountainous about him was his impudence.

Three years older than Moses, he was still several years younger than their sister Miriam. How he lived, what he did, and in what society he moved, before his eighty-third year we have no information. He took a back seat till he was wanted, like all the personages in the story-books. God sent him out into the wilderness to meet Moses when he was commissioned to bring the Jews from Egypt. As this necessitated a journey of two months, Calmet infers that Aaron's circumstances were above those of the lower class of Jews, who were kept to their daily bondage; and that though his family "had no pretension to sovereign authority by descent, yet they were of consideration among the Israelites by property, or by office, or by some other way." This learned writer also maintains that as Aaron and Moses do not seem to have been elected to represent the Jews, their reception by Pharaoh argues his recognition of their superior status. But Scripture tells us that the two brothers had a meeting with "all the elders of the children of Israel,"† who credited their mission from God when they beheld the "signs." What is this but an equivalent to election?

Moses had no "gift of the gab," but Aaron could "speak well."‡ When they appeared before Pharaoh, therefore, Aaron did all the speechifying; otherwise there might have been a scene like that in the *Merchant of Venice*, where Launcelot Gobbo, assisted by his father, solicits a place of Bassanio.

Moses's rod turned into a serpent at the burning bush in Horeb, but it was reserved for Aaron's rod to perform this elegant trick before Pharaoh. When the King of Egypt asked for a miracle in proof of their mission from Jehovah, Aaron threw down his rod and it became a serpent. Pharaoh smiled, and exclaiming "Is that your trump card?" he beckoned to his magicians, who instantly "did in like manner with their enchantments."§ Dean Milman shuffles out of this awkward *contretemps* in the following manner. "The dexterous tricks," he says, "which the Eastern and African jugglers play with serpents will easily account for this without any supernatural assistance. It might be done, either by adroitly substituting the serpent for the rod; or by causing the serpent to assume a stiff appearance like a rod or staff, which being cast down on the ground might become again pliant and animated."|| But

* Calmet, *Aaron*. † Exodus iv., 29-31. ‡ Exodus iv., 14.
§ Exodus vii., 2. || *History of the Jews*, p. 3>.

this pretty explanation might cover Aaron's trick as well as the magicians', and proving too much is as bad as proving too little. Besides the spirit of such an explanation is utterly unhistorical. All ancient nations, like all modern savages, believed in magical arts, and in the power of sorcerers to transform one thing into another.* Egypt was certainly no exception to the rule.† Jehovah himself is represented as admitting the power of rival deities, but boasting his own superiority. "Against all the gods of Egypt," he says, "I will execute judgment: I am the Lord."‡ Even the early Christians never denied the miracles of Paganism; the only question in dispute was which miracles were divine and which were diabolical. Surely Milman must have been disingenuous, for in the very next chapter of Exodus it is recorded that the magicians of Egypt turned water into blood, and brought swarms of frogs out of the river "by their enchantments." Was this also legerdemain? Milman does not say. He does not even mention these worders. Silence in such a case was discretion, but its honesty is more than questionable.

Probably Moses and Aaron felt chagrined when they saw their serpent trick capped by Pharaoh's magicians. "Holy Moses!" the elder brother might have exclaimed, "what on earth are we to do now? Our performance seems stale in these parts. I fancy we shall have to learn some fresh 'business' or throw up the sponge altogether. Hadn't you better go back to the burning bush and ask Jehovah for a new wrinkle? Or stay, there is the leprosy trick you spoke about. Thrust your hand inside your shirt-front, Moses, and pull it out white as snow. Depend upon it these infernal magicians will scamper like hares if you do, for they are punctiliously clean, and some of the Brahmans of this country will not pass within half-a-mile on the leeward side of one of our holy race."

What answer Moses would have made to this appeal may be left to conjecture, for a fresh miracle speedily extricated the brothers from their unpleasant position. There are some sceptics, however, who deny that there was anything miraculous in what occurred; for Aaron's was a Jewish rod, and if, when transformed into a serpent, it swallowed up the others, this was no more than might have been expected. But whether a miracle or a natural occurrence, this event decided the contest, for it was obviously impossible for the swallowed serpents to swallow their swallower. Whether Aaron's serpent digested the others or vomited them up again, we are not informed. If it ejected them, every Egyptian sorcerer doubtless got his stick back; if not, Aaron's stick must have been remarkably stout when he

* Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, chap. iv.

† Lenormant, *La Magie chez les Chaldéens*, p. 90.

‡ Exodus, xii., 12.

left the palace. Jehovah was the lord of lords, and Aaron's rod was literally the stick of sticks.

Aaron's part in the tragi-comedy of the Ten Plagues, as well as that of Moses, is dealt with in our *Bible Romances*. Really the harrying of Egypt was the work of Jehovah and not of his instruments. He, therefore, must receive the full credit of its filthiness and atrocity.

When the Jews were well out of Egypt, and encamped before Sinai, Aaron had the pleasure of accompanying Moses up that mountain, where he had the further pleasure of lunching with God Almighty. Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and seventy elders, "saw God, and did eat and drink."* There can be no doubt as to this remarkable repast, but unfortunately none of the guests preserved the bill of fare. Had they done so, and had the document been handed down to this age in a good state of repair, it would certainly fetch an enormous price in the auction-room. We may presume that God wrote it himself, and if he graved the decalogue with his finger, he probably scrawled this less dignified document with his big toe.

Parson Aaron did not stay with Holy Moses during his forty days' confabulation with Jehovah. He descended to look after the chosen people, who had astonishingly short memories. They were always forgetting the miracles and mercies of Jehovah, and whenever Moses turned his back they were off in search of fresh gods.

Now, on this occasion, Moses turned his back for a very long time. His absence was protracted enough to try the loyalty and patience of the most devoted adherents. Day after day the Jews looked up to "the mount of God," but no Moses appeared, nor did they so much as catch a glimpse of his bald head behind a rock. All they saw was clouds, clouds, clouds; and by-and-bye they concluded that Moses and Jehovah had both ended in smoke. In this predicament they naturally wanted a fresh leader and a fresh god. Savages are like sheep in following their chief, and without a deity to worship they are like fish out of water. The Jews, therefore, requested Aaron to take the place of "this Moses" who had gone aloft, and they begged him to make them a few gods to ease their religious desolation.

Aaron accepted the offer with great alacrity. Possibly he shared the general belief in the collapse of Moses, or thought he might be able to establish his own authority before his brother's return when he might successfully bid him defiance. Aaron was the elder brother, yet he had to play second fiddle; and as he was not yet consecrated high priest, he perhaps thought his own merits were not sufficiently recognised and rewarded. Here then was a glorious opportunity of promoting his own interest, and Aaron not unnaturally seized it. "I've

* Exodus xxiv., 11.

played second fiddle to Moses long enough," he may have exclaimed, "and if ever he returns he shall play second fiddle to me."

Jehovah does not appear to have entered into our hero's calculations. That was not an age when religion presented only Hobson's choice. There were many gods, all independent of each other, and all warranted sound. What wonder, then, if Aaron thought he might, like Cain, go out from the presence of the Lord, and worship another deity.

Orthodox commentators, however, prefer the theory that Aaron was a coward. He had not the courage to resist the popular clamor, and he incurred the wrath of God sooner than face the wrath of the Jews, who on several occasions attempted to stone Moses himself when they were annoyed or disappointed. For our part, we leave every reader to decide for himself.

Having agreed to make the Jews some new gods, Aaron desired them to furnish him with the material. He could not make a god out of his own head, unless it was a wooden one. "Bring your gold," said Aaron. Gold! It is the first demand of priests in every age and clime. They love gold. Judging by their practice, gold is their god. The felicities of heaven are for their dupes; they themselves wish "in health and wealth long to live." They read their title clear to mansions in the skies, but they prefer the actual possession of a snug rectory or vicarage in this miserable vale of tears.

The Jews brought Aaron their golden earrings, which were worn by men and women alike.* With this precious metal he made a golden calf; or rather, we suspect, with so much of it as was left after he deducted his own liberal commission. Before the calf he erected an altar. Religious worship went on merrily again. The people "sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play"; their play apparently consisting in naked dances before the new god. The Jews took readily to the worship of the golden calf. Some people, indeed, say they worship it still.

Perhaps the calf was an imitation of the Egyptian god Apis, and thus the Jews simply returned to the religion of their old masters. Long after this they affected calf-worship. Jeroboam set up two golden calves at Dan and Bethel,† and these were worshipped by Jehu even after he had "destroyed Baal out of Israel."‡

When Moses came down from the clouds and witnessed the saltatory worship of this golden calf, he not only broke all the ten commandments, but burnt the calf, ground it to powder, mixed it with water, and made the Jews drink the potion. Metallurgists would like to know how this was done, but Scrip-

* Exodus xxxii., 2.

† 1 Kings xii., 28, 29.

‡ 2 Kings x., 28, 29.

ture, which tells us many things we could dispense with, neglects to inform us of many things we are anxious to learn.

After drinking this water, those who had kissed the idol were, according to Jewish tradition, marked with gilt lips. Another tradition says that their hair turned red, and that is the origin of red hair among the Jews; while a third tradition declares that this water gave them the jaundice, which was then introduced for the first time, though it has remained ever since.*

Moses instructed the Levites to slay the idolators. They did so, and "there fell of the people that day about three thousand men." Aaron, however, was only expostulated with. The chief sinner was spared because he belonged to the leader's family. During the colloquy between the two brothers, Aaron prevaricated in a manner worthy of his profession. "Look here Moses," he said, "I didn't make that calf. 'Pon honor! I just put the gold into the fire, and the calf came out of itself."†

Soon afterwards Aaron was consecrated high priest, and the office was to be hereditary in his family for ever. Even those who assisted in the ceremonies of Jehovah's worship were to belong to Aaron's tribe of Levi. The consecration was performed by Moses. Taking Aaron and his sons, he washed them with water, and we dare say they needed it. They were then dressed in the priestly paraphernalia. Aaron's outfit was extremely fine. Not only were all his garments of the richest material, but he wore a splendid mitre on his head, and a golden breastplate in front, inwrought with the mystic Urim and Thummim. These words signify *light* and *perfection*, or *revelation* and *truth*.‡ The article itself consisted of twelve precious stones, by which undoubtedly the high-priest divined. This superstition connected with precious stones was common in ancient ages. No oracle was complete without them. Among barbarians the superstition is still rampant, and it lingers even among civilised nations. Thousands of people in our own country believe in the occult virtues of precious stones, and only two or three centuries ago each had its specific influence on human health and fate.

Aaron was also anointed with oil.§ Some of it was mixed with blood from the altar, and the beastly mess was sprinkled on his and his son's garments.|| But most of the holy oil was poured over Aaron's head. According to the Psalmist, it ran down his beard and fell upon the skirt of his garments.¶ Dripping with the holy macassar, Aaron looked a greasy priest, but the stuff sanctified him. Like Christ, he was the "anointed," or the begreased. Anointing is still retained in the Catholic Church, and both the Catholic and the Protestant Church retain

* Gould, vol. ii., pp. 105-107.

† Exodus xxxii., 24.

‡ Whiston, footnote to Josephus.

§ Leviticus viii., 12.

|| Ibid., v. 30.

¶ Psalms cxxxiii., 2.

baptism. "When we come into life," says Robert Taylor, "we must be baptised, when we go out of it we must be anointed. We are baptised into Jesus Christ and greased into the Holy Ghost."*

Besides this holy oil, Aaron had a sacred scent for use in the tabernacle. God gave the prescription for making it, and pronounced a frightful penalty against anyone who violated the patent.†

Henceforth Moses and Aaron pulled well together. Each had his eminent place, and they could exercise their respective authorities without conflict. Woe unto the Jews when they set up their backs against this worthy pair! For murmuring after the settling of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, and the slaughter of two hundred and fifty worshippers in their rival tabernacle, no less than 14,700 were killed.‡

To prevent any further rivalry with Aaron in the priesthood, the brothers hit upon an ingenious device. Speaking as usual in the name of God, Moses ordered the princes and elders to bring a rod for each of the tribes. This made eleven, and Aaron's rod for the tribe of Levi made the twelfth. All were to be placed in the tabernacle, and the rod of God's choice for the priesthood was to blossom. The plan was tried. Twelve rods were laid before the Lord overnight, and in the morning when Moses entered to see the result, Aaron's rod "was budded, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds."§ Aaron's blooming rod settled this dispute for ever. Yet the princes and elders of Israel must have been remarkable flats to accept such a decision. Aaron and Moses had access to the tabernacle at all hours, though they had not; and what was easier than for the confederate brothers to design and execute this pretty miracle themselves?

Aaron had one little quarrel, however, with Moses, and he was joined by Miriam. Moses married an Ethiopian woman; one of a people who, for some mysterious reason, are referred to in Scripture as unable to change their skin. This was against the Jewish law and custom. Aaron and Miriam, therefore, "spoke against Moses." But their murmurings vexed Jehovah, who actually came down, stood in the door of the tabernacle, and read them a severe lesson.|| Miriam was punished with leprosy and excluded from the camp, where she remained seven days, after which the Lord healed her at Moses's intercession. Aaron suffered no other punishment than a bad frightening. Evidently Moses was a terrible old fellow to interfere with.

Miriam apparently did not long survive this ordeal. She died in the desert of Zin.¶ In the same year, according to

* *Devil's Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 332.

† Exodus xxx., 34-38.

‡ Num. xvi., 49. § Num. xvii., 8.

|| Num. xii., 3-5. ¶ Num. xxi.

Josephus,* Aaron died also. Scripture is not so precise, but it records both their deaths in the same chapter. Surely their disappearance so soon after their quarrel with Moses looks something more than a coincidence. The Bible story of Aaron's demise is very singular. God tells Moses to inform his brother that his time has come. Moses and Aaron, and Eleazar the latter's son, ascend Mount Hor. Arrived at a convenient spot, Moses strips Aaron's garments off and puts them on Eleazar; Aaron then accommodately dies, and the uncle and nephew descend. Josephus, perhaps thinking that the story looked ugly, says that the transference of the priestly garments, and the death of Aaron, took place in the presence of the people.†

Now when we remember that Aaron had seriously crossed Moses, and that the "meek" man was capable of sticking at nothing to serve his purpose, is it absurd to suppose that Aaron was "burked" on Mount Hor, with or without the assistance of his son and heir? Eleazar may have actively participated in the murder, or his father and uncle may have left him in some hollow while they went further, and on arriving at a likely situation Moses may have killed Aaron as he killed the Egyptian so many years before. According to a Mohammedan tradition, Moses *was* accused of murdering Aaron, but he was exculpated "by the angels bringing his body and exposing it to public view, or, say some, by the testimony of Aaron himself, who was raised to life for that purpose."‡ This, at any rate, is certain, if anything in the story *is* certain. *Three* men went up that mountain and only *two* came down. They reported that the third had died there; but one of them had seriously quarrelled with the deceased, and the other inherited his office and property.

Gould gives a long account of the Jewish traditions as to the death of Aaron. When they reached the summit of Mount Hor they saw a cavern, and inside they found a death-bed prepared by the angels. Aaron reposed on it and gradually gave up the ghost. The Mohammedan tradition, however, says that there was a sarcophagus, with the inscription, "I am for him whom I fit." Moses tried to lie down in it, but his feet hung out; Aaron then got in, and it fitted him exactly. Subsequently, say the Rabbis, Aaron's coffin ascended in sight of all the people, borne by angels, who carried it to heaven.§ Whatever Aaron's fate may have been after death, he certainly enjoyed a well-feed office on earth. Could he have managed it, he would doubtless be in the ten-per-cent. business still; but fortunately even priests must die, and "go home" to heaven or otherwise as destiny decides.

* Book IV., chap. iv.

† Book IV., chap. v., § 7.

‡;Sale's *Koran*, Ch. xxxiii., footnote.

§ Gould, vol. ii., pp. 127—131.

GENERAL JOSHUA.

AFTER Jehovah had dispatched Moses and secretly buried him, as Moses himself had eighty years previously dispatched and buried the Egyptian, Joshua was appointed to succeed him as leader of the Jews. He was "full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands upon him." No doubt Moses laid his venerable hands on Joshua's head, for religious superiors have always transmitted holiness to their inferiors through the skull. Jesus Christ laid his hands upon the apostles, saying "Receive ye the Holy Ghost," and the same performance is gone through still at the ordination of priests. A bishop lays his hands on the would-be curate's cranium, and discharges through that osseous structure as much of the Holy Ghost as the young gentleman is capable of receiving.

Joshua, it appears, was nominated for the leadership by Moses, but God readily accepted the nomination, and proceeded to instruct the new chief in his duties. He told him to be above all "strong and very courageous," and to fight the inhabitants of Palestine according to the law of Moses, a piece of advice which Joshua was the last man in the world to neglect.

What was this law of Moses? We have already seen (p. 62) how Moses commanded the massacre of all the captive Midianites except the young virgins, all of whom were reserved as food for the lust of his brutal soldiery, with the exception of thirty-two that were assigned to "the Lord," or in other words to the priests.* Let us now turn to Deuteronomy, where we shall find the war-policy dictated by Moses in the name of the most merciful God.

"When thou comest nigh unto a city to fight against it, then proclaim peace unto it. And it shall be, if it make thee answer of peace, and open unto thee, that all the people that is found therein shall be tributaries unto thee, and they shall serve thee. And if it will make no peace with thee, but will make war against thee, then thou shalt besiege it: And when the Lord thy God hath delivered it into thine hands, thou shalt smite every male thereof with the edge of the sword: But the women, and the little ones, and the cattle, even all the spoil thereof, shalt thou take unto thyself; and thou shalt eat the spoil of thine enemies, which the Lord thy God hath given thee. Thus shalt thou do unto all the cities which are very far off from thee, which are not of the cities of

* Numbers, xxxi., 29, 40.

these nations. But of the cities of these people, which the Lord thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth.”*

Such were the bloody maxims of inspired war! Yet when England was excited by the report of Turkish atrocities in Bulgaria, how the clergy, who frequently attended indignation meetings, denounced both the Turks and their creed; declaring that the Koran sanctioned, if it did not command, those infamies; and protesting that there was no hope for a nation which derived its politics from such an accursed book. Mohammed did, indeed, give savage counsels to his followers in respect to war, but they sink into insignificance beside the counsels of Moses. Allah was far less brutal than Jehovah. The whole range of history reveals no more ferocious cruelty than the Jews perpetrated in Canaan, when they took forcible possession of cities they had never built and fields they had never ploughed. “How that red rain will make the harvest grow!” exclaimed Byron over the slaughter of Waterloo; and surely the first harvest the Jews reaped in Canaan must have been luxuriantly rich, for the ground had been drenched with human blood.

Joshua was soon ordered to cross the river Jordan and begin the holy war. But before doing so he dispatched two spies to reconnoitre Jericho, which was the first place to be attacked. They reached this famous old city by night, and of course required lodgings. Instinct, or the Holy Spirit, led them to a brothel.† Mrs. Rahab, who presided over this Academy of Venus, proved a very good friend to the interlopers; for when their arrival was bruited abroad, and the king’s messengers came to arrest them, she hid them beneath a heap of flax on the roof, and declared they had just left. Pursue them quickly, she added, and you are sure to overtake them. These intelligent officers, without searching the premises, set out in chase of the imaginary runaways; and when the coast was clear Mrs. Rahab, whose house was erected on the town wall, let her two guests down “by a cord through the window.”

But before they left she made a covenant with them. Like many other ladies of easy virtue, or no virtue at all, Mrs. Rahab was inclined to piety. She had conceived a great respect for Jehovah, and was assured that his people would overcome all their enemies. She had also a great respect for her own skin; so she made the spies promise, on behalf of the Jews, that when Jericho was taken they would spare her and all her relatives; and they were to recognise her house by “the line of scarlet thread in the window;” *red*, as old Bishop Hall says, being the saving color.

Mrs. Rahab was clearly a traitress to her own countrymen.

* Deuteronomy, xx., 10-16.

† Judges ii., 1.

She not only harbored the enemy's spies, but actually made a profitable alliance with the invader. According to the law of all countries, whether barbarous or civilised, she was guilty of treason and deserved to be hung. But besides being a traitress she was also a harlot. Josephus judiciously describes her as an innkeeper.* Milman blandly says she kept "a public caravan-sary."† Whiston, with whom discretion was not altogether the better part of valor, tries to explain the harlotry away. "Observe," he says, "that I still call this woman Rahab, an *inn-keeper*, not a *harlot*; the whole history, both in our copies, and especially in Josephus, implying no more. It was indeed so frequent a thing, that women who were inn-keepers were also harlots, or maintainers of harlots, that the word commonly used for real harlots was usually given them."‡ But this is a very lame apology for Mrs. Rahab. There is nothing in the "whole history" that contradicts her being a lady of pleasure; and as the Bible is not an ordinary book, but God's Word, its language must be taken as it stands. If the Lord meant us to regard Mrs. Rahab as a virtuous woman, he would have employed another word than "harlot." Some indeed maintain that *zona* does not mean "harlot" at all, but it was so understood by the translators of the Septuagint, and by St. Jerome, the translator of the Vulgate. Our Authorised Version translates *zona* as "harlot," and thus it is allowed to stand in the Revised Version.

Mrs. Rahab, traitress and prostitute, was duly saved from the sack of Jericho. She married Salmon, a prince in Israel, of very questionable taste. They begat Boaz, who begat Obed, who begat Jesse, who begat David, and so on to "David's greater son."§ The blood of Mrs. Rahab, therefore, flowed in the veins of Jesus Christ. She was adopted into the holy line of the Savior's ancestry, and both James and Paul have sung her praises.|| Each calls her a harlot, but one celebrates her "works" and the other her "faith," and between them they make her a most illustrious saint.

Joshua's two spies returned safely to the camp, and reported "all serene." The Canaanites were very much frightened, and their terror would render them an easy prey.

The next morning Joshua got up early and told the Jews that God was going to do wonders. They wanted to get on the other side of Jordan, and the Lord intended to ferry them over. The river was swollen at that time and could not be forded, nor had the Jews any means of navigation. But God was with them, and he who had manipulated the Red Sea was quite equal

* Book V., chap. i.

† *History of the Jews*, p. 92.

‡ Footnote to Josephus.

§ 1 Chronicles i.; Matthew i.

|| James ii., 25; Hebrews xi., 31.

to dealing with the Jordan. Forward went the priests, bearing the ark, followed by all the people; and as the holy feet of the men of God "were dipped in the brim of the water" the river parted in twain; on one side the waters "stood and rose up upon a heap," while on the other side they "failed and were cut off." No miracle, however, was worked further up the river to stop the supplies, and therefore the "heap" must have been a pretty big one before the Lord let it fall.

Standing in the river-bed "firm on dry ground," the priests kept the road clear while the Jews "passed over right against Jericho." They seem to have done this in less than a day, but three millions of people would require a week. Perhaps Old Nick was commissioned to accelerate their progress with his toothpick; or perhaps the Lord assisted them more comfortably, after the fashion of Richard Baxter, the famous author of *The Saints' Everlasting Rest*, who wrote a tractate entitled "A Shove to a Heavy-A—d Christian."

When the Jews were over Jordan the "heap" of water tumbled down. Joshua and his people then encamped near Jericho, in readiness for still greater wonders. Three days afterwards the manna, on which God had fed the Jews for forty years, with such fatal results that only two of them survived the trial, was suddenly stopped. Manna is "angel's food," made of the "corn of heaven."* It was good enough for the chosen people while they loitered in the wilderness, but henceforth Jehovah's fighting-cocks needed a more stimulating diet.

The generation born in the desert had grown up uncircumcised, although it is difficult to understand how such a rite, if it was believed to be the mark of God's covenant with the Jews, could ever have been neglected. Joshua, therefore, was ordered to amputate their foreskins, and he "made him sharp knives" for the purpose. According to the *letter* of the narrative he was the sole surgeon for a million and a half of patients. Allowing a minute for each operation, it would have taken him three years to complete the business, yet it appears to have been transacted in a single day. Samson's jaw-bone was nothing to Joshua's knife.

Orthodox critics will, of course, contend that Joshua circumcised the Jews as a general victuals his army; that is, he simply caused it to be done; and no doubt this would be a rational interpretation of the text if Joshua were not a miraculous personage. Why should not a surgeon perform fifteen hundred thousand operations in one day as easily as an orator could address an audience of three millions? This oratorical feat is recorded of Joshua. After the capture of Ai he gathered all the Jews together, men, women, and children, and even the strangers, and read to them all the law of Moses without omit-

* Psalms lxxviii., 24, 25.

ting a single word.* It must have been a long job, and Joshua must have been pretty dry before the finish. But the greatest marvel is how he made himself audible to three million people at once. Either their ears were very sharp or his voice was terribly loud. General Joshua could outroar Bottom the weaver by two or three miles. One wonders how a voice, which could be heard distinctly on the outskirts of such a vast audience, did not break the tympanums of the front ranks. But perhaps they put the stone-deaf in the first rows, then the half-deaf, and then the hard of hearing, while those with more sensitive ears stood at a merciful distance.

Soon after this wholesale circumcision, and while the Jews were thinking of going to Jericho, Joshua had a curious experience, exactly like the one that happened to Balaam's ass. He saw "a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand." Joshua walked up and asked the stranger whether he was for or against them. I am "captain of the host of the Lord," was the reply. Good heavens! General Joshua was a "big pot," but here was a superior officer of the Lord of Hosts. Our hero immediately fell flat, and he was further ordered to take off his shoes. Moses was told to do the same thing when he met God in the burning bush. We may therefore presume that shoemakers will have to follow some other trade in heaven.

From this celestial messenger Joshua received precise instructions as to the assault on Jericho, and it must be admitted that the Lord's way of storming fortresses is unique in military literature.

"Ye shall compass the city, all ye men of war, and go round about the city once. Thus shalt thou do six days. And seven priests shall bear before the ark seven trumpets of rams' horns: and the seventh day ye shall compass the city seven times, and the priests shall blow with the trumpets. And it shall come to pass, that when they make a long blast with the rams' horn, and when ye hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city shall fall down flat, and the people shall ascend up every man straight before him."†

What general except Joshua ever received such extraordinary instructions from his commander-in-chief? God's soldiers need no cannon or bomb-shells, nor even battering rams or catapults; all they require is a few priests—and that article never runs short—a few rams' horns, and good lungs for shouting.

God's orders were obeyed. Six days in succession the Jews went round the wall of Jericho behind their tootling priests. Probably the garrison wondered why they did not come on, and felt there was something uncanny in this roundabout seige. On the seventh day the Jews went round the wall seven times, and either they must have had good legs or Jericho was very small for a capital city. Suddenly the priests trumpeted like mad

* Joshua viii., 30-35.

† Joshua vi., 3-5.

elephants, the Jews shouted like the Falls of Niagara, and the wall of Jericho fell flat—as flat as the fools who believe it.

Will some inspired sky-pilot kindly inform me whether the *whole* wall fell flat, as seems implied by the text, "the people went up into the city, every man straight before him." If so, I should like to learn what became of Mrs. Rahab's house which was "upon the town wall," and what was the use of her "scarlet thread in the window" when her Academy of Venus was in ruins.

Jericho was in the hands of Jehovah's bandits, and they carried out his bloody instructions to the letter. Even the passion of lust was not allowed to conflict with their prime duty of slaughter. The universal cry was "Kill, kill, kill!" God told them to "leave alive nothing that breatheth," and Joshua was there to see the command obeyed. The army of the Lord "utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox, and sheep, and ass, with the edge of the sword."* Only Rahab and her relatives were spared; all the rest were massacred; and when the pall of night fell upon the doomed city it covered a scene that might have made the very devils shudder. Surely if the blood of man "crieth from the ground," here was enough to have sounded to the stars.

Joshua and the priests understood each other. All the silver and the gold, and all the vessels of brass and iron, were "put into the treasury of the house of the Lord." Then Jericho was burnt, and Joshua laid a solemn curse on whomsoever should rebuild it. But although "the Lord was with Joshua" the curse was futile. Jericho *was* rebuilt. The city existed in Jesus Christ's time, and was next in importance to Jerusalem. A certain man travelling to Jericho fell among thieves; but if he or any other mortal ever fell among worse thieves than Joshua and his marauders, it would need a pen dipped in something worse than hell-fire to chronicle the encounter.

When the Jews attacked Ai they were repulsed, and no less than thirty-six were killed. This prodigious loss melted their hearts and they became as water. Joshua rent his clothes, fell upon his face before the ark with the elders of Israel, and all of them peppered their greasy Hebrew locks with dust. After remaining in this position for several hours, Joshua expostulated with God, asked him whether he had brought his people over Jordan only to betray them to their enemies, and expressed a hearty wish that they had never crossed at all. God, however, told him to get up. Some one had stolen a portion of the spoil of Jericho, all of which belonged to the Lord, or in other words to the priests, who evidently concocted this pretty story. Inquisition was made at once, and "Achan was taken," who con-

* Judges vi., 21.

fessed to having appropriated "a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight." His doom was swift and terrible; he was stoned to death, and his body consumed with fire. Nor was he the only sufferer. Jehovah (or the priests) was not so easily appeased. Achan's sons and daughters, and even his oxen, asses, and sheep, were served in the same manner. A cairn was raised over the cinders, and then "the Lord turned from the fierceness of his anger." This holocaust put him in a good temper, and the heathen felt the smart of his loving-kindness. Joshua captured Ai forthwith; all the inhabitants, from the oldest man to the youngest babe, were massacred; and the city was burnt into a desolate heap. After this feast of blood Joshua "built an altar unto the Lord God of Israel in Mount Ebal," and Jehovah seems to have been mightily well pleased with the whole business.

The Gibeonites obtained a league by craft, but though their lives were spared they did not escape slavery. The five kings of Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon, who united their forces, were defeated by Joshua; and as their armies fled from the field "the Lord cast down great stones from heaven upon them," killing more by this stratagem than the Jews slew with the sword. When we read that Pan fought with the Greeks against the Persians at Marathon, we must regard it as a fable; but when we read that Jehovah fought with the Jews against the five kings at Gibeon, we must regard it as historical truth, and if we doubt it we shall be eternally damned.

But the most remarkable incident of this battle was Joshua's miracle. For the purpose of enabling God and the Jews to kill all the fugitives, which could not have been achieved in darkness, he cried out, "Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon." Those obedient orbs immediately stood still, the day was lengthened, and the slaughter of the enemy was completed.

What Joshua stopped, if he stopped anything, was not the sun but the earth; and science tells us that a sudden arrest of the earth's motion would generate heat enough to cause a wholesale conflagration. But nothing of the kind happened. Nor, indeed, has any ancient nation, except the Jews, preserved the slightest record of Joshua's miracle. Josephus says that "the day was lengthened," but he of course borrowed from the Jewish scriptures. Whiston's footnote on the story is perfectly nonsensical. Milman discreetly commits himself to no opinion on the subject. Bishop Watson, in his reply to Thomas Paine, thinks it "idle, if not impious, to undertake to explain how the miracle was performed." But he adds that, "a confused tradition concerning this miracle" was preserved by the Egyptians.* The only evi-

* Watson's *Apologies*, p. 220.

dence he gives is a passage from Herodotus about the sun having twice risen in the west and set in the east in Egypt. But what has this to do with Joshua? Such prodigies were common among credulous eastern peoples in ancient times. Even the Greeks believed that when Jupiter personated Amphitryon, and visited his bride Alcmena, the amorous god lengthened the night to prolong his enjoyment; and surely this story is quite as credible, and quite as moral, as the Bible story of Joshua's lengthening the day to prolong a massacre.

While the Jews pursued their fugitive enemies the five confederate kings hid themselves in a cave. Joshua ordered the mouth to be closed with big stones until the pursuit was ended, when the poor devils were brought out and treated with great ignominy. Their necks were used as footstools by the captains of Israel, and afterwards they were hung on separate trees. This highly civilised treatment of prisoners shows that Joshua and the Jews were worthy of their God.

General Joshua's remaining career was one of uniform bloodshed. The history, indeed, is monotonous in its brutality. Makkedah, Lachish, Eglon, Hebron, Debir, and other cities were captured; and in every case the inhabitants were exterminated. Men, women, and children were involved in a promiscuous slaughter. Joshua "left none remaining, but utterly destroyed all that breathed, as the Lord God had commanded."* Dumb animals, also, were treated with equal cruelty; the horses, for instance, being maliciously houghed,† and allowed to perish by a slow and agonising death.

When Jehovah's bandits had obtained possession of Palestine by wars of unparalleled ferocity, General Joshua gave up the ghost at the age of one hundred and ten.‡ He was buried at Timnath. Josephus says he led the Jews for twenty-five years.§

General Joshua's father was called Nun; his mother's name is unknown, but according to a Jewish tradition the lady who had the signal honor of bringing this pious murderer into the world was Miriam, the sister of Moses and Aaron.|| Neither the Bible nor any other authority assigns him a wife; and, indeed, it is highly probable that such a slaughterer of his kind was a total stranger to the domestic sentiments. We may presume that he gratified his lust on some of the captive females, who were unfortunate enough to survive the massacre of their fathers and brothers, and to fall into the hands of the vilest horde of cut-throats that ever polluted the earth. Scripture tells us he was "full of the spirit of wisdom,"¶ but the inspired narrative of his career exhibits a moral monster whose effigy merits a conspicuous place in the Chamber of Horrors.

* Joshua x., 40. † Joshua xi., 6. 9. ‡ Joshua xxiv., 29.

§ Josephus, bk. v., chap. i. || Gould, vol. ii., p. 138. ¶ Deut. xxxiv., 9.

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AFTER the death of General Joshua the Jews "forsook the Lord and worshipped Baal and Ashtaroth." Baal was identical with Bel of the Babylonians, and with Moloch, although in the course of time he improved, and became "no longer the god of destruction and death in nature, but the father of life, the supreme dispenser of light and heat, the principle and cause of the renewing which yearly clothes the earth with luxurious vegetation."* This Baal was evidently the sun. Ashtaroth was a feminine deity, better known as Astarte, representing the moon, whose periodicities are intimately associated with those of the human sexual system. She was the goddess of voluptuousness and fecundity, as Baal was the god of strength and virility. Their worship included the most incredible lasciviousness, but who can wonder that an amorous people like the Jews should constantly turn their backs on the stern Jahveh, and court the softer deities of Syria? Their bacchic strains at midnight were better than the horrid shrieks of human sacrifice; the fever of lust was less awful than the rage of murder.

But if the Lord thought otherwise, why did he not take precautions against their natural tendency? He clearly foresaw the mischief, for he purposely left in the promised land "five lords of the Philistines, and all the Canaanites, and the Sidonians, and the Hivites that dwell in Mount Lebanon,"† in order that his chosen people might be tempted into idolatry. They were left to "prove Israel, whether they would hearken unto the commandments of the Lord," as well as "to teach them war, at the least such as before knew nothing thereof"; a proceeding which strikes the carnal mind as simply infamous.

With all their fondness for fighting, the Jews were less sanguinary than Jehovah, and they intermarried with the remnants of the native population. This displeased the Lord, who objected to the spoiling of their precious *blood*, which had "rolled through rascals ever since the Flood." But he was still more displeased when the Jews "served Baalim and the groves."‡ That was an unpardonable sin, for what god could ever stand rivalry in the open market? Therefore the Lord "sold them" into the hands of

* Jules Soury, *The Religion of Israel*, p. 53. † Judges iii, 3.

‡ For "groves" the Revised Version substitutes "Asheroth," which were phallic emblems.

the king of Mesopotamia, who ruled them for eight years. "Sold them" is a capital phrase. Sooner or later the gods always *sell* those who are foolish and weak enough to trust them.

During several generations there was a perpetual alternation of loyalty and treason on the part of the Jews. For long periods they were punished by subjection to their enemies; then the Lord took pity on them, and "raised up" Judges to deliver them.

The first important Judge was Ehud. He was a Benjamite and left-handed, and he delivered Israel in a very left-handed fashion. Under pretence of bringing a present to Eglon, the king of Moab, to whom the Jews were then subjected, he obtained a private interview. "I have a message from God unto thee," said Ehud. Eglon rose from his seat, and being "a very fat man" he displayed a fine abdomen, into which Ehud immediately thrust God's message in the shape of a dagger. It penetrated so deeply that it could not be withdrawn, and in the beautiful language of Scripture "the dirt came out." Ehud escaped, gathered the Jews together, and fell upon the soldiers of Moab, all of whom perished in the battle. They were ten thousand in all, and "not a man escaped."

God's chosen people, and especially their scribes, had marvellous notions of arithmetic. Ten thousand Moabitish soldiers had sufficed to overawe for eighteen years a people numbering three millions with six hundred thousand men of arms! It could scarcely be done even now when trained soldiers with rifles have such immense advantage over undisciplined and ill-armed multitudes; and how much less when the weapons and methods of warfare were rude, when men fought mostly hand to hand, and one man was as good as another.

As the Lord "raised up" this "deliverer," we are justified in assuming that he instigated the assassination. According to Scripture, therefore, the assassination of obstructive monarchs is a virtuous deed. Christian apologists, who make rich capital out of the French Revolution, have wasted much denunciation over the guillotining of Louis XVI., conveniently forgetting the story of Ehud, who slew Eglon treacherously, whereas the execution of Louis XVI. was at least a formal act after a public trial.

Eighty years' rest followed Ehud's performance; then the Jews went wrong again, and were oppressed by the Philistines. Once more the Lord raised them up a deliverer, whose whole history is told in a single verse.* His name was Shamgar, and he "slew of the Philistines six hundred men with an ox goad," probably skewering them like cat's-meat. Milman describes this formidable weapon as "a strong pike, eight feet long, and pointed with iron."† Shamgar was a tough fellow, his ox goad

* Judges iii., 31.

† *History of the Jews*, p. 106.

was tough, the story is tough, and it requires a tough throat to swallow it.

After this "the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord," who once more "sold them" to Jabin, king of Canaan. This monarch "mightily oppressed them," for he had nine hundred chariots of iron. How many soldiers he had we are not informed. But unless they were a great army, it is difficult to understand how they could mightily oppress a nation as populous as Scotland is now, and nearly as populous as England was in the reign of Elizabeth. Our surprise is increased when we subsequently read that his iron chariots, his army, and his great captain Sisera, were all overcome by Barak and ten thousand Jews.

A woman stirred Israel up to fight. She was called Deborah, and her husband's name was Lapidoth. Doubtless he was merely a necessary appendage to his wife. She was a prophetess, and she "judged Israel at that time." She "dwelt under the palm-tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in Mount Ephraim; and the children of Israel came up to her for judgment."* Clearly she was a Sibyl,† who told fortunes and revealed the secrets of futurity. People who practise that business now are sent to gaol, but in ancient times they were honored and trusted, as they still are among savages.

At her instigation Barak, the son of Abinoam, collected ten thousand men to fight Jabin; and Sisera gathered together all his chariots and warriors to put down the impudent rebel. But the Lord took part in the battle, and the Canaanites were utterly discomfited. Every man of them was slain, except Sisera himself, who alighted from his chariot and fled on foot towards the tent of Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite, who was on terms of friendship with king Jabin. Jael came out, proffered him shelter, gave him refreshment, covered him with a mantle, invited him to sleep, and promised to watch for the enemy while he slumbered. Relying on her good faith, the weary general sank into repose, and when he was unconscious his treacherous hostess, violating the sacred laws of hospitality, smote a nail into his temples and fastened his head to the ground. Then she went out to meet Barak, brought him into her tent, and showed him his enemy treacherously and brutally assassinated. A generous soldier would have revolted at the infamous spectacle, but Barak and Deborah sang a long duet, in which they said, "Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be."‡ *Blessed* forsooth! Surely a woman who inveigles a hunted man into her tent, pretends old friendship for him, lulls him into a false security, and murders him in his sleep, is a fit mate for the Devil; nay, a fit spouse for Jehovah

* Judges iv., 4, 5. † Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, vol. ii., pp. 215—228.

‡ Judges v., 24.

himself, who might have bred from her many a "man after his own heart."

Coleridge has expended some fine eloquence on Deborah, calling her "a high-souled, heroic woman," and the "Hebrew Bonduca."* But her pious rejoicings over the treachery of Jael, and the cold-blooded assassination of a fugitive general after the extermination of his army, reveal a dark and ferocious temper.

Israel had rest another forty years, but they went wrong again, and the Lord "delivered them into the hand of Midian." But these Midianites had been utterly destroyed by Moses; their cities were burnt, their males and married women were slain, and the young virgins reserved for a darker fate.† Yet here they are again, stronger than ever, and able to oppress the Jews for seven years!

Gideon was "raised up" to deliver the Jews from this thralldom. Visited by an angel, who wrought miracles for a sign of his divine mission, Gideon demolished his father's altar dedicated to Baal, and prepared for war with Midian. But before commencing the campaign he demanded a supreme sign of God's favor. Laying a fleece of wool on the ground at night, he found it in the morning wet with dew while the ground was dry. The following morning the ground was wet and the fleece dry. What a pity that fleece was not preserved, like the blood of St. Januarius in the bottle at Naples; and as the congealed blood liquefies annually under the hand of a priest, so the fleece might still exhibit its miraculous character. Unfortunately, it is lost. The priests fleece their pious sheep, but they never show them anything so wonderful as Gideon's fleece.

Gideon's army numbered thirty-two thousand, but the Lord reduced it to ten thousand, and finally to three hundred, by "a singular process, of which it is difficult to discover the meaning."‡ Brought down to the river to drink, some of the army lapped the water like dogs, and they were selected. Gideon and his doggish three hundred advanced by night against the Midianites, who were multitudinous like grasshoppers, and their camels as the seashore sand. Each Hebrew soldier carried a lamp in a pitcher. Nearing the enemy, they broke the pitchers and flourished the lamps in their left hands, while in their right hands they blew their trumpets. The Midianites were scared and thrown into great disorder. They fought each other by mistake and then fled, the Jews pursuing them with hideous slaughter, and bringing back to Gideon the heads of two princes as trophies of victory. Jehovah's prize-fighters were on a level with the Zulus. Imagine the French beating the Germans, and bringing the heads of Bismarck and Moltke to Paris! Even the French "infidels" would scarcely do

* *Confessions of an Enquiring Spirit*, Letter iii. † Numbers xxxi.

‡ Milman, p. 110.

that, but God's favorites thought it a glorious part of war, and he never taught them better.

Having killed 120,000 Midianites, Gideon captured two cities, and punished Succoth for refusing him assistance by whipping its elders with thorns and briars.* Being invited to rule the Jews, he declined, but at length consented on condition of receiving all the golden earrings taken from the slaughtered Midianites, and other precious spoil. With a portion of this treasure he "made an ephod," and put it in his own city, Ophrah; where "all Israel went a whoring after it," a circumstance which is difficult to understand, as an ephod was not an idol, but a costly, ornamental part of the priestly raiment.

Israel had rest for *another* forty years. Why *forty*? Because that was a sacred number, and we are not reading history but romance. Gideon lived to a good old age and left a numerous family. Like all God's favorites he was a thorough-going polygamist. He had "many wives" and at least one "concubine." They bore him seventy-one sons, and perhaps as many daughters.

Gideon was succeeded by Abimelech, who put his seventy brothers to death; and he was followed by Tola, who ruled for twenty-three years, and added thirty male children, and God knows how many female children, to the population. When Tola died the Jews indulged in a perfect carnival of idolatry. They worshipped the gods of all their neighbors with the utmost impartiality; which so provoked the Lord that he let the Philistines and the Ammonites oppress them until they repented, when he raised them up a deliverer in Jephthah the Gileadite. This worthy was the son of a harlot, and being driven from his father's house by the legitimate children he had taken to the life of a freebooter. But he was elected chief by the elders of Gilead when they resolved on war with Ammon. Before going out to battle, "the spirit of the Lord" being upon him, he vowed that if he returned victorious he would offer whomsoever came out of his own house to meet him as a burnt offering. The Ammonites were smitten with immense slaughter, and Jephthah returned to Mizpeh, where his daughter, who was ignorant of his vow, came out to meet him with dance and song. The pious father was very sorry, for "she was his only child," but he kept his promise to God, and after allowing the unfortunate girl two months to bewail her virginity, he "did with her according to his vow."†

Ordinary Christians shrink from the literal horror of this story, and welcome every attempt of modern commentators to explain it by the subterfuges of a later faith. But a slight acquaintance with ancient creeds would diminish their surprise. Human sacrifice is almost invariably found in certain stages of religious culture. No matter where we turn

* Judges viii, 16.

† Judges xi, 30-40.

—to Phœnicia, Carthage, Assyria, Arabia, Gaul, Rome, Greece, India, Mexico, or Peru—this dark and bloody rite has prevailed;* and it has been found in recent times among various African tribes, in the South Pacific islands, and among the Mongols and the American Indians.† All the great Semitic gods, from Moloch downwards, were ravenous for human victims, and there is nothing overstrained in the terrific thirteenth chapter of Flaubert's *Salammbô*. Nor was the God of Israel an exception to the rule. "There is, indeed," says Professor Soury, "no doubt that human victims were offered to Jahveh" in primitive times.‡ Like Moloch, Jahveh claims his first-born. "The first born of thy sons shalt thou give unto me," he says, "for all the first born are mine."§ And Jephthah's fulfilment of his vow was in accord with the text in Leviticus (xxvii., 28-29), which declares that both beast and man devoted to the Lord shall not be redeemed, but "shall surely be put to death."

Not until the twelfth century of our era, when Rabbi Kimchi wrote on the subject, was there any attempt to dispute the sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter. Josephus distinctly says "he sacrificed his daughter as a burnt offering."|| St. Ambrose deplores Jephthah's cruelty; St. Jerome says that God permitted the sacrifice to punish the imprudent father for such a rash vow; St. Chrysostom expresses a similar opinion, which was also adopted by Justin Martyr and Theodoret; and the great St. Thomas, while censuring Jephthah's rashness, acknowledges that the faith and devotion which inclined him to make this vow proceeded from God.¶

Rabbi Kimchi proposed to read, "It shall be consecrated to the Lord if it be not fit for a burnt offering," or "it shall be offered for a burnt offering, if fit for it." Simon Patrick** followed this line, but confessed that the stream of interpreters ran in the contrary way. Adam Clarke†† takes the same position, but he supports it with *à priori* reasons of no weight against the text, which, as Luther says in his marginal note, "stands there clear." Our Authorised Version shows "a distinct disposition to tone down the meaning of the original," says the Rev. Dr. Wright, who alleges that the Hebrew "*whosoever* goeth out from the doors of my house,"‡‡ expressly refers to a person, and not to an animal. This agrees with Calmet, who says "Observe, he does not say the first *thing*, or the first *animal*, but the first *person*."

* H. C. Trumbull, D.D., *The Blood Covenant*, pp. 105, 106, 157, 166, 174, 277.

† C. S. Wake, *Evolution of Morality*, vol. i., pp. 161, 324, etc.

‡ Jules Soury, *The Religion of Israel*, p. 46.

§ Exodus xiii., 2; xxii., 29; Numbers iii., 13.

|| Book V., chap. vii. ¶ Calmet, *Jephthah*. ** *Commentary*, 1765.

†† *Commentary*, Judges xi., 31.

‡‡ *British and Foreign Evangelical Review*, July 1884, p. 61.

This great Catholic commentator adds that "I will offer him up as a burnt offering to the Lord, *eum holocaustum offeram Domino*," is the true meaning of the text, and they pervert it who say she was redeemed. Exactly the same view is expressed in the latest English commentary, edited by Canon Cook. The original Hebrew, we are told, means *whosoever*, and "these words prove conclusively that Jephthah intended his vow to apply to human beings not animals;" the same writer adding, still more strongly, that the words "preclude any other meaning than that Jephthah contemplated a human sacrifice."*

The words "and she knew no man," which end the story of Jephthah's vow, have induced some apologists to pretend that his daughter was not burnt, but devoted to perpetual virginity. The words, however, stand in our Revised Version "and she had not known man"; that is, says the Speaker's Commentary, "in the mind of the writer her virginity was an aggravation of her cruel fate." Besides, as Milman observes, "it is certain that vows of celibacy were totally unknown among the Hebrews, and belong to a different stage of society. Another objection of Michaelis is fatal to these views. The daughter could not be consecrated to the service of the high priest, for the high priest and the ark were then at Shiloh, in the territory of Ephraim, with whom Jephthah was at deadly war."† Well might Bishop Warburton exclaim, "Solutions like these expose sacred scripture to the scorn and derision of unbelievers."‡

There cannot be a reasonable doubt that Jephthah's daughter was sacrificed as a burnt offering to the Lord. But the question remains, Did the Lord accept the present and sanction the sacrifice? First, let it be noted that "the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah"§ *before* he made his fatal vow; nor is there any sign that the holy spirit deserted him before its completion. Next, there is absolutely no censure of Jephthah's conduct in any part of the Bible. Lastly, he is mentioned by Paul|| as a worker of righteousness through faith. Jephthah's vow did not, therefore, displease the Lord, who continued to speak through prophets and apostles for more than a thousand years without expressing the slightest disapprobation; and even when he distinctly praised Jephthah through the inspired pen of St. Paul, he neglected to mix any censure with his panegyric.

Jephthah's vow was not without a parallel among pagan nations. Agamemnon, who led the Greeks in the war against Troy, immolated his daughter Iphigenia to appease the gods, and procure favorable winds for the fleet which was detained

* The Speaker's Commentary, Judges xi.

† *History of the Jews*, p. 112.

‡ *Divine Legation of Moses*, vol. ii., p. 698 (Tegg).

§ Judges xi., 29.

|| Hebrews xi., 32.

at Aulis.* According to the Greek legend, Iphigenia's innocence excited the compassion of Diana, on whose altar she was to be sacrificed; and when the knife was descending into her devoted bosom the goddess miraculously snatched her away, and substituted a handsome goat for the maiden. This escape, however, is probably later than the original story of her immolation. Like the modern theories of the escape of Jephthah's daughter, it was the product of an age which had grown ashamed of the brutalities of primitive faith, and learnt to substitute animals for human victims on the altars of the gods.

Jephthah subsequently, at the head of his victorious Gileadites, warred with the tribe of Ephraim, of whom, after the battle, he slew forty-two thousand in cold blood. After this he judged Israel for six years, during which time his deeds are not recorded. Being dead and buried, he left a name illustrious for filicide, massacre, and no virtue except animal courage.

The Book of Judges ends worthily in a tornado of bloodshed and lust. There was a Levite who became priest to one Micah, a fellow who robbed his mother, got wealthy, set up gods for himself, and kept his own parson, who acquired such a reputation that the Danites stole him. This Levite had a concubine who played him false and decamped. He fetched her back, and on his way home he stayed a night at Gibeah, which was inhabited by Benjamites. Just as in the case of Lot's visitors, the people came to the Levite's host and demanded his guest. The old man quietly refused, but offered them instead his own daughter (a maiden) and the Levite's concubine, whom they might abuse as they pleased. In the end, the poor concubine was thrust out to the lustful crowd, who treated her so brutally that in the morning she lay dead at the door. Then the Levite cut her up into twelve pieces, and sent one to each of the twelve tribes, who inflicted such vengeance on the Benjamites that only six hundred escaped alive out of twenty-six thousand.† All the women seem to have perished, and the tribe of Benjamin was threatened with extinction. But the fugitives soon received the gift of four hundred virgins spared in a religious massacre at Jabesh-gilead; and afterwards they made a Sabine rape upon the daughters of Shiloh while they were merrymaking.

What a horrid story of unnatural passion, brutal lust, awful bloodshed, and weltering anarchy! No wonder Josephus, for the honor of his nation, passes it all over in silence. God's chosen people, on their own showing, were an abominable crew; while their Judges were but savage chieftains, whose only virtue was physical bravery, and their highest happiness to possess a harem and procreate like barn-yard cocks.

* Lemprière's Classical Dictionary, *Iphigenia*; Euripides, *Iphigenia in Aulis*.

† Judges xix.-xxi.

PROFESSOR SAMSON.

MILTON'S sublime genius has invested the story of Samson with a fictitious grandeur. Omitting the ludicrous incidents of his hero's career, by taking it at the point where it became tragic, he produced a noble drama in the Greek style. But the real hero of *Samson Agonistes* is Milton himself. All those pathetic lamentations and noble resolves flowed from the depths of his own sorrow and courage, when in blindness and solitude he grieved over the dead Commonwealth, which his pen had defended and adorned, and reflected on the moral profligacy and political baseness of the Restoration. No trace of the poem's tender beauty or heroic splendor can be found in the old Hebrew story, which was the occasion but not the source of his inspiration.

Samson's history is vulgar and absurd. "As in those of the Grecian Hercules and the Arabian Antar," says Milman, "a kind of comic vein runs through the early adventures of the stout-hearted warrior, in which love of women, of riddles, and of slaying Philistines out of mere wantonness, vie for the mastery."* This is mild criticism indeed. Samson is nothing but a great bully, alternately courting, swaggering, fighting and drinking. He is described as a teetotaller, but several texts show that he shared Jack Falstaff's partiality to good liquor, though he never displayed a scintillation of his wit. His one virtue, if it may be called so, was his miraculous strength, in which he excelled Hercules himself. Were he alive in this age of exhibitions, he would realise a colossal fortune by his public performances. Professor Samson would be "all the rage," and his gymnastic exploits the talk of the town.

Myth and tradition seem to have been clumsily blended in Samson's history. We have seen that Shamgar slew six hundred Philistines with an ox goad; and Dr. Oort surmises that the achievements of this hero were woven into a solar myth.† As to the solar myth there can be no doubt. The reader will meet with abundant evidence as we proceed. Meanwhile let two facts be noted. Samson's name is never mentioned in the whole of the Jewish Scriptures except in the four chapters devoted to his career. It is also remarkable that while the

* *History of the Jews*, p. 113.

† *Bible for Young People*, bk. ii., chap. xx.

other Judges fight at the head of armies, Samson fights alone like Hercules, opposing his enemies single-handed, and slaying thousands without arms.

Samson is introduced to us in the thirteenth of *Judges*. His father's name was Manoah, but his mother's is not revealed, from that perverse contempt of women for which the Bible is conspicuous. Like other Bible women who gave birth to wonderful children, she was unfortunately barren. But Manoah was not the only person of the male persuasion. She was visited one day by an angel, who promised her a son. Naturally he called when Mr. Manoah was out; and, according to Josephus, his appearance was that of a beautiful, tall young man.* His intervention was very effectual, and in due course she produced a sturdy baby, who became the champion athlete of the world.

Mrs. Manoah told her husband, and Josephus relates that her encomiums on the visitor's beauty raised a storm of jealousy in the good man's breast. But this passion was allayed by the angel's return. They invited him to dine with them, but he refused, and even declined to tell them his name. Mr. Manoah sacrificed a kid to the Lord, and the angel "did wonderously," though the details of his performance are omitted. Finally, when the flame rose from the altar he ascended with it, and vanished from their sight. This convinced them it was an angel, and they fell on their faces, exclaiming, "We shall surely die, because we have seen God." †

Now, who was this visitor? From the Hebrew it appears that Mrs. Manoah addressed him as "thou God of visibility," and the "angel of the Lord" is said to be equivalent to "the Messiah." According to the Rev. W. A. Scott, ‡ it was "the Great Judge." Gill § says it was "no less than the Son of God," and Adam Clarke || says it was "no other than the Second Person of the ever-blessed Trinity." If these learned commentators are right, this was the first appearance of Jesus Christ on earth, or his first appearance without the other two partners of the firm. Yet the visitor may have been the First Person of the ever-blessed Trinity, old Jahveh himself, in the guise of a "masher"; for he who appeared to Moses in a burning bush, showed him on another occasion his holy posteriors, and habitually conversed with him face to face, might very well call on the Manoahs, who belonged to the same chosen stock.

Mrs. Manoah was ordered by this visitor—whether an angel, Jesus Christ, God Almighty, or even the Holy Ghost—not to eat grapes, nor to drink wine or anything "short," for the child was to be a Nazarite from the womb. No razor was to "come on his head," though nothing was said about scissors. And when

* Bk. v., chap. viii.

† *Judges* xiii., 22.

‡ *The Great Judge; or the Story of Samson* (San Francisco. 1858)

§ *Bible Exposition*, p. 57.

|| *Commentary*, Ju. xiii., 3.

the child grew up he was to redeem Israel from the Philistines, by whom they were then oppressed.

One part of this prediction is very suggestive. How could the boy be a Nazarite, when that sect certainly did not exist until many centuries after the date of the Judges? The Nazarites were teetotallers and strict ascetics, which Samson was not. Why, then, is he called a Nazarite? Because he had long flowing hair, like all the members of that sect, who eschewed the razor and all its works as affronting the decrees of God, and gave unlimited hospitality to as many of his creatures as chose to nestle in their hirsute adornments. But Samson's luxuriant curls have really a different reason. They amounted to seven,* which was a sacred number with the Jews. They were his glory, like the shining locks of Apollo; and his strength lay in them, as is the case with all the solar gods; for that abundant hair represents the sun's rays, which are resplendent in summer, shorn in the winter, and renewed in the spring. It is possible, however, as Gerald Massey argues, that the number seven in this case is derived from the lunar myth; seven being the indivisible quarter of one moon.†

The very name of this miraculous child betrays his mythological character. Samson, or Shimson, means *sun-like*, according to Gesenius;‡ *their sun*, according to St. Jerome; *little sun*, according to Adam Clarke;§ and *his sun*, according to Calmet.|| Dag, or fish, gave Dagon, or fish-god; and from Shemesh, the sun, was derived Shemesh-sun, or sun-god. We find the first syllable retained in many biblical names, such as Shem, Shemuel (Samuel), Shemida, Shemiramoth, and Shemazar. The Phœnician sun-god, Baal, who was notoriously worshipped by the recreant Jews, leaves similar traces in the names of the sons of Saul and David—Eshbaal, Meribaal, and Baalyadah, as preserved in *Chronicles*, but changed by the Rabbi compilers of *Samuel* into Ishbosheth, Mephibosheth, and Elyadah. There were also two places in Palestine, one in Dan and the other in Naphthali, called Beth-shemesh, or Ir-shemesh; that is, "house of the sun" or "city of the sun."

Dr. Oort well remarks of Samson's adventures that "a solar myth doubtless lies at the bottom of them, as we may see by the very name of the hero, which signifies sun-god. In some of the features of the story, the original meaning may still be traced quite clearly."¶ The same view is admirably developed and supported by Professor Steinthal, in his appendix to Goldziher's valuable *Mythology of the Hebrews*.** Gerald Massey, however, contends with some reason, that the legend of Samson is not

* Judges xvi., 19.

† Gerald Massey, *Lunolatry*, pp., 11, 12.

‡ Hebrew Lexicon.

§ *Commentary*, Ju. xiii., 24.

|| B. Dict., *Samson*.

¶ Vol. II., p. 226.

** English Translation (Longmans, 1877).

entirely solar, but is "the Hebrew version of the Egyptian myth of Khunsu, the luni-solar hero, who slays the giants—or Philistines—and overcomes the powers of darkness."* Samson's thirty companions, and their thirty changes of raiment, are "the thirty days to the month in the soli-lunar reckoning."

These sun-gods—with or without moon myths—are found among all peoples who have advanced beyond fetishism. The mighty orb was an object of wonder and praise, and was personified and worshipped. Light, heat, and life sprang from the benignant god of day, and all their fluctuations were reflected in his career. Sunrise and sunset, the war of light and cloud, the fecund power of spring, the consuming heat of summer, and the blighting approach of winter, were all symbolised in his birth, battles, triumphs, defeat, death, and resurrection.

How Samson's youth was spent we are not told. The Bible says he "grew," but most children do that. We are also informed that "the Lord blessed him," but not what the blessing was worth. We picture him as a boisterous lad, fond of exercising his raw strength; pulling cats' tails, robbing orchards, fighting his playmates, and "cheeking" his elders. While still young he entered the camp of Dan, and there "the spirit of the Lord began to move him at times." One movement of the spirit sent him after a Philistine young woman at Timnath. Returning home in hot haste, he told his parents to go down and secure her for his wife. They desired him to choose a wife from his own tribe, but he cut them short. "She just suits me," said he, "so fetch her at once." This was rather undutiful, but "it was of the Lord." So the old people gave in and set out for Timnath, with the young fellow on their track.

As Samson approached Timnath, "a young lion roared against him" most uncivilly, and our hero made a first display of his prowess by slaying the offensive brute with "nothing in his hand," just as Hercules slew the Nemean lion without a weapon. Samson kept his exploit secret and went on to his young woman. Shortly after, on passing the spot again, he found a swarm of bees in the lion's carcase; and taking a couple of handfuls, he ate some himself, and gave the rest to Mr. and Mrs. Manoah.

This worthy couple had made arrangements for the wedding, and thirty young men came to share the festivities. By way of killing the time, Samson propounded a riddle. If they solved it in seven days, he was to give them thirty sheets and thirty changes of raiment; if not, they were to give him the same articles. The riddle was, "Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness." After trying six days to solve it, but in vain, they threatened to murder Mrs. Samson and all her family unless she wormed the answer out of her husband. She coaxed him, wept like a thunder-shower, and

* *Luniolatry*, p. 10.

"lay sore upon him," until he told her the answer, which she conveyed to his friends, who won the bet. Samson delicately taunted them with having "ploughed with his heifer," and then absconded, leaving his wife for his bosom friend; and "the Spirit of the Lord," coming upon him again, he went to Ashkelon and slew thirty men. Josephus says "he divorced this wife; and the girl despised his anger, and was married to his companion."*

Samson's riddle remains a riddle still, except to the mythologists. Bees do not build in dead flesh, for their wax and honey would be spoiled by putrefaction. Virgil, indeed, describes them as breeding in the carcase of an ox;† but he places the event in Egypt, the motherland of superstition. The whole story is mythological. Hercules slew his lion; and the sun-god Sandon, of the Assyrians and Lydians, was likewise a lion killer. The lion is also found as the animal of Apollo on the Lycian monuments as well as at Patara. "Hence it becomes clear," says Steinthal, "that the lion was accepted by the Semitic nations as a symbol of the summer heat. . . . 'Samson, Hercules, or Sandon, kills the lion,' means therefore, 'He is the beneficent saving power that protects the earth against the burning heat of summer.' Samson is the kind Aristæos who delivers the island of Keos from the lion, the protector of bees and honey, which is most abundant when the sun is in the lion."‡ This is mostly true, but it is pointed out by Gerald Massey that, on this theory, Samson "in killing the lion would be only slaying the reflection of himself." Regarded, however, as a luni-solar-god, Samson is relieved from this suicide. Mithraic monuments depict the lion with a bee in its mouth. Sekhet, the she-lion, was an Egyptian figure of fire; her name was also the name for the bee, which was the royal symbol of Lower Egypt; and the bee denotes the sweetness in the lion. When her heat, at the time of the annual inundation, became often fatal, the luni-solar hero, as Khunsu, Hercules, or Samson, was the conqueror in the cool of the night. Further, the full moon rose when the sun was in the sign of the lion, and "As the moon was the bringer of the waters, and the breath of life in the coolness and the dews of night, the lunar hero was not only credited with drawing the sting of Sekhet, but with extracting honey from the dead lion."§

Having satiated his anger, Samson remembered the young woman at Timnath, and at harvest time he paid her a visit. Like the rude lover in Voltaire's *L'Ingénu*, he walked towards her bedroom, but her father barred his way. "No, no," said the old man, "that game won't do now, Samson; the girl's another man's wife, so hands off; but here's her sister, a fine handsome girl, and you can have her if you like." Samson de-

* Book V., chap. ix.

† Goldziher, p. 396.

‡ *Georgics*, iv.

§ Massey, p. 11.

clined the offer, and bolted in a passion. Catching three hundred foxes, he tied them in pairs by their tails, stuck firebrands between their tender buttocks, and sent them into the standing corn of the Philistines. Terrible destruction ensued, and the enraged Philistines burnt the young woman of Timnath and her father to death.

This was a clumsy stratagem, and rough on the foxes, to say nothing of the Philistines. Samson might have kindled a conflagration more easily had the Lord provided him with a few gallons of paraffin oil, a patent sprinkler, and a box of fuses. The word rendered "foxes" is also rendered "jackals."* Dr. Oort considers that "in the reddish-brown jackals, with torches between their tails, we may easily recognise the lurid thunder-cloud, from the projecting points of which the lightning-flashes seem to dart."† Gerald Massey says the jackal was an Egyptian type of darkness; and Samson's chastisement of the Philistines is similar to the struggle between Horus and the jackal-headed Sut-Anap.‡ From a natural point of view, Samson's feat is incredibly absurd. He might have burnt down the Philistines' corn in less time than it takes to catch one fox or jackal; yet, on the other hand, had he acted sensibly he would not have been Samson.

After smiting the Philistines hip and thigh, Samson retreated to the rocky fastness of Etam, though it is strange that such an irresistible warrior should hide himself from his enemies. His own people sided with the Philistines, and he grimly allowed them to bind him with new ropes and deliver him to the foe. But as they shouted he broke his bonds like tinder, and attacked them with the jawbone of a jackass (probably Balaam's) that happened to be lying about. When he stopped slashing a thousand corpses were piled in heaps. Surely the Philistines were jackasses too. They must have stood and waited their turns. Why did they not skedaddle, and leave him to cut slices in the air?

According to Herodotus,§ Hercules had a similar adventure in Egypt, where the inhabitants tried to offer him as a sacrifice to Jupiter. For a while he submitted quietly, but when they led him to the altar he put forth his strength and slew them all.

Samson was dreadfully thirsty after completing his tally of victims, and being ready to die, he called on the Lord, who clave a hollow in the jawbone and brought forth water. One commentator suggests that the socket of a tooth became a well. What a monstrous ass! The Revised Version puts the jawbone in the margin, and says "God clave the hollow place that is in Lehi." Calmet and others argue that the jawbone was the name

* Revised Version, margin.

† Vol. II., p. 233.

‡ P. 13.

§ Book II., chap. xlv.

of a hill or pass, and *Maktesh*, or jaw-tooth, the name of a sharp rock. But in any case there was a miracle, and why stickle for niceties in the presence of Omnipotence?

Hercules was favored with a similar miracle. After slaying the dragon of the Hesperides, he was in danger of perishing from thirst in the scorching deserts of Libya, but the gods caused a fountain to spring from a rock which he struck with his foot. Dr. Oort considers both the jawbone and the spring as mythical, the former being the jagged thunder-cloud, from which the lightning shoots, while the latter is the rain that pours out of it as the sun-god triumphs.*

This tremendous massacre of Philistines appears to have gained Samson the Judgeship, which he held for twenty years; but the dignity of this position did not restrain his fondness for escapades. Going to Gaza once for a spree, he stayed at a brothel with "an harlot,"† and the Gazites laid in wait for him, intending to kill him in the morning. But at midnight Samson went out for a stretch, probably bilking his fancy woman; and lugging off the city-gates on his shoulder, he carried them to the top of a hill, and perhaps took salvage for bringing them down again.

His next amour, for like Hercules he had many, was with Delilah. She dwelt in Nachal Sorek, or the Vine Valley. This may be a mythical trait, representing the sun-god's zealous wooing of the vine; or it may imply that Samson was anything but a Nazarite. Delilah's name, according to Ewald,‡ means *traitress*; but the generally accepted meaning is *languid, delicate, triste*. Gerald Massey compares her with the Egyptian Ishtar, the female moon, who as the year wanes is accused of robbing the sun-god, Izdubar, of his virility.§

As Omphale befooled Hercules, so Delilah befooled Samson. Milton treats her as his wife; but she was evidently a professional beauty; indeed, Calmet plainly calls her "a prostitute." Her countrymen, the Philistines, offered her a heavy bribe to reveal the secret of Samson's strength. Thrice he tricked her, but the fourth time she succeeded. Finding that his strength lay in his hair (as the sun's power is in his beams), she made him "sleep upon her knees," and called in a barber, who shaved his head as bald as a plate. The traitress then delivered him to the Philistines, who bound him with brass fetters, put out his eyes, and made him grind corn in their prison house.||

But Samson's turn was coming. His death was to be more marvellous than his life. He was destined to make positively

* Vol. II., p. 233.

† Ju. xvi, 1.

‡ *History of Israel*, vol. ii., p. 407.

§ P. 13.

|| Calmet says that "some commentators" find an "obscene sense" in Samson's occupation there; but we may be excused from fathoming the Bible *cloaca* too deeply.

his last appearance in the fifth act of the play, to eclipse all his previous efforts, and literally bring down the house.

The Philistine lords fixed a public holiday to celebrate Samson's capture, and to honor their god Dagon for delivering him into their hands. When their hearts were merry they called for Samson to make them sport like a circus-clown. They should have been more careful, for his hair had begun to grow again, and his pate "showed like a stubble land at harvest home." Why did they not give him a clean shave every morning? Samson leaned against the two middle pillars supporting the temple-roof, on which three thousand men and women were assembled, in addition to those inside the edifice. Suddenly he clasped the pillars, prayed for divine assistance, bowed himself with all his might, and brought down the whole structure in shapeless ruin. Thus Professor Samson avenged himself, and perished under a mountain of his enemies.

St. Augustine, St. Bernard, and others, have discussed whether Samson was justified in killing himself; but they exculpate him on the ground that he was moved by the Holy Ghost. Mythologically, his suicide is easily understood. "The sun-god," says Steintal, "in fighting against the summer heat is fighting against himself; if he kills it, he kills himself."* Hercules also destroyed himself, but arose out of the flames to Olympus. The Phœnicians, Assyrians and Lydians also attributed suicide to their sun-gods; yet these did not actually die, but renewed themselves like the phoenix.

According to Josephus, Samson was too easily seduced by wicked women, though "in all other respects he was of extraordinary virtue."† *Very* extraordinary! Show us a single wise word or good deed he ever said or performed? Compared with the heroic age of Greece, that of the Jews was barren and brutal. Adam Clarke is obliged to admit that "if we regard what is called the choice of Hercules, his preference of virtue to pleasure, we shall find that the heathen is, morally speaking, vastly superior."‡ Yet St. Paul classes Samson with the heroes of faith,§ and Adam Clarke says he is "supposed to be a most illustrious type" of Jesus Christ. Surely this is a libel on the Prophet of Nazareth, who bore little resemblance to the mythical Jew, who drank, spread, raked, fought, and murdered wholesale. Our hero is rather an "illustrious type" of God the Father, between whom and himself there was a striking likeness. Old Jahveh is the head of the house, but Professor Samson is a cadet of the family and shares the blood.

* Goldziher, p. 397.

† *Commentary*, Ju. xvi.

‡ Bk. V., chap. viii.

§ Hebrews xi., 32.