

LIFE IN ISRAEL;

OR,

Portraits of Hebrew Character.

BY

Zelman

MARIA T. RICHARDS.

AUTHOR OF "LIFE IN JUDEA."

NEW YORK:

SHELDON, BLAKEMAN AND COMPANY.

CHICAGO: S. C. GRIGGS AND COMPANY.

1857.

LC. also 1857

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1856, by
SHELDON, BLAKEMAN AND COMPANY,
In the Clerks Office of the District Court for the District of New York.

LITHOTYPED BY THE AMERICAN STEREOTYPE COMPANY,
PHENIX BUILDING, BOSTON.

To My Husband,

WHOSE SYMPATHY AND ENCOURAGEMENT
HAVE BEEN MY GREATEST INCENTIVE TO EXERTION
IN THE PREPARATION OF THE FOLLOWING PAGES,

They are affectionately Enscribed,

IN A SPIRIT OF EARNEST CONSECRATION TO THE

Holy Scriptures:

BY WHOSE TEACHINGS THEY WERE FIRST SUGGESTED,
AND TO WHOSE STUDY THEY WOULD FAIRLY GUIDE;
WHOSE INIMITABLE SCENES THEY HUMBLY SEEK
TO UNFOLD, AND BY WHOSE PROPHETIC LIGHT
THEY WOULD REVERENTLY POINT

Unto Him,

WHO IS "THE ROOT AND OFFSPRING OF DAVID, AND
THE BRIGHT AND MORNING STAR."

CONTENTS.

PART I.—THE PILGRIMAGE.

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. THE ENCAMPMENT AT ELIM,	15
II. THE ENCAMPMENT AT SINAI,	26
III. PREPARATIONS FOR BUILDING THE TABERNACLE,	44
IV. THE BUILDING AND REARING THE TABERNACLE,	55
V. THE DEPARTURE FROM SINAI,	68
VI. THE EVIL REPORT,	75
VII. THE SECOND ENCAMPMENT AT KADESH,	88
VIII. THE BRAZEN SERPENT,	106
IX. THE DEATH OF MOSES,	123

PART II.—THE REIGN OF SOLOMON.

I. THE GATHERING TO THE HOLY CITY,	139
II. DEDICATION OF THE TEMPLE,	161
III. THE VISIT TO HEBRON,	172
IV. RETROSPECTIONS OF THE PAST,	188
V. THE CONSECRATION,	212
VI. FULFILLED HOPES,	225
VII. THE GREAT DAY OF ATONEMENT,	239
VIII. A VISIT TO PETRA,	254

PART III.—THE CAPTIVITY.

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. GLIMPSES OF BABYLON,	277
II. INTERVIEWS WITH THE QUEEN,	289
III. PROPHECIC REVELATIONS,	305
IV. A VISIT TO THE MAGIAN,	318
V. THE CAPTURE OF BABYLON,	331
VI. THE RETURN TO JERUSALEM,	348
VII. REBUILDING OF THE TEMPLE,	361

PREFACE.

THE following sketches belong to a series, of which a part have already been given to the public, under the title of "Life in Judea." The remainder now presented, although second in the order of publication, are first, both in the order of time and of composition. Though the several articles are independent of each other, the whole series is connected by a chain of successive developments of one idea, — that of a coming Saviour. This idea is traced through the history of "the chosen people," from the dawn of the early promises, to the full establishment of the kingdom of heaven upon the earth, and the sounding forth of its blessed evangels unto all nations. That this pervading hope of the Messiah may be appreciated, it is necessary to look upon it in its beginning, and to follow it through the unfoldings of its ever-widening and brightening course, till its final consummation. The author would, therefore, crave this indulgence of her readers, that "Life in Israel" and "Life in Judea" be considered as parts of a whole, and that "Life in Israel" be read first.

The national characteristics of the Jews are unequalled in interest by those of any other people. Whether we review the records of their ancient past, far transcending in marvellous interest the history or poetry of other renowned nations of antiquity, or contemplate their present condition, still pursuing their lone path among the nations, which are unto them "as a wall upon the right hand and upon the left," they are still "a chosen generation, a peculiar people."

But the aspect of most absorbing regard in which the Jew is looked upon by the Christian, is his relation to the revealed word of God. Indeed, so close and manifold is this relation,

that it may be said to involve every other which imparts a peculiar charm to the children of Abraham. To them was the sacred word first committed, and by them preserved for long ages, with the most rigorous care and scrupulous exactness. They were the actors in its scenes, the recipients of its commands, the witnesses of its miracles. Their tents were made sacred by the visits of angels, their altars were kindled with heavenly fire, their solitary plains glowed with the visions of patriarchs and prophets, and their mountains burned with the glory of the Divine Presence. Their history occupies a large part of the sacred pages which God has given us as a revelation of his will to the whole human race. They stand from age to age living monuments of the truth of its prophecies; the inspired strains of their poets have been, and shall yet be, the praises of the redeemed through all time; and from all the tribes of the earth they have been singled out "as a royal priesthood, a holy nation," to become the channels through which the great mystery of the incarnation, and the grace and glory of the atonement, should be communicated to the children of men: "of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is God over all, blessed forever."

It is, therefore, manifest, that a careful study of the history and character of the Jewish people is one of the most valuable helps to a right understanding and appreciation of the Bible. The diligent student of the Sacred Scriptures will always be interested in whatever pertains to the Jews; and, conversely, he who has intelligently contemplated the various points of interests centering in this wonderful people, will rarely fail to become intellectually, at least, a lover of the Bible. But it is to be feared that, in the mind of the young, the various scenes and events of Scripture history are too often but a series of statistical facts and isolated abstractions. Thus, although well known, and unquestionably believed to have occurred in the far-distant ages of the past, they are not vividly conceived with the various details of local scenery, passing circumstances, national customs, individual characteristics, and the varying shades of thought and feeling, which would clothe them with a life-like reality, and give them

an abiding place among the most cherished treasures of the intellect, and a permanent hold upon the warmest affections of the heart.

It has been the object of the writer, in the following pages, thus to supply parallel details of local and circumstantial character, which may serve to unfold some of the prominent eras of Biblical history, and to invest with a new interest the reading of the Bible. The characters employed are of three classes: those of sacred history, of profane history, and of imagination. With regard to the first, or Scripture characters, the writer has not presumed to use them, except so far as they are presented in the Sacred Word. She has attributed to them no imaginary actions, nor put imaginary words upon their lips. Two or three slight deviations from this rule will be explained by notes in their appropriate places. The characters of profane history, in their natural traits and public acts, have been exhibited strictly in accordance with the records concerning them; while, in their private relations, they have been made to subserve the particular design of the writer in their introduction. The imaginary characters have been drawn with special reference to the development of the spirit of the times in which they are represented.

In respect to the sentiments which are attributed to the several characters of the work, the author anticipates two opposite criticisms. By some, it may be said that these sentiments are not sufficiently pervaded by an evangelical spirit: that the various types, which, in the old dispensation, prefigured the glorious truths of the new, are not clearly developed in their relation to their great Antitype; that the shadows are not distinctly drawn, which, for long ages, cast their well-defined outline of the coming of Emmanuel; that the prophetic visions, which pictured forth the future kingdom of the Messiah, are not unrolled in the ever-increasing detail of their onward movement of vast significance and solemn grandeur; in short, that the spirit of the work does not sufficiently breathe of Christ. To this we reply, that, although cordially admitting the great truth that Christ is the centre and soul of the Jewish dispensation, yet we have looked upon that truth, not in the

all-revealing and glorious light which has been shed upon it through the long centuries that have followed the rising of the Sun of Righteousness, but, in the pale twilight of the distant ages which preceded the dawn of that Sun. With the former view, we might have discovered a Messianic truth, even in the perpetual renewal of the shew bread, the number of the golden candlesticks, and the position of the cherubim, looking down upon the mercy seat. With the latter, we have echoed the words of those who earnestly sought after "the thing signified" by the scape-goat, the sprinkled blood in the Holy of Holies, and the paschal lamb. With the former light, we might have stood as on a lofty mountain-top, looking down through the long extending vistas of types, and ceremonies, and promises, upon the broad and blessed fields of fulfilment, where shadows are displaced by substance, and visions become realities. With the latter, we have walked side by side with those who darkly felt their way through the windings of an inextricable labyrinth, and in their baffled search for the openings thereof, earnestly lifted up their eyes, waiting for the Light that was to come. We have endeavored to conceive the spirit of those who lived in the times of which we have written, to think as they thought, to feel as they felt, to speak as they spake. Hence we have regarded the ancient Economy, not as a fulfilled truth, but as an unsolved enigma. Even to the prophets this enigma was yet "sealed up," of whom the eloquent Chalmers has said: "They positively did not know the meaning of their own prophecies. They were like men of dim and imperfect sight, whose hand was guided by some foreign power to the execution of a picture; and who, after it was finished, vainly attempted, by straining their eyes, to explain and ascertain the subject of it. They were the transmitters of a light, which, at the same time, did not illuminate themselves. They inquired diligently what the meaning of the spirit could be, when it testified of the sufferings of Christ, and the glory of Christ."

On the other hand, it may be affirmed, that there are characters represented in these sketches, whose views of a coming Saviour are more clear and spiritual than is warranted by their

times. But it will be admitted that, in all ages, there have lived holy, earnest souls, in advance of their generation, whose high spiritual pathway has been specially illumined of God; and it will likewise be observed that the views of these earnest souls are not distinctly affirmed, but only "inquired after," through mists of doubt and perplexity.

The scenes and events which are unfolded by the several actors employed, are described with a careful regard to historical and chronological accuracy, although it is not assumed that perfect correctness is always attained, in speaking of times, concerning which different data have come down through the long ages of the past.

The works which have been chiefly consulted as authorities, or in reference, are first, and above all, the Holy Scriptures; also, The Universal History, Sir Isaac Newton's Chronology of Ancient Kingdoms, Wilkinson's Ancient Egyptians, Sharpe's Early History of Egypt, Clinton's Fasti Hellenici, Bunsen's Egypt, Jahn's Hebrew Commonwealth, Josephus' Antiquities of the Jews, Kitto's History of Palestine, Brown's Encyclopædia of Religious Knowledge, Robinson's Researches in Palestine, Lamartine's Travels in the East, Stevens' Travels in Arabia, Petrea and the Holy Land, Barnes' Notes on Job and Isaiah, Gilfillin's Bards of the Bible, Strauss' Helon's Pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

With an earnest prayer that these pages may be approved by Him, who alone has fully known the writer's frequent tremblings of spirit, lest, in speaking of his blessed word, she should touch the ark of the Lord with profane hand; and with a sincere hope that their perusal may prove neither uninteresting nor unprofitable, they are cordially committed to their readers.

PROVIDENCE, R. I., 1856.

PART I.

—
THE PILGRIMAGE.

THE PILGRIMAGE.

When Israel, of the Lord beloved,
Out from the land of bondage came,
Her fathers' God before her moved,
An awful guide in smoke and flame.
By day, along the astonished lands
The cloudy pillar glided slow ;
By night, Arabia's crimson sands
Returned the fiery column's glow.

SCOTT.

CHAPTER I.

THE ENCAMPMENT AT ELIM.

It was the waning of the day. The sun, that during the long noontide hours had been pouring his scorching rays upon the Arabian desert, now declined towards the horizon. His beams, shorn of their fierce strength, were reflected in softened brilliancy by the waters of the Red Sea, and shone with mellow radiance upon a broad belt of verdure, that, within a short distance of its eastern bank, flourished in the luxuriance of perpetual summer. Most beautiful seemed that favored spot, with its soft greenness, so vividly contrasting with the surrounding arid wastes ;

with its numerous palm-trees rearing their towering forms, and spreading their broad-leaved branches in a wide canopy, and its gushing water-springs, whose low, flowing murmur fell like sweetest music on the ear of the weary traveller, telling of cooling rest and refreshment, and renewed life.

In this delightful spot, more than three thousand years ago, on such an eve as we have named, all was life and motion. A large multitude were scattered in companies over the broad surface of this resting-place in the desert. There were aged women, men of hoary hairs, and mothers with their infants, reclining in varied groups beneath the shade of the palms; while, in all directions, maidens robed in the picturesque garb of the East were passing to and fro, with hurried steps, bearing vessels of refreshing waters to the aged and weary. Men were busied here and there in unloading burdens, pitching tents, and making the necessary arrangements for an encampment; while children, rejoicing in the new life imparted to them by the grateful shade and cold waters, were exulting in their gladness, with bounding steps and ringing shouts of joy. The multitude were bound in one brotherhood, actuated by one purpose, animated by one hope. The great and lofty sentiment that pervaded their souls might be read in the noble bearing of man in his prime, and in the passionate ardor that dwelt on the lips of the youth. It glowed on the kindling cheek of the maiden, and shone in the light of a lofty enthusiasm in the full dark eye of woman. That sentiment was freedom. They were a people for whom the galling chains of bondage had but just been broken; and the new emotion of liberty had sprung up in their souls like the unlocking of prison-doors to the captive, like the opening of eyes to the blind.

Beneath a tent, apart from all others, a mother was ministering to her daughter. The two were strangely contrasted, yet between them a resemblance might have been traced, in the regular features, the hair of shining black, and the graceful proportions of figure. In earlier days the mother might have been fair to look upon; but, though yet in the early prime of womanhood, crushing oppression and blighted hope had done for her the work of long years. Lines of earnest thought and of spirit-suffering were deeply written on her brow. Her full black eye, now fixed in reverie, and anon flashing in wild brightness, revealed a lofty and enthusiastic spirit. Her cheek was blanched by the conflict of contending emotions, and every expression of her finely formed mouth bespoke a firm *devotion* to do and to suffer,—a dauntless heroism, which no trial, no oppression could tame. The daughter was of marvellous beauty. As she reclined upon cushions at her mother's feet, with her shining hair dishevelled on her neck and shoulders, her cheek pillowed by her hand, and her dreamy eyes half-veiled by their heavy lashes, the observer would have checked the advancing footstep, and raised the finger of silence, lest he should break the spell of a vision so beautiful.

“Wilt thou have more of this refreshing water, Adah?” said Zilpah, as her daughter awoke from a long, deep sleep. The maiden but opened wide her eyes and gazed long about her, with the amazed, intense expression of returning consciousness. As her mother repeated the kindly proffer, Adah half raised herself; but her aching limbs refused further effort, and, sinking again on her cushion, while the swelling tears gushed from her eyes, she exclaimed: “These long, weary marches in the wilderness! Would God I had died in the land of Egypt!”

"My poor child!" said Zilpah, as a bright gleam of maternal tenderness softened the expression of her features, "thou art not inured to hardship, like thy sisters of Israel; a day's march brings thee to thy bed in weariness, while other maidens, with busy hands and hasty feet, are ministering to the wants of the aged and children. My poor child!" she repeated, a shade of bitterness crossing her face, "the chains of bondage have been golden ornaments about thy limbs, yet they have but the more surely fettered thy soul."

"Bondage!" said Adah, raising her soft eyes to her mother's; "I never knew bondage. In Egypt I was as free as a bird, and my heart leaped in gladness all the day long. My fingers waked the music of the lyre, and my feet danced to the joyous strains of the timbrel. I in bondage?—whose lightest wish was gratified, whose heaviest task was to twine diamonds in the hair of Egypt's proudest daughter, and whose reward was her smiles, which princes have coveted in vain."

"Maiden," said Zilpah, with a kindling eye, "thou art a reproach to her that bare thee; thou art not worthy to be called a daughter of Abraham. Should the glitter of Pharaoh's court have shut thine eyes to the oppression that was bowing thine own people to the dust? Should the melody of lyre and timbrel have closed thine ear to their bitter groans? Should the selfish enjoyments of luxury have closed thy heart to the matchless wrongs of thine own mother, whose three fair sons were sacrificed, one after another, in their beautiful infancy, to lessen our growing race, and satisfy the ravening jealousy of the Egyptian monarch? Or should the smiles of Pharaoh's daughter have led thee to forget that thou wert of a race, crushed far beneath her feet, yet of a nobler name than

she? that the Almighty arm is the rock of defence to thy people, and that thy children are among the destined heirs of the glorious land of promise?"

"The land of promise! Ah, my mother, it is afar off," said Adah, "while all around us spreads but a dreary wilderness."

"But are we not journeying thither, under the immediate guidance of Jehovah?" answered Zilpah. "Scarce has one moon waned since we came forth from the house of bondage, yet, behold the wonders the Lord hath wrought for his chosen people! Hath he not led us by cloud and by fire? Hath he not made a dry path for our feet in the midst of the Red Sea? Hath he not sunk the host of Pharaoh like lead in the mighty waters? Doth not the song of Moses and of Miriam yet linger in thy spirit,—'Sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously'? When the thirsting people turned from the bitter waters of Marah, were they not sweetened of the Lord by the hand of his servant Moses? And when, again, the whole congregation were fainting through heat and weariness, hath not the Lord opened a place of refreshing, and brought us hither, even to Elim, where are three-score and ten palm-trees, and twelve wells of water? With such tokens of the presence of Jehovah, is it not joy to journey towards the promised land?"

Adah answered not, and Zilpah, after waiting a moment for her reply, was buried in profound silence.

Zilpah was a widow, and, excepting her daughter, childless. The husband of her youth had chosen her in the land of bondage, and, though the iron foot of oppression had pressed them with crushing weight, it could not extinguish the light of their love. Their first-born was a daughter, the beautiful Adah. Then Zilpah became successively

the mother of three sons. Every art of concealment was devised that she might still press her treasures to her heart, but in vain. One after another her babes were torn from her arms, and cruelly slain, in obedience to the mandate of Egypt's king. Then her husband, in whom were garnered her heart's warm affections, fell a lingering victim to cruelty and oppression, and, while her heart yet bled in bitterness, she was called as a bondmaid to Pharaoh's palace. Her proud spirit revolted, but there was no choice for the slave.

One day, while Zilpah, as she was wont, kneeled before Pharaoh's daughter to present the golden goblet, the little Adah, breathless with childhood's eager haste, followed her mother into the presence of the princess. Zilpah's heart trembled at the child's daring, and frowns began to gather on the brow of Charmian; but they vanished as she gazed on the child's exceeding beauty, and she exclaimed, "Thy face is like the light of the morning; henceforth I will drink from no hand but thine." So, with the artless grace of childhood, Adah took the cup from her mother's hand and presented it to Pharaoh's daughter, and from that hour was her constant attendant. As years passed, her gentle sweetness increasingly endeared her to her mistress, till the slave was merged in the companion and favorite. It was Adah whose fingers could most tastefully arrange the princess' festive robes; Adah's lyre whose music could most quickly chase sadness from her spirit; Adah's plaintive song that could most sweetly lull her to repose. She was a handmaid still, but only in name. At noon the Israelitish maiden reclined on silken couches, within the cooling breath of marble fountains, while slaves did her bidding. At even, she partook of the courtly banquet, with Egypt's proudest sons and daughters. Love

for her royal mistress was the one grand sentiment of her being. From her she had daily received manifestations of affection, which she knew were bestowed on no other. When the lip of Charmian had curled most haughtily in reply to the flatterers that surrounded her court, it had ever a heart-smile for the Hebrew maiden at her feet; and, though she addressed her in the words of command, it was always in the tone of love. Yet Adah was not elated at the consciousness of possessing the love of the proud being which so many would have counted it their highest triumph to attain. It subdued her spirit with the answering response of a deeper devotion, and awoke within her heart a reciprocal love, amounting almost to adoration. Full of yielding gentleness, she lifted her eyes to the face of Charmian, as the blossom turns to the sunlight, and found in its varying expression the only law of her heart.

Zilpah yet remained a slave in the palace of Pharaoh; and often did she pour in the ear of her daughter the heart-rending tales of cruel servitude, which made her people cry out in anguish of soul. As Adah listened, she would sympathize in her mother's grief; but her spirit, lulled by the voluptuous charms of luxury, and filled with its ruling passion, that of love for her royal mistress, was in a great degree insensible to the claims of patriotism and humanity.

But, in the midst of the rigorous bondage of the Hebrews, came the word of the Lord, "I have seen, I have seen the affliction of my people in Egypt;" and the command to Pharaoh by the mouth of his servant Moses, "Let my people go, that they may serve me." How did Zilpah's heart bound as the glad tidings fell on her ear. Her people would be free; she should be no longer a slave. Hope, long dormant, sprang anew in her bosom;

the latent energies of her lofty spirit were roused, and the sentiments of ardent patriotism, and gratitude to the Almighty who had visited his people, and remembered his covenant with Abraham, their father, pervaded her whole being. As plague after plague was visited upon the people of the unyielding monarch, Zilpah entreated her daughter to flee for refuge to the houses of the Israelites, but in vain. Adah still clung to the feet of Pharaoh's daughter. There had she sat when her own people were crushed, and the Egyptians were dominant; and there would she still sit, though terrific judgments and agonizing fears made Egypt quake to its centre, while the Hebrews triumphed in the protection of the Almighty.

At length came the announcement of the final judgment to be sent upon the Egyptians, the smiting of the first-born, and the directions to Moses for slaying the paschal lamb, whose sprinkled blood should protect the dwellings of the Hebrews from the visit of the destroying angel. Once more Zilpah hastened to the Egyptian palace, and found audience with her daughter. She led her forth to the palace garden; and there, beneath the hush of starlight, portrayed the fearful desolation that was about to descend upon the houses of Egypt, and charged her to fly from the messenger of death. Adah, usually passive and pliant to a fault, listened with glowing cheek and earnest eye; and, as Zilpah ceased, she replied, as her mother's spirit kindled for a moment within her:

"Thou sayest the first-born through all Egypt shall die. Shall I then leave Charmian? Is she not the first-born of the king? If thy words are true, on the night of the morrow she will be slain. And will Adah fly? Hath she not reclined on my bosom through all these bitter plagues? Hath not my hand ministered to her in pestilence and

thick darkness? Should Adah forsake her in the death-hour? Nay, my mother."

"But," interposed Zilpah, "thou art thyself the first-born. How canst thou serve her whom thou lovest?—for here thou wilt surely die."

"Nay," said Adah, "for I am not an Egyptian."

"It is the Lord that hath decreed it," answered Zilpah. "Every first-born that is not protected by the blood of sprinkling, shall be smitten by the destroying angel."

"Then, my mother, I will die as I have lived, at the feet of Pharaoh's daughter."

Zilpah had stood before her child with a stern loftiness of mien that might have become a prophetess, warning of impending evil; but, as her spirit conceived the import of Adah's last words, she bowed down as a reed before the swelling tide. Tears, whose fountains had been long dried, gushed from her eyes, and, in tones of heart-rending grief, yet melting tenderness, she exclaimed: "My daughter, my first-born, my only one, thou wilt not leave me childless? What shall my life be unto me? Is it not enough that my sons are not, that thou wilt sacrifice thyself also? Shall my seed be wholly cut off from the land of promise? Alas! alas! my daughter, have pity on her that bare thee, and live, that I may still be a mother in Israel."

The trembling Adah lifted her eyes to the palace that rose in stately grandeur before her, and thought of the loved one within it, over whom was hanging that awful doom. Experience of past judgments left no room to doubt the certainty of the coming evil, and she knew that Charmian must die. Again would she have yielded to her impulse of returning to share her fate; but her mother's kneeling form, and the convulsive clasp by which she

folded her arms about her, joined with the impassioned words that flowed in tones of earnest love from the very depths of her being, were irresistible. The fragile girl, overpowered by the struggle of contending feelings, passively yielded to the pleadings of her mother, and was led from the palace garden to an humble dwelling of the Hebrews, the abode of Ephron, Zilpah's brother and protector.

On the ensuing night the paschal lamb was slain, and the blood sprinkled upon the lintels and door-posts, according to the word of the Lord. And, at midnight, when the wail that burst from every house in Egypt filled the land with one bitter cry, Zilpah went forth with the tribes of her people from the house of bondage, bearing in safety her first-born, who, amid the awful scenes of that terrific night, lay helpless as an infant upon her bosom. The first cry of sorrow that fell upon Adah's ear, was to her, the death-knell of Charmian; and, as it was prolonged and deepened in the sound of universal woe, its voice but repeated to her, in louder and deeper tones, the same heart-rending dirge; till, as the agonizing conviction grew more and more intense, her brain reeled, her consciousness grew dim, and she became lost in insensibility. She revived as the morning dawned; but, as the departing tribes journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, and left the confines of Egypt, a dream-like stupor rendered her passively indifferent to all about her, while the varying expression of her face showed that her mind was busy within. As they trod their marvellous path through the midst of the Red Sea, with the swelling waters a wall on their right hand and on their left, Adah moved mechanically by her mother's side, while Zilpah's proud step and queenly bearing were but faint manifestations of the sublime rejoicings of her spirit. The Hebrews next traversed the desert of

Ethanol, or Shus, a region several miles in width, alternating from a dead level to a slightly undulating surface, which was bounded on the west by the Red Sea, and on the east by a rocky wall, breaking up the level, and forming the edge of the African desert. Through this dreary wilderness the cloud still hung over Adah's soul; but, as she awoke from the first refreshing rest of her pilgrimage, the long, deep sleep at the encampment of Elim, its gloom vanished, and returning consciousness gradually enabled her to look upon the wondrous events of her long, waking dream as actual realities.

CHAPTER II.

THE ENCAMPMENT AT SINAI.

THE sojourn at Elim was at an end; and, after many a longing, lingering look upon its seventy palm-trees and twelve wells of water, the Hebrews took again their heaven-directed path across a mountainous region, barren and rocky, and entered the wilderness of Sin, which stretches between Elim and Sinai. A month had passed since their departure from Egypt, and their scant food was consumed. Amid fatigue and hunger, they made their encampment in the wilderness.

Ephron sat beneath his tent, surrounded by his wife and little ones. A settled gloom was on his face, as his children cried for bread which he could not bestow, and scalding tears rained over the cheeks of the mother, as she pressed her hungering infant more closely to her heart. Apart sat Zilpah, her face buried in her hands; and, still farther, in another division of the tent, lay her daughter, whose delicate frame, prostrated by hunger, weariness and the heat of the sultry clime, drooped as a frail blossom beneath the scorching heat of noonday.

"Would God we had remained in the land of Egypt!" said Ephron, bitterly. "Why should we have followed Moses and Aaron, seeing they have led us into the wilderness, to kill the whole assembly with hunger?"

"Beware, my brethren," said Zilpah, "how thou murmurest against the Lord. What are Moses and Aaron

but the arm and mouth of the Almighty, to his people. I marvel thou canst so soon forget the wonders the Lord hath already wrought for us. Is not his promise to Abraham sure? He will deliver us from famine, and bring us into a land flowing with milk and honey."

"May it be according to thy word, my sister," answered Ephron, condemned by the simple faith of Zilpah; and he left the tent, together with the congregation, who were assembling to hear the word of the Lord by his servant Moses.

"Would God it were morning!" said Adah, as she lay wakeful upon her couch during the weary midnight hours. Zilpah, with all a mother's tenderness, arranged the cushion that pillowed her head, that it might invite her to repose; and, as Adah kissed the hand that ministered to her wants, she softly murmured, "O, my mother, but for one morsel of the food of Egypt!"

"Repine not, my daughter," said Zilpah, with brimming eyes, and tones tremulous through faintness; "the Lord will yet work deliverance for us."

The morning sun shone brightly on the encampment in the desert, as the mother and daughter awoke from profound but unrefreshing sleep. As Zilpah came forth from her apartment of the tent, she met the little Elon, her brother's son, who, with a face radiant with the gladness of childhood, exclaimed, "Thou shalt eat and live, even thou and Adah!" And, as he spoke, he extended to her a vessel filled with delicately rounded particles, as white and sparkling as the hoar-frost of the morning. And as Zilpah took it from the child's hand, with wondering eyes he replied to the unuttered inquiry he read in her face, "It is the bread which the Lord hath given us to eat."

"Thou hast well said, my mother, that the food which

thou hast brought is bread from heaven," said Adah, as with famishing eagerness she ate the refreshing manna. "Earth hath nought that is like unto it. The golden dishes of Charmian bare nothing so rare and delicate, nor can the honey of the land of promise be sweeter to the taste."

"Give the praise to Jehovah, my daughter," answered Zilpah, "who so graciously remembereth his people; who, day by day, sheweth himself fearful in praises, doing wonders."

The path in the Desert of Sin lay through deep ravines and mountain gorges, with almost perpendicular walls of rock on either side, whence clear water-springs, breaking out high among the cliffs, and low in the gorges, were a continual refreshing. Within this wilderness, the Hebrews made four encampments: the first by the borders of the sea, the second in the desert, the third at Dophkah, the fourth at Alush. These several tarryings were short, embracing in all less than a month; yet the cloudy pillar again slowly ascended from Alush, and moved forward as a direction for the people to continue their journeyings. Again it descended, and rested over Rephidim, as the next place of their encampment. The weary travellers welcomed rest; but alas! at Rephidim there was no water. They had traversed the burning deserts of Arabia, under the fierce beams of an almost tropical sun, and intolerable thirst was consuming the very springs of their being; but no well of water rewarded their diligent search, no gushing fountain gladdened their eyes. Murmurs of discontent rose among the multitude, like the low ripple of waves upon the seashore. Anon they became louder and deeper, as the people mocked their leader with the vain demand, "Give us water, that we may drink." And as the tumult

of disappointment and anger spread from heart to heart through the assembled tribes, the fierce surges of passion rose, like the roar of storm-tossed waters, from the whole congregation, as with one consent they lifted up their voice against Moses: "Wherefore is this, that thou has brought us up out of Egypt to kill us, and our children, and our cattle, with thirst?"

As a rock, unmoved by the dashing waves of the ocean, Moses stood before the angry multitude. With heavenly meekness and fatherly tenderness, he expostulated: "Why chide ye with me; wherefore do ye tempt the Lord?" And still, in the midst of their bitter clamors, arose his patient cry unto the Lord: "What shall I do unto this people? — they be almost ready to stone me."

"Dost thou behold the forbearance of Moses?" said Zilpah to her daughter, as he stood near the tent beneath which they reclined. "Not only is he the power of Jehovah to his people; he also sheweth the long suffering and loving kindness of the Lord. But see, he leaveth the congregation; perchance he goeth apart, to entreat for us before the God of our fathers." With intense feeling did all the people of Israel watch the retreating footsteps of Moses, as, with his rod in his hand, he ascended an eminence that lay to the east of the encampment. His path was rough and uneven. Towering rocks, rent by deep fissures, and piled one above another, formed his stepping-stones, till he reached the isolated peak that formed its summit. Before this he stood in simple majesty, in sight of the whole congregation, and, in obedience to the word of the Lord, struck his rod upon the mighty rock. But one moment, and its barren bosom yielded living waters, which, as if rejoicing in their new creation, leaped from crag to crag in rich abundance, and ran down like rivers. The full

streams rippled through their stony channels, and flowed among the very tents of the people; and they joyfully drank thereof, themselves, and their children, and their cattle.

Zilpah had gone forth with the daughters of Israel, as they left their tents, to behold the wondrous miracle, and to avail themselves of its fulness; but Adah still remained within. As she impatiently awaited her mother's return, she heard her own name quickly pronounced, and, dropping her transparent veil, she advanced to the door of the tent, where she beheld Jubal, who was the son of Elishama, a prince of the tribe of Dan, bearing a goblet of the sparkling water, which, with the graceful courtesy of the East, he pressed to her lips. "Thou hast given me great favor, Jubal," said Adah, when she had drank the refreshing draught, "for well do I know it is the custom of the daughters of our people to draw water."

"Let me still find favor in thine eyes," said the young Hebrew, as he bowed himself and turned to depart. At the next step he met the returning Zilpah; who, after repeating the praises of the Lord for his renewed goodness, inquired of Jubal, "Is it well with thy mother and thy young brethren?"

"It is well," answered Jubal. "My mother marvelleth that she hath not seen thee since we left the land of Egypt."

"My soul is knit with the soul of Sarah, thy mother," answered Zilpah. "Gladly would I oft have embraced her on our pilgrimage, but she hath tarried with her infant son, and I have ministered to my daughter, who hath often fainted under the weariness of the way. So, when not on the march, thy mother and myself have departed not from our tents."

"Most gladly would my mother welcome thee to eat bread beneath our tent," answered Jubal, and returned to his own place.

To the east of the encampment at Rephidim, the path to Sinai lay through a long, deep defile, forty feet wide and one-third of a mile in length, walled in on either hand by perpendicular rocks, eight hundred or a thousand feet high. Here the Amalekites came out to battle with Israel, determined to prevent their passage through this defile, and to arrest their progress into the land of promise.

At the command of Moses, Joshua, with chosen men of Israel, went out to meet the enemy. The contending armies closed in deadly conflict upon the arena of that high-walled battle ground, the floor of one of nature's grandest temples. Above the towering wall, upon a broad platform of rock, stood Moses, in full view of Israel and Amalek, and lifted up his hands unto the God of all the earth, for the success of his people. While the arms of Moses remained outstretched towards heaven, the banners of Israel waved victorious in the contest; but when the fainting limbs failed before the bidding of the unwearied spirit of the prophet, and the children of Israel no longer looked upward upon the upraised hand which had held the rod of God over the dividing waters of the Red Sea, their spirit departed, their hearts melted, and their hands grew weak before the enemy. From the top of the Mount, Aaron and Hur saw the sudden turning of the tide of battle, and they knew the soul of the people grew faint, because they felt not themselves upborne by the strong power of their leader; so they brought a stone, that Moses might sit thereon, and they held up his hands while he made supplication for Israel, unto the going down of the sun. And when the last beams of day had faded, Joshua

had "discomfited Amalek with the edge of the sword." The conquered enemy fled before the pursuing of the victorious Hebrews. The walls of the pass at Rephidim resounded no more with the clashing of swords and the clanging of trumpets, and echoed faintly and yet more faintly the wail of the dying, till, in awful silence, they reared on high their lofty towers as solemn sentinels in the pale moonlight, and below cast their deep shadows of blackness as a pall over the unburied dead.

It was while the Israelites yet tarried at Rephidim, that, as Moses sat at the door of his tent, at eventide, he beheld a small company slowly approaching from across the wilderness. There were four camels, on one of which sat a man of erect bearing, though he was far declined in years. By his side rode a woman, bearing before her a child of some two summers, who, in the restless playfulness of infancy, now rested his head upon the faithful camel, then quickly raised it to gaze upon his mother's face, while his merry laughter rang forth its strange music on the silence of the solitary desert. Before them rode a youth just emerging into manhood, and a servant followed, leading the fourth camel, laden with burdens.

Many a wondering eye was turned towards the little party, as they directed their way to the camp of the Hebrews. As they advanced, Moses went forth to meet them. With glad surprise he recognized the aged man, and listened to his salutation, as, descending from his camel, he said, "I, thy father-in-law, Jethro, am come unto thee, with thy wife, and her two sons with her."

Moses bowed himself in obeisance, and kissed his father-in-law, while each most cordially inquired of the other's welfare. Then, with a husband's tenderness, Moses greeted his wife, Zipporah, whom he had first seen a

maiden of dewy youth, in the simple beauty of a shepherdess; while her thoughts bounded back to the polished Egyptian courtier, who had watered her flock at the well of Midian. As she looked on her husband, tears of joy glistened in her eyes, and her heart swelled with the pride that woman only knows, when the fame of the beloved one falls on her ear from every tongue. The thoughtful face of Gershom glowed with a consciousness of his lofty birth-right, as he pronounced the words, "My father!" to him who, by the power of the Lord, stood forth as a wonder to the nations; while the little Eliezer opened wide his bright eyes in amazement at the caresses of his unknown parent, and with a quivering lip hid his face upon his mother's bosom.

Moses led the travellers into his tent, and with his own hands ministered unto them the courteous hospitalities so grateful to his weary guests. There, in long converse, they recounted the events of the past, and Jethro rejoiced in the wondrous deliverances that the Lord had wrought out for Israel; for he, himself, though a Midianite, was a son of Abraham.

On the morrow, Aaron and the elders of Israel assembled to eat bread with Moses, in honor of his guest. Most impressive was the scene in its beautiful simplicity. The venerable patriarchs of the chosen people were gathered, not in palace halls, but beneath a simple awning in the wilderness; and, reclining in the native dignity of unborrowed greatness, they ate of angels' food, and drank from the rock which had been turned into a fountain of waters.

Most grateful to Moses, in the midst of toil and care, were the attractions of domestic endearments, and the sympathy of his venerable relative. His wife and sons were to remain with him, and share the future weal and woe of

his pilgrimage, but Jethro must return to discharge his duties as priest of Midian; so, after receiving his judicious counsel, Moses let him depart, and he went his way into his own land.

In the third month after leaving Egypt, the Hebrews departed from Rephidim. Proceeding southward, their pathway opened "as into a magnificent hall of nature's statuary. Far as the eye could reach, immediately to the south, stretched a broad, level avenue, at least half a mile in width, along whose sides, and towering far on either hand, arose majestic conical heads of granite and porphyry, like the busts of giants, ranged by the hand of art." Along this grand highway, the great congregation travelled nearly a day's journey, still encompassed on either hand by the same majestic, towering walls of granite. At length the level avenue changed to the ascent of a gentle eminence. As each successive band passed on a few paces beyond the summit of this mount, the lofty head of Mount Sinai broke suddenly into view before their astonished eyes, and yet a little farther, the whole mountain, from base to summit, stood sublime upon its throne of majesty, filling the soul of every beholder with silent veneration and deepest awe.

Immediately in front of Mount Sinai, upon the east, lay an extended plain, a mile and a quarter in length, and two-thirds of a mile in width, itself elevated above the surrounding country, called Horeb. Between it and the base of Sinai stretched a rocky wall of sixty feet, in almost perpendicular height, forming an impassable barrier to the approach of the mountain, except at the northern extremity of this wall, where a narrow passage afforded an entrance to a platform of half a square mile in extent, at the very foot of Sinai. Upon the extended plain thus

stretching before the awful mount, the Hebrews pitched their tents, and here, surrounded by nature in her sublimest forms, they encamped for nearly a year.¹

"See how glorious a resting-place the Lord hath prepared for his people!" said Zilpah, as in the early morning she led her daughter to the door of her tent. Star after star had gone out before the breaking of the day, but the half-waned moon still shed a chastened light over the landscape, which, in its vastness and grandeur, was fitted to inspire the beholder with the profoundest emotions of reverence and adoration for the Creator. "The Lord hath lifted us above the earth, even as an eagle maketh her nest on high."

"Thou sayest well," answered Adah; "yet, when fainting on the toilsome journey, and dwelling beneath the rude shelter of our tent, how doth my heart go out for the marble pavements and silken couches of my palace-home. Nay, look not on me thus, my mother," she continued. "Thou knowest I would not now return unto Egypt, for she who was the light of my eyes hath departed; and sigh not so heavily because I mourn for Charmian, for thou knowest not what deep love for thee hath grown up within me. And now, I will speak no more of Egypt, and thou shalt be glad, as thou wert before I troubled thy heart."

"Ah!" returned Zilpah, "if thou wouldst indeed cease to sigh after the house of bondage, then should my heart rejoice. If thou wouldst remember thine own high birth-right, as one of the children of the Almighty; if thou wouldst ponder the ways of the Lord concerning us, from the beginning until now; if thou wouldst diligently consider the promises made unto our fathers, and mark how the Lord worketh out by us, continually, the counsels of

¹ See note A.

his own will, how would thy soul rise above the hunger, and thirst, and weariness of thy pilgrimage, and stay itself beneath the wings of the Angel of the Covenant."

"If I could believe the promises as thou dost, my mother," answered Adah, "they should be unto me according as thou sayest. But my soul trembleth, and feareth to lay hold on the words of the Lord. Thou hast often told me of the dealings of the Almighty with our people, yet my thoughts concerning these things are as a wilderness, out of which no way hath been trodden. Why should our fathers be driven by famine from their own land, which the Lord hath given to them and their children for an everlasting possession; why should he suffer them to remain in bondage four hundred years, and be evil entreated by the Egyptians; why, even now, doth he still chastise us, from time to time, with sore troubles?"

"Beware, my daughter. Shalt thou, who art but dust, speak of the ways of Him who hath revealed himself to his servant Moses, as 'I am that I am'? The Lord worketh out his own pleasure. He maketh the children of Abraham a wonder among the nations; yea, by them he sheweth forth his praise in the earth. His counsels concerning them shall stand fast, and shall be wrought out from generation to generation. And these counsels are deep and high, and in their greatness are past finding out, yet the covenant of the Lord is established with his people, and he hath therein decreed glorious things for Israel; yea, and through Israel he hath appointed a blessing for the whole earth.

"The first promise," continued Zilpah, — anxious to improve Adah's somewhat unusual interest in her people's history, for her farther instruction, — "the first promise was made to our mother, Eve, at the very gate of Paradise,

that her seed should bruise the head of the serpent, who hath brought upon us sin and death. And when the Lord, wearied by the wickedness of man, swept off the race of evil-doers from the earth, by the waters of the flood, he kept alive just Noah and his family, that a seed might be saved for the fulfilment of His word. And wickedness yet again waxed great in the earth; but the Lord, in remembrance of his covenant with Noah in the day that he came out of the ark, destroyed not the race of man; but he chose one, even Abraham our father, and called him forth from his kindred and his own land, and set him alone among the nations, that he, and his seed after him, should be a peculiar people.

"Now, my daughter," said Zilpah, with renewed earnestness, "mark this promise made unto our father, when God first called him to go into a strange land: 'In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.' Hear the same promise spoken upon Mount Moriah, in the day when Abram bound there his son upon the altar of sacrifice; the son of Sarah, the son of his love, the son of promise, of whom God has said, 'In Isaac shall thy seed be called,' the son of his old age, who should be a father of kings and nations, even Isaac, lay bound as a burnt-offering beneath the uplifted hand of Abraham. What is like unto this in the whole earth? Truly, my heart turneth from our triumphant path through the waters of the Red Sea, and glorieth upon Mount Moriah, in the faith of our father Abraham. 'And the angel of the Lord called unto Abraham, out of heaven, and said, By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand

which is upon the seashore. And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed!

"Hear the same promise coming yet again from heaven unto our father Jacob, as he lay upon his pillow of stones beneath the starlight of Bethel: 'And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set on the earth, and the top of it reached unto heaven; and, behold, the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And behold the Lord stood above it, and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham, thy father, and the God of Isaac. And in thee, and in thy seed, shall all the families of the earth be blessed!'

"Dost not thou see, in this thrice-repeated promise," added Zilpah, "that the Lord hath devised great mercy for the sons and daughters of Adam? Behold our first parents bowing beneath the heavy curse of the Lord, as they went forth from the flaming gate of Paradise. From that day until now, hath not the ground brought forth thorns and thistles, for their sakes? Hath not man eaten his bread in the sweat of his face, and woman travailed in sorrow? Hath not sin made every imagination of the thoughts of all hearts evil continually, and blotted from our souls the image of God, wherein we were created? Yet, the Almighty hath purposed deliverance. Shall he not wash away iniquity, as by the waters of the flood? Shall he not overwhelm the power of evil, even as he hath sank the host of Pharaoh like lead in the mighty waters? And this blessing, which the Lord shall yet make to pass before the whole earth, shall come forth from the seed of Abraham, yea, from the tribe of Judah. Hear the words of the dying Jacob, 'The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come, and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.'"

"But now the sceptre belongeth not to Judah," answered

Adah. "Behold, Moses and Aaron lead thy people, and they are of the tribe of Levi."

"Dost thou remember the words of Abraham," answered Zilpah, "as he carried the fire and the wood, and led the young Isaac to the altar?—'My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt-offering.' The Lord shall establish his own counsels. 'A lawgiver,'" said Zilpah, abstractedly, weighing in her mind the meaning of the several parts of the prophecy she had repeated. "Shall he not teach the people righteousness, and make known to them the commandment of the Lord? 'The sceptre shall not depart.' Is not here a king, for judgment and justice? 'Unto him shall the gathering of the people be.' Is not here a leader, a deliverer, full of the strength and mercy of the Lord? 'Until Shiloh come.' O, that my eyes might behold his coming! But the time is not yet. Israel shall first be set in his own land. 'Until Shiloh come,'" repeated the rapt speaker, with clasped hands and uplifted eyes:

"When thou, in thy mercy, O Lord, hast led forth thy people which thou hast redeemed,

When thou hast guided them in thy strength into thy holy habitation,

The people shall hear and be afraid.

Sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestina,

Then the dukes of Edom shall be amazed,

The mighty men of Moab, trembling shall take hold on them.

All the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away,

Tears and dread shall fall upon them.

By the greatness of thine arm, they shall be as still as a stone,

Till the people pass over, O Lord,

Till the people pass over which thou hast purchased.

Thou shalt bring them in and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance.

In the place, O Lord, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in,

In the sanctuary, O Lord, which thy hands have established."

"And when the Lord, with a high hand and an outstretched arm, shall thus bring us into the land which he sware unto our fathers for an everlasting possession, then shall the sceptre not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come, and unto him shall the gathering of the people be."

"My mother, thou hast thyself the faith of Abraham," answered Adah. "If I seek to believe these things, they are afar off; yea, when my thoughts diligently consider them, they fade away as a dream of the night. But thou lookest steadfastly on the future blessings of our people, even as if they were now fulfilled before thine eyes."

"They shall not be fulfilled before mine eyes," replied Zilpah, "for I shall be gathered unto my fathers. But if I may hereafter dwell where Enoch walks with God, peradventure the Angel of the Covenant shall there show unto me the glory of Israel. Nevertheless, my heart is fixed concerning them, that they shall surely come to pass; and so will I teach them to the generation that shall come after me."

The gray twilight was now fast retiring before the glow of the reddening east, and the surrounding scenery gradually lost the indistinctness of its wild grandeur beneath the kindling footsteps of the morning. More and more brilliant grew the illumination of the eastern sky, till a line of insufferable brightness verged its extreme horizon. The world yet lay in shadow, but Sinai caught the first glance of the day-king, and with a kindling blush its lofty summit smiled a bright welcome to his greeting; a moment more, and the gorgeous sunlight poured adown the steep sides of the mountain, gleamed upon the white tents of the encampment, awoke into new life the flocks and

herds browsing in the valleys beneath, and bathed the world in gladness.

"It is the Lord!" murmured Zilpah, in a subdued tone, after she had gazed long in silence on the scene; "it is he who hath said, 'Let there be light,' and who hath divided the light from the darkness." Then, suddenly turning to her daughter, she exclaimed: "Behold the likeness of the blessing which the Lord shall pour over all nations. The light of promise is now faint and dim, even as the breaking of day, yet it shall grow brighter and brighter, like the glory of the sun. Ages and generations shall watch for its rising. Out of Israel shall it shine."

"Truly, 'mid a scene like this, I can forget my repinings after Egypt, and glory only in being a daughter of Abraham," said Adah, as she caught the enthusiasm of her mother's spirit. "May the Lord grant that I may become worthy of my birthright, and may I henceforth be unto thy heart as Benjamin unto our father Jacob."

A smile lighted Zilpah's face as she listened to Adah's words, and, warmly embracing her, she spake fervent words of love and blessing. Then, taking her pitcher upon her shoulder, she went forth to draw water. All was now life and motion throughout the encampment. Maidens in all directions were hastening to the fountain or returning with brimming vessels; others were watering their flocks; while, scattered far and wide over the extended plain, thousands of men were gathering the daily supply of manna, that lay upon the ground in the glistening whiteness of new-fallen snow.

The sun rode higher in heaven. But suddenly his brightness was veiled, and, as the people looked forth on the gathering gloom, a cloud of fire and smoke enveloped the summit of Sinai. All was still, and in tones of a

father's love, yet with the majesty of the thunder's voice, came the word of the Lord to his chosen people. "Ye have heard how I bare you on eagle's wings, and brought you unto myself; now, if ye will obey my voice, ye shall be unto me a holy nation." And the Lord said unto Moses, "Be ready against the third day, for the third day the Lord will come down in the sight of all the people upon Mount Sinai."

The required purifications were accomplished, the bounds were appointed about the Mount, and the morning of the third day had come. In breathless silence the assembled people were gathered at the foot of Sinai. Stillness reigned, as if earth had hushed her thousand voices, and paused in her orbit to listen to the mandate of God.

Thick darkness enveloped the stupendous mountain, while upon its summit the glory of the Lord appeared like devouring fire. The whole mount trembled with the convulsions of earthquakes. The sound of the trumpet waxed louder and louder. Mighty thunderings uttered their voices, and lightnings darted their living fire through the ascending smoke, as the words of the law issued from the burning mount, in the voice of the Almighty. So fearful was the sight, that Moses said, "I exceedingly fear and quake," while terror took hold of the assembled multitude, and their hearts melted within them. "Speak thou with us," they besought of their leader, as with fearful tremblings they retreated from before the insufferable majesty of God. "Speak thou with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die." So the people removed and stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was.

With straining eyes the Hebrews watched the footsteps of Moses, as ever and anon the lightning's flash revealed

his form slowly ascending through the impenetrable gloom that encompassed the mount. Anxiously they awaited his return, as it drew towards the setting of the sun; but he came not. Days and weeks rolled on, and still he tarried with the symbol of Jehovah's presence. Forty days and nights had expired, when Moses descended from Sinai, bearing in his hand the two tablets of stone written with the finger of God. But the first sound that greeted the ear of the returning prophet was the song of idol worship; the first scene that met his amazed vision, the idolatrous dance before a golden god. In his indignation he cast the tablets from his hands; and, as they lay dashed in pieces beneath the Mount, their broken fragments were a fit emblem of the desecration of the holy law they had borne, whose thunder-tones yet vibrated on the ears of the children of Israel: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me."

CHAPTER III.

PREPARATIONS FOR BUILDING THE TABERNACLE.

AFTER the dread punishment which followed the sin of the Israelites, and the renewing of the broken tables of the law by a forgiving God, Moses proceeded to give directions to the people for the building and the decorations of the tabernacle, according to the pattern which had been shown him in the mount.

"Dost thou know, my daughter," inquired Zilpah, "that the Lord hath required an offering of his people, even gold and silver, and all precious treasure, that a dwelling be builded for the Angel of his presence, and that the place of his feet be made glorious? He hath given to his servant Moses the pattern of the tabernacle, which shall be His visible abode among his people, with its curtains, its altar, and its surrounding court; and he commanded that beautiful garments be fashioned for Aaron and his sons, that they may minister therein, before the Lord, in his holy place."

"But how can all these things be wrought in the wilderness?" interrupted Adah. "Where are the precious stuffs, the rare devices, the cunning workmen of Egypt? How shall the wandering tribes of Israel prepare a fit tabernacle for the Lord?"

"Hath the Lord given his command, and will he not open a way wherein it shall be fulfilled?" inquired Zilpah, with something of sternness. "Hast thou forgotten

the obedience of our father Abraham? Let but the people obey, and through them the Lord shall work out the counsels of his own will. Behold, he hath already chosen Bezaleel, the son of Uri, of the tribe of Judah, and hath filled him with the spirit of wisdom in all manner of workmanship, to devise curious works in gold and silver and brass, and to do cunning work in the carving of wood, and in the cutting of stones to set them. Also, he hath called by name, Aholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan, an engraver, and a cunning workman, and an embroiderer in blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen. They shall oversee and teach all the wise-hearted men among our tribes to do the work for the service of the sanctuary. Thou knowest, too, that there are many among the daughters of our people whose hearts are wise to work in purple and fine linen. Even my fingers shall spin the delicate goat's hair; and, my daughter, thy rare and curious needlework, the praise of thy hands at the palace of Egypt, shall best befit the glorious robes of Aaron."

"It shall be my delight if I be counted worthy to do aught in the service of the tabernacle," answered Adah. "And now, my mother, what shall be our offering unto the Lord?"

"My small treasures," said Zilpah, "are all the Lord's; and thou, my daughter, mayest present costly offerings. Bring the precious gems that adorned thee when thou didst flee from the Egyptian palace: the ear and neck jewels, the ornaments for the feet, the bracelets, and the shining girdle."

Adah gathered her glittering jewels, and, placing them in her mother's hand, said, "Thou hast all but the bracelets." Then, lifting the drapery from her arm, she essayed to unlock the curiously concealed spring which bound

them; but her fingers instinctively recoiled from the task. She lifted her eyes to her mother's face, and with a quivering lip said, pleadingly, "Never have I loosened their fastenings, for it was Charmian's own hand that clasped them here, saying, that only Adah's arms could fitly match their rare brilliancy, and smiling on me so brightly that my heart leaped in gladness."

"The Lord hath required them of thee," was Zilpah's reply to her daughter's unuttered request; and in a moment more the bracelets were numbered with the articles of the offering, while here and there a tear-drop glistened amid their shining gems.

"Aholiab desireth the presence of Zilpah and Adah, that they may receive their portion of the work of the sanctuary," said Jubal, as he entered the tent of Ephron; "and Sarah, my mother, likewise entreateth, that ye may eat bread in our tent, and commune with her, as in Egypt."

Aholiab courteously saluted Zilpah and her daughter, as they entered his tent, and, addressing Zilpah, he said: "It hath been told me that thy heart stirreth within thee to do work for the service of the Lord. Now, therefore, thou shalt prepare one of the eleven curtains of goat's hair, which shall be for a covering of the tabernacle, even a covering over the ten-curtains of fine twined linen, and thus shalt thou make the curtain of goat's hair. Its length shall be thirty cubits, and its breadth four cubits, and on one edge it shall have fifty loops, that may receive the fifty tacks of brass of the curtain, wherewith it shall be coupled.

"And I have heard of thee, maiden," added Aholiab, turning to Adah, "that thy hands are skilful to do cunning needlework. If it seem good unto thee, thou shalt

fashion the curious girdle of Aaron, according to the pattern shown to Moses, in the mount."

"I am thy handmaid," replied Adah, as she bowed herself before Aholiab; "and, if in the eyes of my lord the work of my hands be counted meet for this service, it shall be according to thy word."

"It is well," answered Aholiab. "Jubal, the son of Elishama, who hath been well instructed in embroidery in the land of Egypt, shall work the ephod, and shall bring unto thee fine twined linen, with gold, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, that thou mayest fashion its girdle of the same, according to the work of the ephod."

When Aholiab had thus finished his instructions, Zilpah and Adah bowed themselves unto him, and departed. Conducted by Jubal, they soon reached the tent of Elishama, who arose to receive them with cordial greeting. Then, leading them forward a few steps, he drew aside the curtains which separated from the rest of the tent the apartment of Sarah, his wife. The Hebrew matron sat watching the sports of the two blooming boys at her feet, while the third, with the roguish glee of infancy, was entwining the braids of her raven hair. She lifted her eyes as the curtains were withdrawn; and, as Zilpah and Adah raised the veils that partially concealed their faces, she sprang forward, saying, as she warmly embraced Zilpah, "How gladly do my eyes behold thee once more!" Then, tenderly kissing Adah, she seated them upon cushions, on either side of herself, and with a mother's pride presented to them singly her three beautiful sons.

Long and earnest was the converse of Sarah and Zilpah, whose hearts, from very childhood, had been knit in friendship, as each recounted to the other the trials and mercies which had been their experience on the pilgrimage.

"Didst thou know that my son Joseph strayed afar from the tents while we encamped at Dophkah?" said Sarah. "For one whole day both Elishama and Jubal sought the child in vain, and when, to see if peradventure he was restored to me, they returned once and again to my tent, and brought him not, my heart grew exceeding heavy. I said, 'Of a truth mischief hath befallen him;' for the child knoweth not fear, and laugheth at danger. He hath climbed the rocks and the hills, that he might seek out the wild goats and the conies; surely he will fall from on high, and be dashed in pieces, or perchance he hath wandered into some cave of the earth, and a wild beast shall spring from his lair, and devour him! As the day waned away, I bowed my face unto the earth, and mourned bitterly, fearing that I should see his face no more. But suddenly I heard the glad shout of my boy. I hastened to the door of the tent, and the child ran to my arms swift as a young hart upon the mountains. Blessed be Dophkah. There have I set up an Ebenezer unto the Lord, who hath given back the wandering lamb unto my fold."

"And where was the child found?" asked Zilpah and Adah, in one voice.

"It was even according to mine own thoughts," replied Sarah, — "amid the dwellings of the conies. Towards the going down of the sun, Jubal drew near a high hill formed of many rocks, thrown together, as it were, side by side, and piled one above another. The top was lofty, and the climbing thereof slippery and difficult, in some places fitted but for the feet of the young roe; yet Jubal made his way upwards, looking within the caverns which lay many and deep between the rocks, and calling aloud the name of Joseph."

"Jubal!" said a joyful voice from above, and he lifted up his eyes, and there, upon a narrow ledge of rock, overhanging the deep precipice below, stood the young child, clapping his hands in triumph, because he looked far down on his elder brother.

"Jubal's heart sank within him as a stone, fearing lest the child should hasten to come down unto him, and the loose rocks below should become his instant sepulchre. But Joseph stood still, and called aloud, 'Come up to the top of the mount, and see what I have to show unto thee.'

"With steady eye and sure foot, Jubal at last gained the summit of the hill, and Joseph led him a few steps to the mouth of a deep cave, where five young conies were basking in the warmth of the western sunbeams. 'See how beautiful they are,' said the child; 'and they fear me not. They have come forth again and again, and hid not themselves from my face. Surely I will bring one of them unto my mother; thou shalt take it in thine arms and carry it unto her tent.'

"But as Jubal drew near, and they heard the sound of human voices, they hid themselves in the cave; neither would they again come forth. At this Joseph grieved greatly; but presently he turned, and, pointing to a broad stone, on one end of which rested yet another, flat and smooth, he said: 'Behold my pillow of stones, whereon I have slept like our father Jacob. Yet truly I longed for the cushions of my mother's tent, for my feet were sore and weary.'

"'Hath the Lord ceased to give us rain of manna?' he inquired earnestly, as if a new thought had suddenly come into his mind.

"'Nay,' answered Jubal. 'Knowest thou not, thou wentest forth this morning, with Elishama, to gather it?—'

and on the morrow thou wilt again behold it, covering the ground, white and beautiful.'

"'Perchance it was a dream,' said Joseph, 'but I asked my mother for food, and she said the manna came no more, and she was of a sad countenance, even as in the days when we cried for hunger.'

"'Yet, it is not a dream that thou art hungry, little one,' said Jubal, 'seeing thou hast not eaten since the morning. Now, thou shalt come quickly with me unto thy mother, who hath mourned for thee greatly. When she beholdeth thee, she will rejoice, and will give unto thee drink of goats' milk, and food of the sweet manna.'

"'Truly, Jubal is unto my heart as a pomegranate tree,' said the proud mother, as she finished her narration, 'whereof the blossoms are pleasant to the eye, and the fruit sweet unto the taste.'

"The Lord hath indeed filled thy cup with blessing," said Zilpah, "and my heart rejoiceth with thee. I also can speak of goodness and mercy; for, when we came forth from bondage, I feared that my daughter, who had been brought up in so great delicateness and tenderness in the palace of Egypt, would never be able to endure the hardness of the pilgrimage. I trembled lest I should behold her grave in the wilderness. But, after a time, her strength revived, and thou now beholdest her with renewed life, blooming fresh in the light of her youth. And yet a greater blessing I have to record before the Lord," added Zilpah, fixing her large dark eyes upon Adah's face, with an expression of deepest tenderness. "My daughter ceaseth to repine after the house of Egypt; she maketh her portion among the children of her people; she uniteth her heart unto the fear of her father's God."

"May she fill up the measure of husband and sons unto

thee," said Sarah. "Thou sayest well that the Lord hath remembered us in mercy; yet, many times my heart hath been sorely tried within me, since we left the land of Egypt; yea, it was nigh unto breaking, when the little Ephraim lay near to death before mine eyes. It was the day before the giving of the manna. Joseph and Japheth clung to my garments, erylng bitterly unto me for bread, and lo! I had not a handful of meal in my tent. My own spirit was sorely fainting within me, seeing it was two days since I had tasted food; for how should I eat, when I saw the life of my young children consuming away because of hunger? And my unweaned babe," added the mother, as she clasped her infant more closely to her heart, "my glad, beautiful Ephraim, lay still and pale, and faintly wailing, as if his last hour had come. Ah! Zilpah, even thy faith should tremble, shouldst thou see thine own little children fainting with hunger, and hear their cries for bread, which thou couldst not give!"

"Should my faith tremble before the hunger of my young children?" answered Zilpah. "Nay, for the Lord hath made it to triumph over their death, their heart-breaking sacrifice. Thou forgettest my first-born son, which came unto me amid the sore service of the house of bondage, filling my heart with hope and joy, even as the bow of promise, after the clouds of the latter rain. But I cannot speak of the thing thou knowest. One month passed, and the child was not. Yet the Lord again remembered me, and gave unto me the little Asriel, bright and beautiful as the morning. How my heart leaped with a strange, fearful gladness, over its treasure. How I blessed the coming of the night, that I might bring him forth from his hiding-place, and lay him in mine own bosom. How the sweet breath of his lips stirred my heart within me, and filled it

with such fulness of love, that I slumbered not for blessedness. And when, with the breaking of the day, I beheld the exceeding fairness of the child, when he opened his bright eyes, and stretched forth his tender hands unto my face, when his soft cooings, as of the turtle dove, spake unto my soul more than a multitude of words; then all the pulses of my being danced in gladness, and mine eyes rained over with tears of joy. But alas for the day when the light of my life was put out in utter darkness! for the long weeks and months when floods, more bitter than the waters of Marah, overwhelmed my soul!

"Yet a third time I bore in my arms a son," resumed Zilpah, "and now I filled my soul with the thoughts of rebellion and of bitterness. I said: 'Wherefore hath the Lord dealt thus with me, to give me another son, who shall also become a prey and a sacrifice? Wherefore should I cherish the child, seeing that through him my spirit shall yet again be rent asunder within me?' I sought to harden my heart, that it might forget a mother's love; yea, I bound it about as with bands of iron, that its tenderness should no more flow forth forever. But all was in vain. When I beheld the uplifted face of my tender babe, the bands of my heart became as flax in the hands of a strong man; yea, my spirit melted as wax before the flame, and my love went out unto my child, even as a river of water that hath been stayed in its course,—who should hinder it?"

"A third time my son was ravished from my bosom, and I walked in darkness, thick darkness, that might be felt. But at length came the remembrance of the promises of the Lord made unto our fathers. One by one they entered my soul, as the stars walk into the firmament at even; and the Lord lifted me up out of the clouds that had encompassed me, and set me on high, with the darkness under my feet; and around me all was calm and holy, even as

if sanctified by the Angel of his Presence. Yet, there was neither the shining of day, nor the gloom of the night. It was as the starlight, faint and holy as from afar. And since those days," continued Zilpah, "though my hands have wrought hard service, and my body bowed beneath heavy burdens in the house of bondage, my soul hath walked in this light, this starlight of the promises. They beam upon me with hope and comfort, sweet as the shining of the Pleiades. They burn with bright and far-off glory, like the sons of Orion. They fill my soul with the light of the loving kindness and tender mercy of the Lord, even as the whole firmament sparkleth and burneth with the stars he hath set therein."

"Surely I know that thy soul dwelleth on high," answered Sarah. "Thy words evermore fall upon my heart, as if, like Moses, thou hadst stood before the burning bush in Horeb, whence came the words, 'Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground!' My murmurings are rebuked before thee, as of old; yet I cannot, like thee, take fast hold on the promises of the Lord. Thy faith is like that of Noah, of Abraham, of Joseph, of Miriam, Aaron, and Moses, whom the Lord, from generation to generation, hath appointed for deliverers and leaders unto his people. I have mourned bitterly for thee, because the Egyptian judgments have crushed and ground thy soul with terrible power, and thou hast not one son left unto thee. Yet surely the Lord, who hath called thee to pass through overwhelming floods, hath upheld thee by the right hand of his power, even as he hath led his people, dry-shod, through the midst of the sea."

"It is as thou sayest," rejoined Zilpah; "the Lord hath led me. By my sore trials he hath accomplished his will

concerning me, and so doth he prepare all his people for his ways. In affliction, the pride of our hearts vanisheth away before the Lord, who holdeth the earth and the inhabitants thereof in his right hand, and doeth his own pleasure therewith; who, amid the thunderings and earthquakes, the flashing lightnings and thick darkness of Sinai, appeareth like devouring fire upon the top of the mount, and speaketh the words of his commandments in the ears of his astonished and quaking people; who beareth us on eagle's wings, and bringeth us unto himself; who giveth us water from the rock, and feedeth us morning by morning with bread from heaven. Are not his ways deeper than the earth, and higher than the path of the sun? Hath he not chosen his people to be the channels of his great blessing which he hath purposed unto the whole world, and to show forth his praise unto all generations? And shall not every son and daughter of Israel say unto him, 'Here am I?' Shall we not rejoice to suffer for his great name's sake; and, whether he ordains for us the toils of bondage or the wanderings of the pilgrimage; whether he appoint hunger, or thirst, or fainting heat; whether he leads us to the bitter fountain of Marah, or the twelve wells of water at Elim; yea, whether he call the young children from our arms, and cause us to walk in the shadows of the grave, shall we not look on the pillar of cloud and of fire that leadeth us out from among the nations, and say, 'It is enough?'

For a time Sarah sat buried in profound thought, deeply pondering the words of Zilpah. At length she arose, and, taking a ready-dressed kid of the goats, she roasted it before the coals upon the hearth, and set it before her guests, with manna and new milk. And, when the evening drew on, Zilpah and her daughter once more embraced Sarah, and returned to the tent of Ephron.



CHAPTER IV.

THE BUILDING AND REARING THE TABERNACLE.

It was on the morrow that the rare fabrics for the girdle were given to Adah by the hand of Jubal. After attentively listening to the various directions sent by Aholiab, Adah proceeded to examine the materials. As she untwined a roll of fine linen, her hand suddenly stopped in its task, and she lifted her eyes to the face of Jubal with an expression of amazement and inquiry. "Hast thou never seen the jewels before?" asked Jubal, as she held in her hand, the bracelets she had offered for the service of the sanctuary. "Truly," said she, "they are the gift of Charmian to me. But why are they here, and how didst thou know they were once Adah's?"

"The offerings of the people have been so great," answered Jubal, "that Bezaleel and Aholiab have much more than sufficient for the whole work. They have, therefore, spoken unto Moses that he may cause it to be proclaimed through the camp, that the people be restrained from giving. Among the gifts that have been brought to Aholiab, over and above what was needed, I have found thy bracelets, and, with his leave, I have returned them unto thee."

"Thou hast my thanks for thy kindness, Jubal," replied Adah; "and now, my mother," she continued, turning to Zilpah, "thou shalt clasp them upon my arms as they were wont to be; neither shall they again be loosed."

"Nay," interrupted Jubal with advancing step; then pausing, as if fearing to give utterance to the offer that sprang to his lips, he added, "Let thy servant still find grace in thy sight," and withdrew from the tent.

Weeks and months rolled on, and the unceasing stir and busy hum of industry, which had been the life of the Hebrew camp, gradually gave place to comparative quiet. The measured beating of those that wrought in precious metals ceased. The implements of the carver of wood and the cutter of stones were silent, while, successively, the busy fingers of engravers, spinners, weavers, and embroiderers became still. At length all was finished, and, in the presence of the assembled people, Moses examined the numerous parts of the whole work. The ark of the testimony, the mercy seat, the winged cherubim, the table with its vessels, the candlestick with its lamps, and the altar of incense, were all glittering in the brightness of beaten gold. Then came the veil of the covering wrought with cherubim, the ten curtains of the tabernacle with their golden rings, the eleven curtains of fine spun goat's hair, and the beautiful hangings of the court. Lastly were carefully inspected the robes of Aaron, bright for glory and beauty:—the brodered coat of fine linen; the rich ephod, with its curious girdle wrought of gold and purple and scarlet; the blue robe, with its border of pomegranates and golden bells; the crown of pure gold, and the breast plate, which dazzled the eye by the brilliancy of its constellated gems. It was with no common satisfaction that Moses beheld, in every part of the varied service, the unaltered development of those conceptions of symmetry and beauty which had been revealed to him upon Sinai. "For Moses did look upon the whole work, and they had

done it, even as the Lord had commanded; so had they done it, and Moses blessed them."

The western sun had sunk below the horizon, as the Hebrews, with hearts made glad by the approbation and blessing of their leader, slowly dispersed to their tents. Tempted by the mild beauty of the evening, Jubal and Adah strayed farther and farther from the encampment, till, ere they were aware, they found themselves near the rocky boundary of the plains of Sinai. The scene that lay spread out on every hand, in view of the young Hebrews, was most enchanting in its mingled grandeur and beauty. The full-orbed moon rode half-way up the eastern heavens. The flood of light, which she threw on the uneven country below, was strangely broken by huge shadows of massive rocks and the darkness of deep ravines, while, on the elevated plain upon which they stood, the unbroken radiance clothed every object with a soft and dreamlike beauty. Jubal and Adah gazed long upon the scene in silence. It was three thousand years ago, and, though since then Time hath wrought wondrous changes, he hath left untouched the human heart. Then, as now, life's unutterable poetry breathed upon the spirit with the fragrance of the spring-flower, and drew tears of delirious gladness from human eyes, as the gushing music of the song-bird melted upon the summer air. Then, as now, lovers met and communed beneath the melting ray of the moonbeam, and the swelling emotions of pure and devoted affection flooded the spirit with an untold joy.

"Thou hast tarried long, my daughter: what hath kept thee from thy tent?" said Zilpah, as Adah entered.

"Thou shalt know all, my mother," returned Adah; and, seating herself at Zilpah's feet, she said, in the simple artlessness of her character: "Jubal, the son of Elishama,

loveth me. He hath this night entreated me to become his wife."

"Jubal is of the tribe of Dan, and thou art of the tribe of Judah," said Zilpah, as the pride of birth lighted her dark eye. "Both thy father and myself descended in an unbroken line from him whom Israel blessed above all his sons, saying: 'Thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise. Thy father's children shall bow down before thee.' Such is thy birthright, my first-born; and when thou art a wife in Israel it hath ever been my thought that one of the sons of thy own tribe should be thy husband. Yet it is well," she continued, musingly; "even in Judah there is none of lordlier step or nobler soul than young Jubal, of the tribe of Dan. Long hath he loved thee, my daughter. Hath he not brought unto thee the choicest dates and the freshest manna? Hath he not been quick of foot as he entered our tent, and of lingering step when he departed? Most sacredly will he cherish thee, and most gladly will Zilpah behold thee a wife among the daughters of thy people. But what saith thine own heart unto his request?"

"It answereth as thou wouldst have it," answered the maiden. "When I came forth from Egypt, my heart cherished not the bright hopes so dear to the daughters of our people. I thought that the deep devotion which I had given Pharaoh's daughter should be thine, my mother, and that no other love should find place in Adah's soul. When first I heard Jubal talk with thee concerning the glorious hopes of Israel, his lofty words, so different from the flatteries of a kingly court, awoke my admiration, and my heart said, 'Among the sons of Egypt there is none like unto thee.' When among the assembly of the people I have seen him rise up before the hoary head, and tenderly

guide the footsteps of young children, or when within the tent I have marked the honor he hath paid to his father, and the reverent tenderness of his speech to Sarah, his mother, my heart hath said, 'Among the sons of the Hebrews there is none like unto thee;' and now, when he hath told me that my presence is to him as the morning light, and besought with earnest words that he might always dwell therein, my lips have answered, 'I will be given a wife in Israel only unto thee.'"

Adah's character was of that cast which veils its deepest emotions under the exterior of an impenetrable calmness; and Zilpah, though she had long sought to discover whether her daughter returned the affection of Jubal, had still been ignorant of her feelings till they were thus revealed by her own lips. As her words ceased, tears of mingled emotions flowed over the cheeks of Zilpah, as she said: "The Lord be praised, who hath united thy heart to one of the sons of thine own people. May he also unite thee to the fear of his holy name, and may his blessing distil upon thee like the dew of the evening."

Seven days had expired. As Elishama dwelt beneath his tent at noonday, his son entered his presence, and, prostrating himself, asked, "If I, thy son, have found grace in thy sight, let me entreat a favor at thy hand, and deny not my petition." And Elishama said, "Speak on, my son." And Jubal answered, "My desire is, that Adah, the daughter of Asriel, who hath died in the land of Egypt, may become my wife, and my prayer is, that thou mayest ask her for me, at the hand of Ephron, her mother's brother."

"It shall be as thou desirest," answered Elishama. "I wonder not that thy soul cleaveth unto the damsel, for she is of soft speech, and exceeding fair to look upon. To-

morrow I will entreat her for thee, that she may be unto thee a wife."

The princes of the tribes of Judah and Dan were assembled beneath the tent of Ephron, and, in their presence, Elishama said unto Ephron: "If thou wilt deal truly and kindly with my son Jubal, tell me, and give him Adah, thy sister's daughter, to wife; and if not, tell me, that I may turn to the right hand or to the left."

"The thing proceedeth from the Lord," answered Ephron, "therefore, I cannot speak unto thee, bad or good. Behold, the maiden is before thee; let her mother inquire at her own mouth."

"Wilt thou go with Jubal, the son of Elishama, and dwell with him as a wife?" asked Zilpah, turning to her daughter.

The varying expressions of Adah's face were concealed by her low descending veil, but her clear voice responded distinctly, "I will."

Then Ephron, taking the right hand of Adah, placed it within that of Jubal, and blessed them, saying: "The God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, be with you, and keep you together, and give his blessing richly upon you. The Lord make the wife that cometh into thy house like Rachel, and like Leah, who built up the house of Israel."

Kindred and friends now approached the married pair with blessings and congratulations; after which, Adah, attended by her mother, was conducted to the tent which had been erected as the abode of Jubal. Passing through the first division, a pair of curtains was withdrawn, which separated from the rest of the tent the apartment destined for the bride. It was of small dimensions, yet fitted up with richness and beauty. Its floor was covered with mats of divers colors, and rare and curious

devices. The thick, heavy fabric, which formed the outer covering of the tent, was concealed within by low descending curtains of blue, delicately embroidered with threads of gold, which were dispersed in the manner of the tapestries of Egypt. The small openings which served to admit the light, were shaded by curtains of fine linen, while couches and cushions, richly covered with purple and scarlet, were arranged around the apartment.

Adah entered the room, and seating herself, took possession thereof, as mistress of the tent, and henceforth to be accounted a wife among the daughters of Israel. Then rising, she threw aside her veil, and while her face beamed with the radiance of happiness, and her eyes glistened with tears of gratitude and love, she said, "Every blessing be thine, my husband, that thou hast prepared for me so beautiful an abode in the wilderness."

"Here we are but pilgrims and strangers," replied Jubal; "but when we enter Canaan, that glorious land, smiling with olive trees and vineyards, and flowing with milk and honey, there shall a habitation be built worthy to be the abode of her who hath dwelt the fairest in the palaces of Egypt."

The Hebrews had left the land of Egypt on the night of the fourteenth of Abib, which the Lord had commanded to be henceforth unto them the beginning of months. On the first day of the next Abib, which was likewise the first day of the sacred year, the tabernacle was set up in the wilderness. Its dimensions were forty-five feet in length, fifteen feet in width, and fifteen feet in height. The sides of the sacred enclosure were formed of boards of shittim wood, each resting by its tenons in sockets of silver, and all held securely together by bars passing across them through rings fixed for that purpose upon each board.

Thus, the frame of the tabernacle, when erected, presented on each of its sides and its western end a heavy wall, glistening in the brightness of its covering of gold, and supported beneath on ninety-six massive sockets of silver. Over this gorgeous framework was first spread the ample and beautiful drapery formed of the ten embroidered curtains of fine-twined linen, fastened together by their loops and taches of brass. Over this was thrown the yet larger covering, formed in like manner of the eleven curtains of fine spun goat's hair, then the protective covering of rams' skins, and lastly, the outer covering of badgers' skins completed the sacred tent. Across the east end, or entrance of the tabernacle, were ranged five pillars, overlaid with gold, from which was suspended a curtain, wrought with needlework of blue and purple and scarlet, which covered the whole front, and, being arranged to be withdrawn at pleasure, formed the door of the tent. Within the enclosure, at the distance of fifteen feet from the western end, were likewise ranged four pillars, ready for the hanging of the curtain which should divide the tabernacle into two apartments. By this division the eastern end, or Holy Place, was thirty feet in length, and the western end, or Most Holy Place, fifteen feet in length, making the enclosure of the latter a perfect cube.

When the tabernacle was thus reared, Moses put the tables of stone, which the Lord had given him on Sinai, within the ark, and set it in its place at the western end of the sanctuary, and upon it placed the mercy-seat of pure gold, with its winged and shining cherubim. Then, before the ark and the mercy-seat, he hung the glorious veil, wrought with many angels, which covered their sacred enclosure, and, extending the whole width of the tabernacle, separated the Holy from the Most Holy Place. Moses then

set the table upon the north side of the Holy Place, with the twelve loaves of show-bread in order upon it, and put the candlestick upon the south side, lighting its seven lamps before the Lord, and placed the golden altar just without the veil, burning sweet incense thereon. Next in order, Moses reared the pillars of the court of the tabernacle, embracing an area round about it, one hundred and fifty feet long, and seventy feet broad. There were twenty of these pillars on the north and on the south side, and ten in each of the end ranges, east and west. Unto these pillars were fastened plain curtains of fine-twined linen, eight feet in height, forming a complete enclosure for the court of the tabernacle. The entrance was on the east, thirty feet wide, embracing four pillars with their intervening spaces, and closed with a richly-embroidered hanging, different from the other curtains, which could be drawn up with cords, thus forming the gate of the court.

Within this court, directly in front of the door of the tabernacle, Moses placed the Brazen Altar, or altar of burnt-offering, and he set the brazen lavers, filled with water for the purification of the priests, between it and the gate of the court. "So Moses finished the work."

"Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.

"And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.

And when the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the children of Israel went onward in all their journeys.

"But if the cloud were not taken up, then they journeyed not till the day that it was taken up.

"For the cloud of the Lord was upon the tabernacle by day, and fire was on it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys."

The setting up of the tabernacle was followed by the giving of the ceremonial law, in all its details; the directions for presenting the burnt offerings, the meat offerings, the sin offerings, the peace offerings, and the trespass offerings; the rites of consecration for Aaron and his sons, as the progenitors of a perpetual priesthood; and the ordinances that should pertain to it from generation to generation; the distinction of clean and unclean meats; the tokens for discerning the leprosy, and the rights of cleansing it; the laws of marriage; the estimation of vows; the commandment concerning the solemn yearly feasts; and the ordinances for the great festival of the year of Jubilee; all followed by the fullest and most exalted promises of personal and civil, of temporal and spiritual blessings upon obedience, and likewise by the warnings of unutterable calamity, desolation, and woe, as the fruits of disobedience.

All these were given with a breath of compass and minuteness of detail, befitting the civil and ecclesiastical polity of a great people. Each specification had its own peculiar significance, founded either upon a reference to the practice of the heathen nations around them, from whom they were by these laws to be kept separate, or intended to convey, by means of tangible and sensible manifestations, the conceptions of moral truths, which the people were fitted to receive in no other way. By the unflinching equity of the laws, they learned the impartial justice of the Lawgiver; in the appointments for the poor, the widow, and the fatherless, they saw his tenderness and compassion. The sacrifices, so varied and multiplied, for the different shades of open offence, or the consciousness of secret guilt, taught most impressively, by their flowing blood, the nature and desert of sin. The successive purifications through which each sacrifice was to pass—chosen without spot or

blemish, cleansed by the washing of water, accompanied by the purification of the consecrated priest that offered it, and the purification of the sanctified altar upon which it was offered, and after all this not worthy to enter into the view of the Holy of Holies, but lifting up the smoke of its burning without the vail—these signs spake in unmistakable language of the spotless purity, the unapproachable holiness of God; while the various manifestations he had made of himself in the giving of the law, revealed with an overwhelming power his incomprehensible greatness and majesty.

Thus every statute of the Levitical code contributed its part towards the great and three-fold object for which it was given: first, to build upon the right and the left of the Hebrews a wall of partition, within whose bounds they should, from age to age, pursue their divinely-appointed path through the nations, but not of them; secondly, to give a detailed exposition of the great principles of the moral law, always revealing the nature and attributes of the only living and true God; and thirdly, by a system of significant types and emblems, to foreshadow the mighty work of Him, who should come forth in the fulness of time, to point to the promised hope of the world, the morning star, yet trembling, faint and dim, in the light of early prophecy.

While yet the Israelites were encamped at Sinai, Moses was commanded to number of the congregation, the men from twenty years old and upward, who were able to go forth to war, and to appoint twelve men, one of each tribe, who should be "the renowned of the congregation, princes of the tribes of their fathers, heads of thousands in Israel." The tribe of Judah stood pre-eminent in numbers, as well, as in position, counting seventy-four thousand and six hun-

dred. The numbers of Dan ranked second in order, being sixty-two thousand and seven hundred; and those of Simeon third, even fifty-nine thousand and three hundred. All the men in the congregation that were numbered were six hundred thousand, and three thousand, five hundred and fifty, exclusive of the tribe of the Levites, whom the Lord had commanded not to be counted among the men of war, but to be appointed over the tabernacle, to set it up and to take it down, and own all things belonging to it, that they might minister thereto.

The position of the tents of the several tribes in relation to the tabernacle, and the order of their march on their journeys, was likewise given by the Lord unto Moses and Aaron. The tabernacle, with its surrounding court, occupied the centre of every encampment. Immediately about this, at a certain distance therefrom, were pitched the tents of the priests and Levites. On the east, or entrance of the tabernacle, was the encampment of Moses, with Aaron and his sons, the priests. The Levites were divided into three classes, of which the Gershonites encamped on the west, the Kohathites on the south, and the Merarites on the north.

The whole congregation, which was marshaled under four grand divisions, each containing three tribes, were commanded to pitch their tents without those of the Levites, in the form of a hollow square, far off, round about the tabernacle. On the east side, towards the sun-rising, was appointed the encampment of the hosts of Judah, of Issachar, and of Zebulon, each under its respective captains and princes, and all beneath the standard of Judah.

On the south side was the encampment of the armies of Reuben, Simeon, and Gad, beneath the standard of Reuben.

On the west side were encamped the tribes of Ephraim,

Manasseh, and Benjamin, with their armies, enrolled under the standard of Ephraim.

On the north side were the tents of Dan, Asher, and Napthali, marshaled beneath the standard of Dan.

The fourteenth of the month Abib drew nigh, the first anniversary of the Passover. As the Israelites observed the sacred feast upon the plain of Sinai, how they lived over, once more, the wonderful events of the previous year, which it was designed to commemorate; how they shuddered in horror at the remembrance of the Egyptian plagues, the devouring locusts, the atmosphere of thick darkness, the rivers of blood; how their hearts quailed and melted before the terrors of that last fearful night, when Egypt's mighty wail of sorrow rose and fell as the heavings and surgings of an overwhelming flood of waters; how they gloried in their own sure refuge beneath the sprinkled blood of the Passover; how they triumphed in their miraculous exodus from the house of bondage. And, could they have lifted the veil of the future, and looking down the long vista of time, beheld the antitype of their own paschal lamb; could they have witnessed the mysterious sacrifice which that sacred feast foreshadowed; could they have seen the sprinkled blood upon their door-posts, pointing forward to that shedding of blood which should be for the atonement of the sins of the world,—how would their souls have labored to grasp the mighty mystery; how would the Miriams of the congregation have burst forth in lofty songs of rejoicing, and those, like Moses, meek and lowly, have retired within the sanctuary of their own hearts, to keep silence before the God of all the earth. How full of sublime significance to every Israelite should have been this first anniversary of the Passover, observed beneath the shadows of Mount Sinai.

CHAPTER V.

THE DEPARTURE FROM SINAI.

ON the twentieth day of the second month, the cloud was taken up from off the tabernacle, and the eventful encampment of Sinai was at an end. The Hebrews immediately struck their tents, and prepared to follow the Divine guidance. Animation and business became at once the spirit of the scene. Men were employed in taking up the stakes, winding the cords, rolling the coverings of their tents, and in arranging the few necessary articles of furniture, for safe and easy carriage. Mothers were making provision for the comfort of their little ones upon the journey, and women everywhere, with thoughtful kindness, were taking precautions for the relief of the sick and the weary, the aged, and the young children, amid the various emergencies of the way. The prince of each tribe was giving directions to the subordinate captains of thousands and of hundreds, and carefully inspecting the operations of the hosts under his charge, to see that all should be ready for motion at the appointed signal. The Levites, according to their three divisions, were employed in taking down the tabernacle. The sons of Gershon were preparing for removal the tent and coverings thereof, and the hangings and curtains, both of the tabernacle and of the court. Unto the sons of Kohath was given the carriage of the ark, the vail, the table, the candlestick, the altars, the vessels of the sanctuary wherewith they ministered,

and all the service thereof. Nevertheless they were not permitted to step within the sanctuary to lay their hands upon any of the holy things, but stood reverently waiting the time when they should receive their sacred charge from the hands of the priests. In the custody of the sons of Merai were the boards of the tabernacle, and the bars, and the pillars, and the sockets, and all that serveth thereto, and the pillars of the court round about, with their sockets and pins and cords. And while these all labored diligently and reverently, in the several parts of their sacred work, Aaron and his sons superintended the whole body of the Levites, and kept the sanctuary in charge for the children of Israel.

When the Gershonites and Merarites had finished their portion of the work, Aaron and his sons approached the sacred things of the sanctuary, and prepared each for removal, observing minutely the specified disposition of its various appurtenances, the manner of its several coverings, and the arrangements for its transportation according to divine appointment. And thus, when the camps should set forward, were they made ready to be entrusted to the sons of Kohath, who should bear their several burdens by bars and staves, lest they should touch, by profaning hand, the holy things.

During all the multiplied operations, the busy life, the strong excitement of this scene, one moved to and fro with a meek and thoughtful countenance, the umpire of prince and priest, the deputed authority of God unto his people. At such a time as this, might not the steadfast heart of Moses faint before the great work of leading Israel through the wilderness? Might he not then, as on a subsequent occasion, have pleaded before the Lord: "Have I conceived all this people? have I begotten them, that thou shouldest

say unto me, 'Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth the sucking child, unto the land which thou swarest unto their fathers?'"

In the spot from which the tent of Jubal had first been removed, sat Zilpah and Adah, ready for departure. Now, that the hurry of preparation was over, Adah observed that her mother wore an air of silent abstraction, very different from her usual enthusiastic sympathy with the great movements of the people; and, wondering what should be its cause, she said, "Hath aught happened to trouble thee, my mother?"

"No trouble hath come to me," answered Zilpah. "Yet, knowest thou not why I am this day of a sad countenance?"

"Nay, indeed, I know not," answered Adah. Then, as a sudden recollection gleamed across her mind, she said, quickly, "It is because thou goest not forth with the families of Judah."

"Even so," answered Zilpah. "Truly, I am now as an alien among the tribes of my people; as a stranger that knoweth not his own place."

"Nay, my mother," exclaimed Adah, "this shall not be; I know the kindness of thy heart, and what thou wouldst fain sacrifice for my sake. Thou rememberest our former journeyings, when thy daughter fainted by the way, and thou wast evermore her strong stay and support. But it shall not be so now. Seest thou not that gladness has come to my heart, and strength to my body, in this wilderness? Knowest thou not that, as a true Israelite, I now tread joyfully the path of my pilgrimage, and shall not faint therein? Moreover, whatever may be the trials of the way, is not Jubal, my husband, with me? Hath he not a sure foot, and a strong arm, and a large heart? Shall not his care compass me about, as a garment?"

Shall not his kindness be as a shelter from the wind, and as a shadow from the heat? Truly, my mother, this sacrifice shall not be required of thee. Thou shalt go forth as thou wast wont, with thine own tribe."

"It is even so, Zilpah," added Jubal, who had now drawn near. "Fain would we have thy company by the way; yet, I know it were a grievous thing unto thee, were thou not numbered this day with the children of Judah. As for Adah, she shall be tenderly guarded, and shall want for no good thing; and, at the next encampment, I will bring thee again unto our tent, and thou shalt behold her fresh and glad as a young child, that hath been carried in his father's bosom."

"Truly, Jubal, thou hast well considered my case," answered Zilpah. "When first I saw the cloud arising from off the tabernacle, my feet could hardly be restrained from running unto the tents of Judah. But I said in my heart, 'What shall Adah do in the weariness of the journey, peradventure her husband may be obliged to depart from her to attend to the service of Ahiezer, the prince of Dan, who often giveth his commands? And in the long hours of scorching heat, and fainting weariness, should a mother forsake her only child? Therefore, I resolutely set my face to travel with the families of Dan. Nevertheless, if it pleaseth Adah that I go with mine own people, and ye be both united in your minds concerning it, I will henceforth journey unto the land which the Lord sware unto our fathers, only in the ranks of Judah. While the cloud of the Lord's presence resteth on the tabernacle, I will dwell with thee in the tents of Dan; and, when it moveth forward in majesty to search out our way before us, and lead the people of the Lord into an everlasting possession, I will follow it in the front of the host, even amid the armies of him to whom

hath been given the sceptre of Israel. In what other tribe should my name be reckoned among the children of Abraham? In what other ranks should my feet move in safety and strength? Beneath what other banner should my soul mount up on its wings of rejoicing?"

"The Lord make his face to shine upon thy pilgrimage," said Jubal, fervently, "and abundantly reward thee for the strong faith on which thou hast evermore lifted up our souls, for the light of holy joy thou hast shed abroad in our tent."

"The Lord be henceforth unto thee and thine, a defence and a refuge, and a joy," rejoined Zilpah; then warmly embracing Adah, she added: "The angel of the Lord's presence redeem thee from all evil by the way, and grant that I may again behold thy face in peace."

Jubal then led Adah to her place in the tribe of his people, near unto Sarah, his mother, and went forward with Zilpah to search out the family of Ephron, among the children of Judah. So perfect was the order of the various divisions and subdivisions under which each tribe was marshaled, that this was soon accomplished. Zilpah was joyfully welcomed among her kindred, and Jubal returned unto his own place.

At length the various preparations were accomplished; and the armies of the people stood in their appointed ranks under their respective leaders. Then came the blasts of the silver trumpets, clear and shrill, echoing and re-echoing from the rocks of the desert. At the thrilling peal the standard of the first division of the hosts spread its broad surface upon the breeze, displaying in rich embroidery of white, and purple, and blue, and crimson, the Lion of the tribe of Judah. One shout of proud glory, long and loud, burst forth from the hundreds of thousands, all enrolled

beneath the royal ensign of Israel. And the armies of the camp of Judah set forward in their appointed ranks, every one under the banner of his own captain, and the subordinate captains, every one under the prince of his own tribe.

Then two divisions of the Levites, even the sons of Gershom and of Mesari, moved forward, bearing the tabernacle. Again pealed the blast of silver trumpets; and, responsive to the call, the banner of the camp of Reuben floated upon the air, and the armies of Reuben, Simeon, and Gad, took up the line of march.

Next in order, even in the midst of the whole host of Israel, moved the priests and the Koathites, or the third division of the Levites, bearing the ark of the testimony, the mercy seat, the golden altar, and all that appertained to the sanctuary. These were divided from their brethren, in order that the preceding divisions arriving first at the place of encampment should set up the tabernacle, ready for the reception of the sacred things that belonged to the Holy and Most Holy Place. A third time sounded the trumpets; and, beneath the waving ensign of Ephraim, the third grand division of the host moved onward in its appointed order.

Once more the trumpet-call awoke the reverberations of the wilderness of Sinai, deepened and multiplied by the exulting shout that greeted the standard of Dan, floating high and wide in its gorgeous emblazonry of cherubim. And the thousands of Dan, of Asher, and of Naphtali, marched forward, the rear-ward of the armies of Israel.

Thus the mighty host, even two millions of people, moved slowly off the plains of Sinai, and, following the direction of their miraculous guide, turned their course toward the wilderness of Paran. The day was far spent. The sun sank down in glory, and the darkness drew on apace. But brighter and brighter grew the pillar of cloud,

till it burned as a pillar of living fire, lighting up the moving masses of the mighty multitude with a strange brilliancy, and shedding its glowing radiance far across the sands of the desert. Infants lifted their wondering eyes, and stretched forth their little hands unto the marvellous brightness, while young children shouted in gladness, and clapped their hands for joy. Man, in the pride of his strength, and woman in the living depths of her feeling; the young, exulting in the bounding flow of the unspent tide of life, and the aged, with their hearts beating wearily against its ebb, — all were thrilled with the sublimity of that highway through the wilderness. There was earnest converse, expressive of strong desires, and glowing hopes, and fervent aspirations. There were exclamations of wonder, adoration, and praise. Now from young men and maidens burst forth responsive songs of joy; and again from many voices a lofty anthem sent forth its waves of melody upon the still air of the night. There were those of clasped hands and speechless lips, and eyes running over with the swelling fulness of the heart. There were those whose souls mounted above the pillar of fire to the starry firmament, yea, and above the heavens unto Him that dwelleth therein. They marvelled that He who led forth His people by a Father's hand, "made the stars also." They pondered diligently his promises concerning the future hope of the world which should arise out of Israel. They worshipped in reverence and godly fear before his unsearchable greatness and majesty.

CHAPTER VI.

THE EVIL REPORT.

AFTER a three days' journey, the cloud rested in the wilderness of Paran. At the encampment of Taberah, the people began to loathe the manna which formed their daily food, and to crave the flesh and fish, the vegetables and fruits of Egypt. Their discontent soon manifested itself in open complaints against the Lord. As a punishment for this offence, a fire was kindled in the uttermost parts of the camp, and many were consumed. The terrified people cried unto Moses, to entreat that it might be stayed; and, in answer to the prayers of their leader, the fire was quenched. Notwithstanding this judgment, their murmurings broke out afresh at Kibroth-Hattaavah, the place of the next encampment. "Who shall give us flesh to eat?" was their mournful cry. "We remember the fish which we did eat in Egypt freely, the cucumbers and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic. But now our soul is dried away. There is nothing at all besides this manna before our eyes."

As Moses beheld every man sitting in the door of his tent, with sighing and tears, and heard the weeping of the people throughout their families, even his patience and forbearance shrunk before the test. "Whence should I have flesh to give unto all this people?" he exclaimed before the Lord; "for they weep unto me, saying: 'Give us flesh, that we may eat.' I am not able to bear all this

people alone, because it is too heavy for me. . . And if thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, and let me not see my wretchedness."

In consideration of the affliction of Moses beneath his heavy charge, the Lord appointed seventy men of the elders and officers of Israel, and gave unto them of the spirit of his servant, that they also might share the burden of the congregation which had hitherto rested alone on Moses. He also granted the desires of the people for food of flesh, and by a strong wind brought quails from the sea, which fell round about the camp for the space of a day's journey on every side, an immense mass, three and a half feet high. But the gratification of the unhallowed desire became its dread punishment. Before the eagerly coveted delicacy was consumed, it became loathsome, and brought in its train the fearful destruction of pestilence.

"Surely the strong men fall as standing grain before the sickle of the reaper, and the young men wither as grass," exclaimed Jubal, as with a despairing heart he entered his tent, after assisting in the hasty burial of a chosen friend. "Who should have said that Helon should lie down in the sepulchre? He whose foot was swift as a young roe upon the mountains; whose hand held the bow in strength; whose eye was as that of the eagle searching out the prey from afar? Beautiful hath been thy countenance; precious thy words unto me, O Helon. Even from a child thou hast been unto me as a brother. Together we have climbed the high places where the stork dwelleth among the fir trees; we have hunted upon the hills the fallow deer and the unicorn. With feet of matching swiftness, like the speed of the wind, we have chased the wild ass of the desert. Sweet have been our counsels concerning the days when we should dwell, each with the

wife of his own heart, in the delightful land whither we go. Blessed have been the hours when our hearts have united, and gone up on the breath of the morning incense in the worship of our fathers' God. Alas for me, Helon, thou liest low in the dust. This day have I buried my dead out of my sight."

"Nevertheless, thou shalt comfort thyself concerning thy friend, that it shall be well with him," answered Zilpah, "inasmuch as his heart was steadfastly fixed to walk in the commandments of the Lord."

"If a man die, shall he live again?" resumed Zilpah, evidently seeking to extricate herself from a labyrinth of entangling thoughts. "Surely he goeth the way whence he shall not return. Alas, for the curse that settled as a heavy cloud upon the children of men, when our first parents fell from their high estate, and fulfilled the word of the Lord: 'In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.' When He cometh, in whom all nations shall be blessed, shall he have power to lift up the heavy curse? shall death reign no longer? shall its desolating woes be forgotten? shall its rivers of anguish be dried up forever? Alas! who shall speak when God hath not spoken? who shall unfold the counsels of the Almighty?"

"Truly the people shall all make their graves in the wilderness," answered Jubal, so absorbed in the present calamity as to give no heed to Zilpah's contemplations of the future. "Doth not the plague overshadow every tent, and walk in and out among the people, black as night, still as death, and strong as an armed man? Are not its jaws wide open to devour, and its consuming terrors like the stings of many scorpions? Who shall abide before its destruction, seeing it wasteth as a fire that cannot be quenched?"

"Nay, say not so, my husband," answered Adah, with many tears; "will not the Lord be entreated for us to stay his hand, and turn away his anger, that we be not utterly consumed?"

"When the Lord hath punished Israel for his sin, then shall he cease to smite," answered Zilpah. "How long shall the people rebel, and be stiff-necked to walk in the desires of their own hearts? Was not the Lord feeding this great multitude, even as with angels' food; but they murmured at his will, and spake proudly concerning his ways? They despised the leadings of his hand, and said, 'Why came we forth out of Egypt?' Therefore, he will show them their folly; he will bitterly chastise them for their sins. Yet his mercy is not clean gone for ever. When the people repent, and submit themselves unto the Lord, he shall appear for their deliverance, and they shall be satisfied with the bread that cometh down, day by day, as the rain from heaven. Oh! that the whole congregation might humble themselves before the Lord, because of his righteous judgments."

At length the plague was stayed, and with great lamentation over the fallen of the flower of Israel, and bitter tears over the clustering graves of the loved and the lost, the people departed from Kibroth-Hattaavah as from a city of the dead. It was but a mournful journey unto Hazerath, which was also marked with sin and sorrow by the sedition of Miriam and Aaron, and the accompanying punishment of the leprosy visited upon Miriam. The humble confessions of Aaron unto Moses for their joint sin, and his earnest entreaties that Miriam might be spared the dreadful doom which was hanging over her, moved in Moses the tenderest sympathies of a brother's heart. "Heal her now, O God, I beseech thee," was his an-

guished cry, and God graciously heard the prayer, and withdrew from her the terrible scourge. Seven days she was shut out from the people as unclean, and the whole congregation waited in their journeyings for the erring prophetess, who, by the pride of her heart, had brought upon herself so grievous a fall.

The cloudy pillar next rested at Kadesh. After the tabernacle was set up, and the tents of the people pitched in order about it, Moses, in obedience to the command of God, chose one man of every tribe, and sent them into Canaan to search out the land. "Get you up this way southward," said Moses to the twelve spies, as they were ready to depart, "and see the land what it is, and the people that dwelleth therein; whether they be strong or weak, few or many." After the lapse of forty days, the explorers returned to the camp. Their coming was descried from afar by the waiting people, and kindled afresh the ardor of their eager expectations. How universal became their curiosity and excitement, how strong their desires, how fervent their hopes. Near, and yet nearer, drew the little company, whose mission was freighted with such momentous consequences unto the people of God, till they stood before Moses and Aaron in the presence of the great congregation, all listening in the breathless intensity of suspense to hear the report they should make.

And they said: "We came into the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey, and this is the fruit of it." And as they spake, they displayed delicious figs in the soft tinge of their early ripeness; pomegranates, doubly tempting by their beauty of form and color, and their known excellence of flavor; and grapes in the perfection of their deep rich purple, hanging upon a staff in one massive cluster, whose weight had

been supported by two men. "Nevertheless," they continued, anxious to present the difficulties in the way of immediate possession by the Israelites, "the people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled and very great; and, moreover, we saw the children of Anak there. The Amalekites dwell in the land of the south, and the Hittites, and the Jebusites, and the Amorites, dwell in the mountains; and the Canaanites dwell by the sea and the coast of Jordan."

But Caleb, of the tribe of Judah, full of courage and patriotic fervor, sought earnestly to counteract the impression which this enumeration of difficulties by his associates might make upon the armies of Israel. "And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said: 'Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it.'"

"We be not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we," insisted the great majority of the spies. "And there we saw the giants, and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight."

The single voice of Caleb was unheeded, and the united testimony of his companions prevailed to affright and dishearten the people from attempting the conquest of Canaan. The camp was thrown into a tumult of disappointment, grief, and anger. The whole congregation lifted up their voices and cried, and the people wept that night. They murmured against Moses and Aaron, saying: "Would God we had died in this wilderness." They complained of the Almighty, saying: "Wherefore hath the Lord brought us into this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey." They counselled an immediate rebellion from the government of God,

and of his servants, saying one to another, "Let us make us a captain and return into Egypt."

Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of Israel, in a bewilderment of grief and despair. Caleb, joined by Joshua, of the tribe of Ephraim, who was also of the spies, made one more attempt to turn aside the disastrous consequences of the "evil report." "They rent their clothes, and spake unto all the company of the children of Israel, saying: 'The land which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land. If the Lord delight in us, then he will bring us into this land and give it us. Only rebel not ye against the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us; their defence is departed from them, and the Lord is with us; fear them not.'"

"But all the congregation bade stone them with stones." The assurances of the two faithful servants of the Lord, concerning the exceeding richness and beauty of the dwelling-place which he had prepared for his people; their entreaties that the people should go immediately forward in the strength of the Lord, not fearing the nations whom he had decreed should be driven out before them; their earnest warnings against rebellion; their inspiring encouragements of the promised help and defence of the Almighty, — all fell upon the great heart of Israel as rain upon the flinty rock, stirring no depths of gratitude, causing to spring forth no bursts of fearless patriotism, no tribute of loyal devotion unto their Lawgiver and King. They forgot the simple obedience of their father Abraham, who, ages before, had come forth, single-handed and alone, from his country and kindred upon the plains of Chaldea, not knowing whither he went, and entered into the land upon whose borders the multiplied hosts of his posterity now

stood, "as sands upon the sea shore." They forgot the wonderful chain of providences, by which, in that very land, the Lord had redeemed the fathers of their tribes from famine, and fed them with the corn of Egypt. They forgot the path which their own feet had trodden, paved and walled and overshadowed and lighted by the wonders of perpetual miracle.

The story of the difficulties and dangers of the great enterprise before them was in accordance with the fears and faithlessness of their own hearts, and met with a full and strong response of sympathy. Thus, even as a mule, which hath no understanding, Israel stubbornly refused to walk in the ways of the Lord, and brought down upon himself the righteous judgments of the Almighty. The heavy chastisement which the Lord was about to inflict, even the utter disinheritation of the whole people, was lightened by the prevailing prayers of Moses. And God said unto Moses, "Because all these men which have seen my glory, and my miracles which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice, surely they shall not see the land which I swear unto their fathers. To-morrow turn you and get you into the wilderness by the way of the Red Sea." And the Lord spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, "How long shall I bear with this evil congregation, which murmur against me? Say unto them, as truly as I live, saith the Lord, as ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you. Doubtless ye shall not come unto the land which I swear to make you dwell therein, save Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua, the son of Nun. But your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, them I will bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised. And

your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, until your carcasses be wasted in the wilderness. I, the Lord, have said, I will surely do it unto all this evil congregation that are gathered together against me: in this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die."

The infliction of this judgment, joined with the immediate death of the ten spies, who had not, like Caleb and Joshua, followed fully the guidance of God, moved the hearts of the people to an appreciation of their true position. They mourned greatly, they acknowledged their sin, they expressed their willingness to obey the direction of the Lord. "And they rose up early in the morning, and gat them to the top of the mountain, saying, 'Lo! we be here, and will go up unto the place which the Lord hath promised.'" But alas, their repentance was too late; the gates of the promised land were closed upon them forever. Yet in the agony of their remorse, they would fain strive, they would make the effort, they would rush forward to see if peradventure they might not be permitted to enter therein. Notwithstanding the expostulations and warnings of Moses, in their despairing eagerness they presumed to go up unto the hill-top; nevertheless "the ark of the covenant of the Lord and Moses departed not out of the camp." Therefore their strength was departed from them; they were driven backward by their enemies as chaff before the wind. They were discomfited, and made to feel their own nothingness, when cut off from the help of the Lord. They had wilfully turned their backs upon the delightful home which their God had provided; and now, with unavailing remorse and bitter wailing, they sat down in the desert, and looked forward with blinding tears to the ceaseless toils of a hopeless pilgrimage. The bright land flowing with milk and honey,

breathing fragrance from its soft dropping tears of balm, smiling in freshest green, blushing with its mantling blood of grapes, murmuring sweet music of living waters, garlanded with roses, laden with plenty, girded with strength, crowned with beauty,—Canaan,—became henceforth to them but as a dream of the night, and lo! they had awaked to make their dwelling-place and their graves in the waste howling wilderness.

* * * * *

For the pilgrims of earth there is prepared a city of habitation, and the glories of the promised land are but as the faint whispers we have heard of it. Unto the most favored of the sons of men, the captive of Patmos, it hath been shown in vision, "descending out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband," beautiful exceedingly. It is built upon twelve precious foundations, and its corner stone is from everlasting to everlasting; it is finished in matchless perfection; it is inhabited by spotless holiness; it is filled with inconceivable bliss; it overfloweth with unsearchable riches; it breatheth unutterable love; it shineth with light inaccessible, for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. The gates of it shall not be shut at all by day, for there is no night there. Yet the way thereto is straight and narrow, and leadeth still through the wilderness. Unto those that walk therein, dangers lay thick upon the right hand and the left, and enemies are on the alert, both within and without. The way already trodden seemeth but a path of stumbling; the way yet to be traversed stretcheth upward, and onward, and afar. Over it oftentimes hang clouds and darkness, so that the sun giveth not his light, and the stars withdraw their shining. Yet they that have put on the whole armor of God, evermore hold on their way, until at length light ariseth out of darkness.

They discern the far-off shining of the glorious city. They hear the faint echoes of the song which goeth up from those who walk therein in white. "They shall mount up on wings, as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint; they shall enter in through the gates into the city."

But the pilgrims who walk not in the strength of the Lord are discouraged, because of the conflict by the way. Unto them dangers multiply, enemies grow fearful, and their strength becomes less than nothing, and vanity. Like the Israelites of old, who were terrified before the giants, in whose sight they were as grasshoppers, and who shrank from encountering their foes of the south, and of the seashore, and of the mountains, and of the coast of Jordan; so do these pilgrims quail and tremble before the mighty power of an evil world, so do they shut their eyes, and close their ears, and seal their hearts to the stern demands of duty, and refuse to grapple in unyielding conflict with the myriad hosts of sin. So in slothful fear do they turn back in the face of battle, saying: "We be not able to go up and possess the land, even the eternal city of habitation." Alas, for these pilgrims, when even the long-suffering of God is exhausted, and the days shall come when they cannot enter in because of unbelief; the days when the life-giving power of the Spirit of God shall be withdrawn from their hearts, and the "narrow way" closed up unto them forever. Like the efforts of the children of Israel to force their way into the promised land, while the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and Moses, departed not out of the camp, so shall be their strivings to take the kingdom of heaven by violence, when the Lord worketh not with them. The gate, over which all their lives long they have read the precious words,

"Knock, and it shall be opened unto you," now yields not to their importunities; but there comes to them a voice from within, "I know you not whence ye are." Their deep repentance, their anguished tears, their agonizing earnestness, all recoil back upon their own hearts as vain and bitter mockeries. Alas, for those pilgrims by whom the Holy Spirit is grieved, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness, by the generation of whom He said, "So I swear in my wrath, they shall not enter into my rest."

Immortal pilgrim, "upon whom the ends of the world are come," if thou art negligent, and slothful, and faint-hearted in thy journey to an eternal home, wilt thou not be admonished by these things, which are "written for our ensamples," and henceforth "give all diligence to make thy calling and election sure!" But if thou art praying, and working, and watching, having thy loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness, and thy feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, taking the shield of faith, and the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the spirit, fear not the warfare. Though thou wrestlest "not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places," foes seven-fold more powerful than the enemies of Israel, "their defence is departed from them," and the Lord is with thee, fear them not. Lift up thine eyes above, whence cometh thy help. Behold Him who hath foreshadowed Himself unto his chosen people as the "Lion of the tribe of Judah," and the "Lamb that was slain," now enthroned in light and majesty, before the vision of whose insufferable glories the beloved disciple "fell at his feet as dead." With this Captain of thy

salvation thou shalt be more than a conqueror. When thou faintest in thine own weakness, and tremblest before His unsearchable majesty, He shall lay his right hand upon thee, saying unto thee, "Fear not; I am the first and the last; I am he that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive forevermore, Amen, and have the keys of hell and death." "He that overcometh shall inherit all things." When thou wrestlest long and hard in the conflict, thou shalt catch inspiring strains from the song of victory, in which thou mayest yet join with ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, unto the Lamb that hath redeemed thee unto God by his blood. When alone with thine own heart, thou weepest over thy sin, and sighest amid the toils of thy pilgrimage, and longest for the rest of thine eternal home, a still small voice shall be wafted down unto thee on the wings of the solemn night: "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

CHAPTER VII.

THE SECOND ENCAMPMENT AT KADESH.

NOTWITHSTANDING the terrific judgments, which from time to time had been visited upon Israel, the presumptuous rebellion of the sons of Levi soon followed the expulsion from Canaan. Korah, Dathan, Abiram, and On, the leaders in this rebellion, were joined by "certain of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown." And they gathered themselves together against Moses, and against Aaron, and said unto them: "Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, and the Lord is among them. Wherefore, then, lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord."

The answer of Moses proposed to leave the decision of the whole matter to the direct interposition of God. Accordingly, on the morrow, Korah and his company, even the whole two hundred and fifty men, each holding his censer in his hand, with fire and incense thereon, appeared before the tabernacle of the congregation, to prove whether the Lord would accept their unbidden sacrifice. Then the glory of the Lord appeared unto all the congregation, and after listening to the prayers of his servants, not to consume the whole people, he commanded every one to depart from the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, that they and their families might become a perpetual warning against the folly and guilt of despising

(88)

the statutes of the Lord. And "the ground clave asunder that was under them, and the earth opened her mouth and swallowed them up; they, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them, and they perished from among the congregation. And all Israel that were round about them fled at the cry of them, for they said, "Lest the earth swallow us up also." And there came a fire out from the Lord and consumed the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense.

And the Lord likewise commanded Moses to speak unto Eleazer, the priest, to take the censers which these sinners had used against their own souls, out of the burning, and to make of them broad plates for a covering of the altar, to be a sign and a memorial unto the children of Israel, that no stranger which is not of the seed of Aaron come near to offer incense before the Lord. But it was only on the morrow, while these terrors had hardly passed from before their eyes, that all the congregation openly espoused the cause of the rebellious ones, and charging the judgment which had been inflicted upon Moses and Aaron, they murmured against them, saying, "Ye have killed the people of the Lord." But as they gathered themselves together, the glory of the Lord appeared yet again over the tabernacle, and the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, "Get you up from among this congregation, that I may consume them as in a moment."

"And Moses said unto Aaron, 'Take a censer, and put fire therein from off the altar, and put on incense, and go quickly unto the congregation, and make an atonement for them, for there is wrath gone out from the Lord; the plague is begun.'"

"And Aaron took, as Moses commanded, and ran into the midst of the congregation, and behold the plague was

8*

begun among the people, and he put on incense, and made an atonement for the people. And he stood between the dead and the living, and the plague was stayed."

Thus again did the backsliding, revolting children of Israel make for themselves a path through deep floods of sorrow, beneath the black, overshadowing wings of the pestilence. The stricken ones went down quickly into the grave, and carried with them the hope and comfort of the living. Again flowed the bitter tears of the bereaved and desolate-hearted; again the souls of the people melted in fearful anguish, under the dread curse of disobedience and sin, the seven-fold terrors of that multiplied harvest of death, for "they that died in the plague were fourteen thousand and seven hundred, besides them that died about the matter of Korah."

The encampments of Rimmon-parez, Liboah, Rissah, and Kehelathah, had been passed, and the tents of the Israelites gleamed beneath the brightness of sunny skies, as in the symmetrical order of their arrangement they rose by hundreds and thousands near the base of Mount Shaphar, a few miles distant from the southern shores of the Mediterranean. Within the abode of Jubal all was joy and gladness. Elishama and Sarah, Ephron and his wife Judith, with many other kindred and friends, had gathered together, all mingling their rejoicings with Zilpah, and vying with each other in bidding welcome to the fair being she held in her bosom. "Blessed be the Lord," said Sarah, "who hath not left thee this day without a kinsman. May his name become great in Israel. Truly shall this, the son of thy daughter, be unto thee a restorer of thy life, and a nourisher of thine old age."

"Praise the name of the Lord," replied Zilpah, "that he hath graciously remembered his handmaid, that he hath

given this son, that the name of my husband go not out in Israel." Then gazing upon the child in silence for a moment, she added, while an expression of maternal tenderness softened the lofty bearing of her countenance, "My heart hath already received him with the same love I bore my own fair sons, who were sacrificed in the land of Egypt."

In Adah's tent all was silent. Sarah sat watching the soft slumbers of the young mother, and as Adah's first waking glance sought her infant, her mother-in-law asked, "What wilt thou call thy son?"

"It hath pleased Jubal that my mother should name him," answered Adah, looking tenderly upon Zilpah. "Wilt thou call him Helon, my mother," she asked, "for the first-born of thine own sons?"

"Nay," replied Zilpah, "he shall bear the name of my husband, and thy father. His name shall be called Asriel, the son of Adah, the daughter of Asriel," and pressing the child to her bosom, she said, fervently, "The Almighty bless the child, and cause that thou mayest possess the spirit of thy mother's father. May thy teeth be white with milk, and thy garments red with the blood of grapes, and may the Lord exalt thy name among the sons of thy people."

As weeks and months passed away, Adah lived a new existence in the life of her child. Jubal rejoiced over it with all the pride of a Hebrew father, while Zilpah was its devoted and delighted nurse. Thus domestic love, "that only bliss of Paradise that has survived the fall," folded its soft wings over the tent in the wilderness. But alas! what hath sin wrought? In the midst of peace and quiet joy came the blighting touch of the great destroyer.

"Poor race of men," said the pitying spirit,
 "Dearly ye pay for your primal fall,
 Some flowerets of Eden ye still inherit,
 But the trail of the serpent is over them all."

There were times when, as the tender mother and devoted husband gazed upon Adah, and marked that her steps grew slow and weary, and the hands which were wont to be quietly busy with the cunning needle-work, gradually laid aside their graceful tasks, and were folded in stillness; when they felt that her voice had grown tremulous and faint, and the light of her eye had become dim, the dread thought knocked fearfully at the door of their hearts, that Adah's days were numbered. But ah! how strongly the loving heart bolts and bars itself against such convictions concerning its beloved ones.

So Zilpah and Jubal breathed not their fears to themselves, much less to each other, or to her who was their subject. Yet their guarded silence distanced not the slow approach of the last conqueror. With a sure and unfaltering hand he touched the secret springs of life, and the beautiful being they had sustained gradually yielded to the silent mandate.

It was at the sunrise hour of a bright morning, that Adah, awaking from slumber, called her mother and husband to her couch. "Hear me, my beloved ones," she said, "and be not dismayed at my words. The God of Abraham hath called for my spirit, and soon shall I be gathered to my fathers. In deep sleep, in the visions of the night, he hath sent his angel to reveal to me that the time of my departure draweth near. Nay, grieve not, my husband," she continued, "it is but a little while that I leave thee, for the angel of my dream hath assured me, that soon thou shalt join me whither I go. And now, my

mother," she said, turning to Zilpah, "fain would I stay, that I might soothe thine old age, and bless thee with a daughter's love, when hoary hairs whiten upon thy head; but it may not be, for God hath called me. The husband of my youth shall soon follow me. To thee I give my son, my first-born. May he grow up to be more to thee than seven daughters, and may the Almighty arm be to him, and to thee, a defence and a rock of refuge."

Jubal bowed down with grief as a bulrush, but Zilpah answered: "Is thy faith strong in the God of Abraham, my daughter? canst thou trust thy soul in his keeping?"

"It is strong," answered Adah. "He is God, and doeth all things well. I am in his hands, that he may do with me as seemeth good in his sight. But," she added, turning to Jubal, "I will that thou this day present for me both the burnt-offering and the sin-offering, that the priest may atone for me before the door of the tabernacle. May the Lord grant unto me a penitent spirit, and accept the sacrifices of his own appointment." Then, after an interval of deep thought, she asked: "What is the great blessing, wherewith in time to come the Lord shall visit his people?"

"Indeed, I know not," answered Zilpah, "for the Lord hath not revealed it unto us. Yet hath my heart pondered and made diligent search concerning it. Shall it not speak of pardon and peace? Shall it not lift up the curse of sin forever from our souls? Shall it not restore to us the lost image of God? Now, from time to time, we come before the Lord with the blood of bullocks and of goats, to testify the desert of our guilt, and He hath graciously promised to accept our offerings, and thereby to forgive our iniquities; and, though in this thing we walk as Abraham, not knowing whither he went, yet our path openeth the

way by which all flesh shall see the salvation of God. Only believe, and it shall be accounted to thee for righteousness; believe, and thy heart shall be full of forgiveness and great peace, yea, it shall be lifted up with exceeding joy and praise."

It was eventide of the third day. Adah revived as the evening's coolness succeeded to the heat of the noontide, and after caressing her babe with a mother's tenderness, she said: "I will that thou take me without the tent, my husband; I would fain see once more the going down of the sun." It was done as she desired. The rich purple of the west shed a softened glow upon the landscape, soft breezes came from off the isles of the sea, laden with the fragrance of orange and citron groves, and strange bright birds winged their aerial path to the spicy shores of Araby. Adah looked long in silence on the scene, nor spoke till the evening star trembled in the west. "It may be, my husband," she said musingly, "that the God of our fathers may permit my soul to visit thine, even before thou dost join me in the spirit land. Perchance I may come to thee in a dream of the night, or thou shalt hear my voice, as that of angels, in the still starlight. But if it be not so, grieve not for me, for I go the way in which the well-beloved of the Lord have gone before me. Our fathers and our mothers, do they not now walk with God? And with the blessed Sarah, and the faithful Rebecca, and the meek-hearted Leah, and the beloved Rachel, may not I too dwell with the Angel of the covenant? Even now cometh unto me a voice which thou canst not hear, and I see strange visions of an exceeding brightness. Once more doth my soul bless thee, my beloved; may the living God take home the spirit he hath given."

The air became damp with the dews of evening, and

the stricken Jubal took his dying wife in his arms, and carrying her within the tent, laid her with gentlest tenderness upon her bed. One hand she placed in that of her mother, the other was pressed closely to the lips of her husband. More and more softly came her flickering breath through the long night watches; and when the sun, whose going down she had watched, returned in light and glory, Adah's pilgrimage had ended, and she had entered into rest.

The seven days of mourning were accomplished. In a luxuriant dell at the foot of Mount Shaphar, they prepared Adah's grave. Bright with the glow of sunny skies, and sweet with the perfume of spicy gales, was the last resting-place of the beautiful Israelite. But to the solitary mourner, who day by day wept over that grave in bitterness of spirit, a cloud of heaviest gloom overshadowed the thousand forms of beauty that sprang up around him, and the full harmonies of Nature's glad anthem sounded upon his ear as the wailing notes of a burial dirge.

The tender-hearted Sarah sought, by every endearment and delicate attention, to win her first-born son, that he might return to the cares of life with a resigned and chastened spirit; and the high-souled Zilpah would fain have inspired him with the exalting hopes of her own devoted faith; nevertheless, they of Israel said concerning Jubal, "He goeth down in sorrow to his grave."

Within a twelvemonth from the death of Adah, Jubal fell a victim to a prevailing sickness, whose first attack he welcomed as the summons of the angel of death, and died as the words lingered on his lips: "My soul longeth for a grave beneath Mount Shaphar."

Deep was the grief of Zilpah when her only daughter was taken forever from her sight, and again was her soul

smitten in the death of Jubal. Yet, in the midst of these afflictions, Zilpah was the same in word and look and action. With her sorrow had done its utmost. Again and again had it seized upon her spirit, with the might of a strong man, till, as it were, her soul had tested the extent of its power. Years of bitterest agony had imparted to her the element of heroic endurance, and nursed within her spirit a faith in the God of the universe, as simple in its unwavering trust as it was sublime in its lofty devotion. Amid the judgments of the Lord, she still spake of his mercies, and remembered the faithfulness of his covenant with his chosen people. She rejoiced that, while her daughter had been taken, it was not till a son had been given her, who might become the representative of her family in the land of promise. Her whole care was now bestowed upon the little Asriel. As his infancy ripened into childhood, her hopes and her love for him became stronger and stronger, till her very life seemed bound up in the child. When his busy limbs became wearied in the heat of the noontide, she soothed him to soft slumbers. When in sportive glee he rambled from the tent, she also remained without, lest evil should befall him; and, during the night-watches, she slept with her treasure closely pressed to her bosom. Year after year but strengthened the rare promise of the child, and ripened his exceeding beauty. In the contour of his figure, his elastic step, and freedom of bearing, might be traced his resemblance to Jubal. His smile of winning sweetness, richly-tinted cheek, and hair of shining black, had once been Adah's; while the lofty brow, formed for the habitation of high thought, and the depths of his large beaming eyes, revealed that the spirit of Zilpah had been reproduced in the boy—

that he was, as she proudly called him, the son of her own soul.

Early did Zilpah instruct the young Asriel in the history of his people. She told him, with all the minute details that tradition offered, of the call and unparalleled faith of Abraham, the founder of their race; of the marriage of Israel and Rebecca; of the rival brothers, Jacob and Esau; and of the twelve patriarchs. Then upon his raptured ear she poured the thrilling romance of the tale of Joseph, and repeated, with awe-inspiring veneration, the paternal blessing of the dying Jacob. With words of bitter indignation, she related to him the various events of the long and cruel bondage of the Hebrews; and, with the graphic vividness of an eye-witness, portrayed before him the fearfully sublime judgments by which God had effected their deliverance. In tones of lofty enthusiasm she pictured before his astonished mental vision the triumphant passage of the Red Sea, till, in the fervor of his sympathy, the boy shouted in gladness, and clapped his hands for joy. With reverence and godly fear, she repeated to him the words of the law, and told him of the burning, quaking mount, whence they had issued; of the blackness, and darkness, and tempest, till the trembling child instinctively hid his face upon her bosom. With kindling words, she spake of the future eminence of the race, already so favored of God, and of the glorious excellency it should attain in the promised land, till he gloried in the loftiness of his birthright, and felt himself devoted to the high purpose of exalting the name of his fathers in Israel. Then, as if treading upon holy ground, she repeated unto him, with the living faith of one who gazed on things to come, the promises concerning the future hope of the world, the seed of the woman, the sceptre of Judah, the Shiloh of

prophecy, in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed, till his spirit mounted upward in adoring awe and loving gratitude unto God, and the simple trusting faith of the child's heart rested in the promises as an everlasting inheritance. Thus, from his earliest years, the foundations of Asriel's character were laid in adoring reverence for the Supreme Being, with an unquestioning belief in his word, patriotism, and a certain sort of self-consecration, into all of which the spirit of poetry had infused itself by its most sublime and touching manifestations, imparting to him the generous glow of deep feeling, the pervading enthusiasm of lofty sentiment, and the firm devotion of religious faith.

The Hebrews encamped once more at Kadesh. Long had they been wandering in the wilderness, receiving the punishment of their sins, by filling up the measure of the time which God had ordained, a year for every day which was spent in searching the promised land. And now they pitched their tents in the very place whence the spies had been sent forth. Since that time, nearly thirty-eight years had passed away. Their rolling suns had shone on eighteen successive encampments of the Hebrews, and witnessed among their tribes many a scene of sorrow and joy. The hoary head had been lain upon its last pillow beneath the sands of the desert; and infants, clothed with the ever-recurring beauty of a new creation, had, in their bright innocence, gladdened the hearts of that pilgrim band, as sweet flowers shedding their fragrance on the wilderness, or as ministering angels to the spirits of the earth-worn and weary. The voices of bridegroom and bride had mingled in the song of rejoicing, and the wail of lamentation had been echoed by the rocks of the desert, as when now, at Kadesh, the dust of the renowned Hebrew prophetess was

consigned to its last home. It was she who had guarded the cradle of the Jewish lawgiver on the banks of the Nile; whose song of triumph, the swelling floods of the Red Sea had answered in responsive joy, and whose prophetic wisdom had guided the counsels of sages, even Miriam, the sister of Moses and Aaron.

At Kadesh there was no water, and the people chode with Moses by their oft-repeated complaint: "Wherefore have ye made us to come up out of Egypt, to bring us into this evil place? It is no place of seed, or of figs, or of vines, or of pomegranates; neither is there any water to drink. In obedience to the Divine command, Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, which the Lord had promised should give forth water for themselves and their cattle. But while Moses stood with his rod in his uplifted hand, anger burned in his heart, and pride kindled upon his lips. For once, unclothed with the meekness which had evermore surrounded him as a garment, he said: "Hear now, ye rebels, must we bring you water out of this rock?" "And he smote the rock twice, and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also."

The miracle was accomplished, the vast multitude were satisfied, but the serene majesty of meekness, in which the prophet had walked on high among the people, was smitten by the withering touch of anger. The character, which, in its single-hearted humility, had ever been as a bright mirror to reflect the glory of the Lord, was suddenly marred, and gave back but a distorted image. The face, which had once shone with the insufferable glory, caught from the presence of God upon Sinai, had lost its brightness beneath the dimming clouds of human pride. Who shall measure the goings forth of sin? For thus arrogating

to themselves the honor which should have been given to God only, both prophet and priest received the immediate warning of their punishment. "And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, 'Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.'"

The way now before the people in their passage to Canaan, lay directly through the land of Edom. Moses therefore sent unto the king of the country, with a message unsurpassed in its spirit of kindness and courtesy. "Thus saith thy brother Israel: 'Thou knowest all the travail that hath befallen us. And behold we are in Kadesh, a city in the uttermost of thy border. Let us pass, I pray thee, through thy country; we will not pass through the fields, or through the vineyards, neither will we drink of the water of the wells; we will go by the king's highway; we will not turn to the right hand nor to the left, until we have passed thy borders.'"

But Edom, fearlessly secure in his impregnable mountain fastnesses, and proudly seated on his throne of immovable strength, the wonderful Petra, the city hiding itself in the rocky clefts of the everlasting mountains, whence it looked down on the inaccessible amphitheatre they girded round about, made answer in scornful pride unto the request of his wandering brother Israel.

"And Edom said unto him, 'Thou shalt not pass by me, lest I come out against thee with the sword.'"

"And Edom came out against him with much people, and with a strong hand. Thus Edom refused to give Israel passage through his border, wherefore Israel turned away from him."

Unto Moses and Aaron, how full of sad memories was

Kadesh, as, with the bitter refusal of the king of Edom scathing their hearts, they saw the whole congregation preparing for the journey to Mount Hor. How full of living, agonizing sorrow, came back to their minds the remembrances of long years before, when the "evil report" of the goodly land echoed among the rocks of Kadesh, like a dread messenger of darkness, holding in one hand the fast raining terrors of rebellion, pestilence, and death, and in the other the slowly unwinding coil of the long years, of which each one in its seed-time and harvest, and summer and winter, and day and night, should become a distinct chronicler of the rejection of the land of promise. Amid the sepulchres of old, how did their hearts linger with gushing tenderness over the freshly-made grave, wherein they had just buried their dead — over Miriam their sister, who had come up with them, hand in hand, from out of the land of Egypt. How they missed the long accustomed atmosphere of her presence; how they longed for the inspiriting power of her sublime words; how they yearned for the soothing rest of her womanly sympathies; how they mourned for her who had watched them from infancy upward, even as with a mother's love — who had garnered up in them all the affections of her large and lofty heart, and who had identified herself with them in the great work to which they had been called of God, with a life-long devotion. How full of desolation was Kadesh, which claimed Miriam also among its congregated dead, that they should see her face no more. And yet again, as turning from the last resting-place of the beloved one, they gazed upon the smitten rock, how did their souls swell with bitter repentance and sorrow, as they remembered the waters of Meribah.

The way to Mount Hor lay through a wild and rugged

country, opening on every hand long vistas of bald, stony mountains, whose towering heads stretched onward in far extending lines of desolate grandeur, and whose barrenness was occasionally relieved by gushing streams, leaping down the cliffs with dance and song, and giving birth to smiling spots of greenness in the valleys below. In these magnificent halls of nature silence reigned supreme, save when its almost fearful intensity was broken by the music of the water-springs, the piercing cry of the great owl or the bittern, echoing among the mountains, or the scream of the eagle, as from her nest on high she called unto her distant mate.

Mournfully the great congregation pressed on their toilsome and still ascending path, till they stood on the borders of Edom, before the base of Mount Hor, which looked down in kingly sovereignty over the endless wastes of bleak and arid mountains; and here they made their encampment, amid scenes whose wild and awful sublimity was second only to that of the region of Mount Sinai.

At Mount Hor came the word of the Lord, "Aaron shall be gathered unto his fathers." It was another death knell, which struck long and heavily upon the heart of the children of Israel. Though Aaron had not possessed the strength and independence of the character of Moses, upon whose great soul and strong arm the nation had leaned through a whole generation, as upon an unshaken rock, yet he had been a friend of the people, a lover of peace and indulgence, and the subject of warm and universal affection. The tones of his pleasant speech were linked with all their souls' memories, since the days when they came up out of the house of bondage. They had looked up to him in his sacred office of High Priest, with heartfelt veneration. With submissive reverence they had listened

to his words as Divine oracles. With profound awe they had watched his steps, as, clad in the vestments "bright for glory and beauty," he had, year by year, lifted the veil of the Holy of Holies, and entered for them into the symbolic presence of God. They now traced his departing footsteps for the last time, as with melancholy grandeur he passed the outmost tents of Israel, and ascended the steep and barren sides of Mount Hor, accompanied by Moses and Eleazer. Slowly and sadly the three went up. What emotions swelled the almost bursting heart of the first high priest of Israel, as thus he climbed the rugged cliffs of Mount Hor, and at length stood upon its sublime height, to bid a farewell to the earth which spread out so broad an immensity of magnificence at his feet. To the north stretched the dreary valley of El Ghor, terminated in the far distance with a view of the sheeted waters of the Salt Sea, and the borders of the land of promise, whereon his feet might never tread. To the right he looked afar over the "folded hills of Idumea," robed in the hazy mists of the rich sunlight, and sighed heavily as he traced the future long windings of the pilgrimage, because Israel was forbidden to pass through the beautiful heritage of Esau. To the left he gazed upon the encampment of his people, with its white tents contrasting in glistening brightness with the deep shadows of the mountains, and appearing in the measureless vastness of their surroundings, as if gathered in the clefts of the rocks, as an eagle maketh her nest on high. What unutterable thoughts filled the soul of Aaron, as he looked down for the last time upon the tribes whose names he had borne for long years engraven on his heart, for whose sins he had entered again and again with sprinkled blood before the Holy Symbol of the presence of the Lord, and among whom, in fearful

judgments, he had stood with the smoke of ascending incense, as a daysman betwixt heaven and earth—as a beacon between the living and the dead. And yet again, as his eye wandered afar to the south, tracing the “great and terrible wilderness of Kadesh Barnea,” and yet onward in imagination even to the awful peak of Sinai, how profound were his remembrances of that long and wondrous pilgrimage, how overwhelming his sense of the marvellous works which the Lord had done in the way, how unfathomable his wonderings concerning the mystery of his own priestly ministry therein.

But from the marvellous remembrances of the past, and the unanswerable questionings of the future, the high priest recalled himself to the present, and gave all the thrilling intensity of feeling that yet remained for earth, unto his brother and his son. Unto whom, in the long ages, hath Mount Hor revealed the lofty grandeur, the profound grief, the agonizing sorrow of that last interview of Aaron with Moses and Eleazer. Every one of the three had come up to the mountain top, with his own heavy burden of soul. Moses, as the civil ruler of the nation, to part with his great coadjutor in its ecclesiastical head, and to breathe a last farewell over an only brother; Eleazer, to be clothed with the official garments of his father, and to be invested with the holy duties and dignities of his birthright; and Aaron, to gaze once more on the wide spreading tents of Israel, to look once more upon sun, and sky, and mountain, and plain, to speak words of hope and comfort to a bereaved brother, to pour a father's dying blessing upon a beloved son, and to gird up his soul to walk through the valley of the shadow of death, and enter the sanctuary of Heaven above, into the presence of the living God. “And Aaron died there, in the top of the

mount;” and, when the brother and son returned to the waiting people, Eleazer was the high priest of Israel; and Moses, with his kindred, smitten down upon the right hand and the left, stood alone of the children of Amram.

The thirty days mourning for Aaron were hardly expired, when the people encountered a new enemy. King Arad, who dwelt in the southern border of the land of Canaan, had heard of their approach by the way of the spies, and now came out unto them to battle. At this crisis, Israel vowed a vow unto the Lord, that if the Canaanites should be delivered into their hand, they would utterly destroy their cities, a judgment divinely purposed against them for their exceeding wickedness. The subsequent events brought forth both the granting of the condition, and the fulfilment of the vow. And, in commemoration of this conquest over the Canaanites, the name of the place was called Hormah.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BRAZEN SERPENT.

ON journeying from Mount Hor, Moses could not take a direct northward course, because he had been forbidden by the king of Edom to pass through his territories. He therefore turned southward toward the eastern tongue of the Red Sea, or sea of Elath, in order to compass the land of Edom. But the backward journey was long and tedious, and because the faces of the people were not set towards Canaan, their soul was much discouraged because of the way. Again they murmured because of their light bread; and, as they passed the mountainous region surrounding the encampment of Zalmonah, the Lord sent fiery serpents among them, from whose poisonous burning bite many of the people died. Their path from Zalmonah was marked by an unbroken line of graves, and still a ceaseless wail of lamentation arose over the dead and the dying. At Punon they came to Moses with words of repentance and contrition, praying his intercession for the removal of the terrible judgment.

"We have sinned," was their heartfelt confession, "for we have spoken against the Lord, and against thee; pray unto the Lord that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people.

"And the Lord said unto Moses, 'Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole, and it shall come to pass

(106)

that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live.'"

On the floor of his tent lay Asriel, the son of Jubal, writhing in anguish beneath the consuming sting of the burning serpent. The cushion, which, with ministering tenderness, the aged Zilpah had placed beneath his head, was crushed and wrung within his agonized hands; the cup of healing by his side was dashed in pieces, and, with quick despairing cries, he besought Zilpah to hasten, hasten with cooling waters.

"O, my son, deliverance is at hand," exclaimed Zilpah, as with her pitcher of fresh water she rushed to the side of Asriel. "Praise the Lord, thou shalt yet be saved."

"Nay, nay, mock me not, my mother. Pour on water quick, quickly, I beseech thee, that it may quench this terrible burning."

"Moses hath made a serpent of brass," said Zilpah, "and lifted it up on high by the word of the Lord."

"Mock me not, my mother. Speak not of Moses; I hear not thy words. Who shall deliver me from this consuming fire?"

"The Lord shall deliver thee, my son," answered Zilpah, taking the hands of Asriel in her own, with the calm firmness of one accustomed to command, "hear, and understand. The Lord hath commanded Moses to set up on high a brazen serpent, and he hath promised that whosoever is bitten when he shall look upon it shall live."

"Thou knowest not, my mother," answered Asriel. "Thou canst not know. Can the sight of my eyes restore my bones which are devoured as stubble; or cause the blood to flow, which is drunk up as an ox licketh up grass? Water, my mother, more water, or I die."

"The Lord hath spoken it," answered Zilpah, "Thou shalt look upon the brazen serpent and live."

"A brazen serpent lifted up on high," replied Asriel. "What cooling hath it, what healing, what power? alas! alas! my mother, thy words are but vanity."

"Wilt thou question the decrees of the Lord?" asked Zilpah. "Wilt thou mark out a path for the Almighty? When he bids thee look and live, shalt thou say, 'Why hast thou done this?'"

"Let them look and live who yet have hope," said Asriel, "but for me, it is nought. Seest thou not that I am already within the power of the grave? Shall death give back its prey? Nay, nay, for me it is nought."

"O, my son, my son, my only one in Israel, how shall I give thee up, how could I see thee die?" cried Zilpah, in an agony of tears. "The Lord will not cut off my last refuge, he will not put out my last hope. Only look according to the word of the Lord, and it shall be accounted unto thee for healing and salvation. O, my son, turn not away from the life the Lord holdeth out to thee."

"I will look, yea, I will lift up mine eyes with my whole heart for thy sake, my mother, and may the Lord fulfil unto me his word," answered Asriel fervently, "but how shall I go forth?"

"How shall I praise thy name, O Lord?" exclaimed Zilpah, lifting her eyes heavenward. Then turning to Asriel she said, "If I could but give unto thee of my faith, my son, it should raise thee up upon thy feet, and thou shouldst walk forth in strength. But I will quickly bring them who shall carry thee out, that thou mayest lift up thine eyes unto thy salvation."

In a moment Zilpah returned to the tent with Joseph and Japheth, the brothers of Jubal. And the strong men

lifted the only son of their brother gently and tenderly, as a mother her weaned child, and carried him forth with the thoughtful cautious steps of love, from the tents of Dan to the encampment of Moses, on the east side of the tabernacle. From the whole camp the stricken ones were approaching in every direction towards the standard of healing, while about its foot circled old men and maidens, young men and children, wives with their smitten husbands, and mothers with their smitten sons, all gathered in obedience to the word of the Lord, unto the type of life and blessing. Joseph and Japheth drew near, and, sinking upon their knees, supported Asriel in their encircling arms, and raised his head upon the pillowing hands of Zilpah, that he might look upward upon the brazen serpent. There it hung between earth and heaven, throwing back the bright sunbeams from its surface of burnished brass, and winding its dread coiling length about the pole that sustained it, with suggestions of chilling horror. Asriel gazed long and earnestly; and, while his eyes were fastened upon the heaven-ordained way of deliverance, the image of that which had brought him to the gates of death became unto him as a well-spring of renewed life. Pain and terror fled away before the sight. Strength came back to his frame, and light to his eye, and hope to his heart. "Sing ye unto the Lord for me," said he to his kindred, "for he hath brought me up out of the land of darkness, he hath delivered my soul from going down into the grave. O, sing unto the Lord a new song. Let all the people praise him."

"My heart maketh melody unto the Lord," answered Zilpah, with fast flowing tears of joy, "though my voice is that of the aged, as the strings of a broken lyre that knoweth music no more."

"How blessed is this new life," said Asriel, as he stood once more in the strength of his manhood. "It hath shed itself abroad through my being as soft as the dew of evening; it hath quickened me like the breath of morning. Truly the Lord hath redeemed me from the power of all evil, and my soul shall glory in Him above while I have my being."

"Lift up your hearts," said Zilpah to the friends who had gathered about her, "even your hearts with your voices in a psalm of thanksgiving unto the Most High, who doeth wonders past finding out; who plucketh the prey from the jaws of destruction, and giveth it back unto the heart of the desolate; who keepeth covenant with the aged and the widow, even with me his handmaid, forever and ever."

But the lips of the rebellious, backsliding children of Israel were not used to songs of rejoicing. These were not the gushings forth of those whose feet were familiar with falling, and their eyes with tears, and their souls with death. So in response to the fervent request of Zilpah, they sang the psalm of Moses, whose lofty grandeur towered up in their souls like the mountain-top of Sinai, sublime and alone.

"Lord thou hast been our dwelling place

In all generations.

Before the mountains were brought forth,

Or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world,

Even from everlasting to everlasting,

Thou art God.

For a thousand years in thy sight

Are but as yesterday when it is past,

And as a watch in the night.

O satisfy us early with thy mercy;

That we may rejoice and be glad all our days.

Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us,

And the years wherein we have seen evil."

"Truly, the Lord hath satisfied me with his mercy," responded Zilpah, "and I will rejoice and be glad all my days. But my days shall soon be cut off, and I shall flee away, and my years shall be as a tale that is told, yet will I still praise thee, O thou Holy One of Israel. Even from everlasting to everlasting thou art God."

What should have been the rejoicings of the aged saint of the pilgrimage, could she have seen in the lifting up of the brazen serpent, the foreshadowing of that great deliverance, after which her faith went out with sleepless vigilance, as they that watch for the morning. How profound would have been her astonished awe, could she have beheld therein the emblem of that wondrous cross, unto whose sublime height all the rays of Divine revelation culminated, through the long generations that prepared for its manifestation, and there, concentrating with the brightness of the sun, have thence poured forth their warm and life-giving beams upon the nations as the light of the world. How fervent would have been her adoring love, could she have heard the faint echo of the blessed words that were to be spoken in the coming ages by Him, who, manifest in the flesh, walked upon the earth he had created. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

From Punon the children of Israel set forward, and pitched in Oboth. And they journeyed from Oboth, and pitched in Ije-abarim, in the wilderness, which is before Moab toward the sun rising. From thence they removed and pitched in the valley of Zared. Each of these

encampments marked a decided and encouraging advance toward the end of their pilgrimage. They were now to pass by the way of the wilderness, over against the coast of the land of Moab, which is upon the southern portion of the eastern coast of the Salt Sea. Notwithstanding the inhumanity of the Moabites in refusing water to the Israelites upon this passage, Moses, by the command of God, contended not with them, nor distressed them, neither did he make any attempt to subdue the land, because it had been divinely given to the children of Lot for a possession. Having passed through the borders of Moab, the Hebrews arrived at the river Arnon, which formed the boundary line between Moab and the land of the Amorites. At this place the people received the Divine direction, "Rise up, take your journey and pass over the river Arnon. Behold, I have given into thine hand Sihon, the Amorite king of Heshbon; begin to possess it, and contend with him in battle. This day will I begin to put the dread of thee and the fear of thee upon the nations that are under the whole heaven, who shall hear report of thee, and shall tremble and be in anguish because of thee."

Having crossed the Arnon, the Israelites encamped upon its northern side; and from the wilderness of Kedemoth Moses sent messengers unto King Sihon, who dwelt in the city of Heshbon, with words of peace, saying: "Let me pass through thy land. I will go along by the highway; I will neither turn unto the right hand nor to the left. Thou shalt sell me meat for money, that I may eat, and give me water for money, that I may drink. Only I will pass through on my feet."

But Sihon utterly refused the peaceful request; and, when the Israelites had proceeded as far as Jahaz, he came

out against them with a powerful army to battle. The contest was sharp and terrible, resulting in a complete victory to Israel. The cities of the Amorites were overthrown, their riches taken for spoil, and their men, women, and children, who dwelt on the coast of Jordan, utterly destroyed. This contest was but the partial fulfilment of the fate of a doomed nation, whom the Lord, in judgment for their wickedness, had given into the hand of his people, his own appointed instrumentality for their overthrow; and but the prestige and the earnest of the destruction of the seven nations that inhabited the land of Canaan, who had long dwelt beneath the heavy clouds of their overhanging doom, gathered by the same cause, and about to break over their devoted heads by the same agency.

Having thus possessed themselves of the land of the Amorites, the children of Israel dwelt temporarily in its cities and villages, and thence pursued their way through Gilead unto the country of Bashan, which lay along the eastern bank of the Jordan, and extended northward as far as the mountains of Hermon. Og, the king of the land, a renowned giant of formidable name, led forth his armies, and fought with the Hebrews at Edrei. But notwithstanding his might and power, he was brought low by the conquering hand of Israel. Three score cities, fenced with high walls, and gates, and bars, were taken by the victors, besides unwalled towns, a great many. The people were slain, and the cattle and the spoil reserved for a prey. Thus this beautiful land, with its magnificent outline of the mountains of Gilead, and the more softened shades of its forest-clad hills, with its fertile plains, and gentle slopes proudly waving with the lordly oaks of Bashan; with its deep valleys of rich meadows and

singing streams; and scattered everywhere over wooded slope, and plain, and hill-side, and brook-side, its rejoicing flocks and herds, luxuriating in their green pastures; all became the possession of the wandering tribes who had come up out of the land of Egypt.

These two conquests, over Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan, were events of great national importance to the children of Israel, inasmuch as they thereby established themselves in all the country on the east of the Jordan. Moreover, so prosperous a commencement of their great enterprise before the death of Moses, their leader, was a powerful stimulus, which would impel them to the complete and final subjugation of Canaan.

The tribes of Reuben and of Gad, charmed with the exceeding richness and beauty of Gilead and Bashan, formed the immediate plan of entreating their inheritance therein, instead of going over Jordan. They came therefore unto Moses, and Eleazer the priest, and representing the great advantages of the country for cattle, in which their wealth exceeded those of their brethren, they said: "Wherefore, if we have found grace in thy sight, let this land be given to thy servants for a possession, and bring us not over Jordan."

"And Moses said unto the children of Reuben and of Gad: 'Shall your brethren go to war, and shall ye sit here?'

"And they came near unto him, and said: 'We will build sheepfolds here for our cattle, and cities for our little ones. But we ourselves will go ready armed before the children of Israel, until we have brought them unto their place. We will not return to our houses until the children of Israel have inherited every man his inheritance.'

"And Moses said unto them: 'If ye will do this thing,

and will go all of you armed over Jordan before the Lord, until he hath driven out his enemies from before him, and the land be subdued before the Lord, then afterward ye shall return and be guiltless before the Lord, and before Israel, and this land shall be your possession before the Lord. Build you cities for your little ones, and folds for your sheep, and do that which proceedeth out of your mouth.'

"And they answered: 'Thy servants will do as my lord commandeth.'

"And Moses gave unto them, even to the children of Gad, and to the children of Reuben, and unto half the tribe of Manasseh, the son of Joseph, the kingdom of Sihon, king of the Amorites, and the kingdom of Og, king of Bashan, the land with the cities thereof in the coasts, even the cities of the country round about."

After the victorious termination of these contests of war, the Israelites retraced their steps, and made the forty-ninth and last encampment of their pilgrimage at Shittim, in the plains of Moab, on the east side of Jordan, opposite Jericho.

Although the Moabites had not been invaded by the Hebrews, yet from their hill-tops and mountain-sides they had watched with paleness and quaking, when the mighty hosts swept by, as an army of locusts for multitude. Their ears had tingled with the tales of Bashan and the Amorites. They had seen the greatness of Sihon and of Og put out suddenly, as the light of a candle, and now with fear and dread they saw this people settling themselves upon their very borders, and as a cloud, black and heavy with rain of terror, casting its desolating shadow far and wide over the plains of their own land. "And Moab was sore afraid and distressed because of the children of

Israel. And Moab said: 'Now shall this company lick up all that are round about us, as an ox licketh up the grass of the field.'

Balak, the king of Moab, fearing open conflict with so formidable a host, devised the plan of silently withering them beneath the blasting curses of sorcery. He, therefore, sent beyond the Euphrates unto Balaam, the son of Peor, who had gained a famous name as a diviner, with the message: "Behold, there is a people come out from Egypt; behold, they cover the face of the earth, and they abide over against me. Come now, therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people, for they are too mighty for me; peradventure, I shall prevail, that we may smite them, and that I may drive them out of the land, for I wot that he whom thou blessest is blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed."

The elders of Moab and of Midian stood before the idol priest, with the words of their king upon their lips, and the rewards of divination in their hands. How flattering unto Balaam was this royal testimony of the power of his enchantments; how full of shining promise the kingly gifts before his eyes; yet, by a strange restraining influence, he could not yield to the imperative mandate. His heart was in the hand of Him who had created it, and without His will he could do neither less nor more. Deeply conscious of the inner presence of an undefined guidance, a resistless power, he refused to go unto Balak. But the king was not to be thus silenced. A second time came his messengers unto the diviner; princes more, and more honorable than the first, with multiplied gifts, and high places of great honor, and visions of unlimited promise. Although earnestly coveting the riches, and honor, and station which lay spread with kingly munificence at his

feet, yet the consciousness of the strong hand which held every energy of his soul forced from Balaam the assertion: "If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God to do less or more."

The journey was at length undertaken by Divine permission, yet the conduct and spirit of Balaam moved the displeasure of the Lord, and he was rebuked on the way by a strange and significant miracle, showing that his course was wicked and perverse, and that he would be effectually prevented from doing that which the king of Moab desired.

When Balak heard of the approach of Balaam, he went out to meet him, even to his utmost coast. By the extreme boundary of his dominions, — the bright flowing Arnon, — the king welcomed the diviner, within the power of whose sorceries he placed the welfare of his kingdom: "Did I not earnestly send unto thee, to call thee," was his impatient and deeply-interested salutation: "Wherefore camest thou not unto me? Am I not able indeed to promote thee unto honor?"

"Lo, I am come to thee," answered Balaam, not in his own character of one who loved the wages of unrighteousness, and would fain have become the flattering courtier, doing the bidding of power and of gold, but as one who felt himself led by a mighty hand, and compassed about by an irresistible agency, "Lo, I am come to thee; have I now any power at all to say anything; the word that God putteth in my mouth, that shall I speak."

On the morrow the king led his guest up a lofty hill of Moab, which was consecrated to the worship of Baal, whence he might have a complete view of the far-spreading tents of Israel. On the one hand, lay the hill country

of Moab, begirt by lofty mountains, fortified by proud cities, pouring plenty from her fields of waving grain, and rejoicing in her adornment of olive yards and vineyards. On the other hand, her fertile plains stretched onward, broad and fair, till their green borders fringed the shores of the Jordan. In the centre of these beautiful plains rose the tabernacle of the Lord, guarded by the surrounding enclosure of its court, sacred and alone. A broad space of living green intervened, and then came the wide belt of the tents of the Levites, remotely girding the resting-place of the tabernacle. And yet, afar upon the east, and west, and north, and south, the camp of the Hebrews lay stretched in vast extent and symmetry, with its white tents reflecting the brilliancy of the sunlight from above, and contrasting with the rich green of the plains beneath, and its royal standard waving proudly on the breeze above the vanguard of the host, even the armies of Judah.

The king of Moab looked down from his high standpoint upon his own fair land, and upon the enemy who seemed ready to submerge it as an overflowing flood. He looked upon his princes, and read in their countenances but the confirmation of his own fears. He turned to Balaam, impatiently waiting for the withering curses that should fall from his lips; but his eagerness was checked by sudden surprise, as he beheld the change that had passed over the face of the diviner. A lofty inspiration lighted his eye and kindled upon his cheek, and encircled him with a majesty above that of a royal diadem. In tones of command he gave his directions to the king: "Build me here seven altars, and prepare me here seven oxen and seven rams."

The smoke of the burning sacrifices curled on high from the seven altars, while Balak and all the princes of Moab

awaited the coming of Balaam who had retired from their midst.

And Balaam returned and took up his parable, and said:

"Balak, the king of Moab, hath brought me from Aram,
Out of the mountains of the east, saying:
'Come curse me, Jacob, and come defy Israel.'"

"How shall I curse whom God hath not cursed?
Or, how shall I defy whom the Lord hath not defied?"

"For from the top of the rocks I see him,
And from the hills I behold him;
Lo, the people shall dwell alone,
And shall not be reckoned among the nations."

"Who can count the dust of Jacob,
Or number the fourth part of Israel?
Let me die the death of the righteous,
And let my last end be like his."

The disappointed king, deeply moved by the stirring and prophetic power of Balaam's words, and grievously displeased that the curses he would fain have rained upon the head of Israel had turned into blessings, immediately renewed his attempts to secure his purpose. He led Balaam to the top of Pisgah, whence he might behold another view of Israel; and, having there lighted the flames of sacrifice upon seven altars, he listened in all the intensity of suspense, and fear, and terror, for words which should fall as mildew on his enemies, and light up hope within his own heart. And on the bleak mountain top, still and sublime, broke forth the words of Balaam, slow and solemn as the voice of thunder, rolling afar on the silence of night:

“Rise up, Balak, and hear ;
 Harken unto me, thou son of Zippor :
 God is not a man, that he should lie :
 Neither the son of man, that he should repent.
 Hath he said, and shall he not do it ?
 Or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good
 He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob,
 Neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel ;
 The Lord his God is with him,
 And the shout of a king is among them.”

Yet once more the trembling Balak, oppressed by a sense of the overshadowing power of Israel's God, and of his own utter helplessness to escape therefrom, desperately sought to take refuge in the enchantments of the sorcerer. With a heavy heart and faltering limbs, he led Balaam up the steep sides of Peor, that looketh toward Jeshimon. With hurried step and despairing countenance, with the conviction that the sorcerer's words were no more his own, than the eddying winds of the mountain top that played about his head, he moved mechanically to and fro, glancing ever and anon at the building of the seven altars, and the slaying of the seven oxen and seven rams. With aspect of cautious humility, in low and doubtful tones, all unlike the accents of his former kingly pride, he said unto Balaam, as he waved his hand toward the third high place consecrated by blood and fire, “Peradventure it will please God that thou mayest curse me them from thence.”

But Balaam, with his whole soul absorbed in the greatness and glory of Israel, which now filled his enraptured view, no longer went to seek for divinations and enchantments in the vain hope of doing the bidding of Balak. With entire unconsciousness of everything but the grand visions that thronged his soul, he yielded himself in utter abandonment to the might that swept over him from on

high, “and the spirit of God came upon him.” The past, present, and future of Israel, glided before his astonished eyes, swift as the rushings of Jordan, beautiful as Sharon, sublime as Lebanon ; and, as one gazing from a lofty watchtower, he uttered the glorious tidings of what he saw :

“How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob,
 And thy tabernacles, O Israel !
 As the valleys are they spread forth,
 As gardens by the river's side,
 As the trees of lign aloes which the Lord hath planted ;
 As cedar trees beside the waters.
 God brought him forth out of Egypt ;
 He hath, as it were, the strength of an unicorn :
 He shall eat up the nations his enemies,
 And shall break their bones,
 And pierce them through with his arrows.
 He couched, he lay down as a lion,
 And as a great lion : who shall stir him up ?
 Blessed is he that blesseth thee,
 And cursed is he that curseth thee.”

“I called thee to curse mine enemies,” exclaimed the enraged king, smiting his hands together in kindling anger, “and behold thou hast altogether blessed them these three times. Therefore, now flee thou to thy place. I thought to promote thee to great honor ; but lo ! the Lord hath kept thee back from honor.”

But the stern words of the king had no power to intimidate the strange prophet ; for lo ! before his rapt vision the mists of long ages rolled away, and he beheld the glorious dawning of the day of Israel's promise. It was all holy and mystical, wondrous and distant, yet in its firmament, clear and luminous, burned the “bright and morning star.” Again he uttered his voice, first slowly and softly, as feeling that he stood in the presence of the Eter-

nal; then again losing consciousness of all but the glory revealed to him, his spirit mounted upward on exultant wing, to catch the radiant beams of that heavenly day-spring.

“He hath said, which heard the words of God,
And knew the knowledge of the Most High,
Which saw the vision of the Almighty,
Falling *into a trance*, but having his eyes open.
I shall see him, but not now:
I shall behold him, but not nigh:
There shall come a star out of Jacob,
And a sceptre shall rise out of Israel.”

At length, upon the still mountain air was borne the last swelling peal of Israel's triumph, the prophetic doom of Moab and Edom, of Amalek and Seir, and the last dirge-like notes over the wasting, perishing nations. Peor had answered loud to Pisgah, and Pisgah to the high place of Baal; and now each mountain peak in that lofty range stood proud and silent, an everlasting chronicler of the blessings of Israel. The altars of Peor lay strewn with red and smouldering ashes, the brightness of sunset faded from the west, the new moon hung her bow of silver light just above the horizon, and smiled purest welcome upon the evening star as she came forth in serenest beauty, sole vestal of the antechamber of night. Beneath, Edom and Moab, the silvery belt of Jordan, and the encampment of Israel, all lay soft and pure and silent as an infant's sleep. The awe-stricken princes of Moab gathered their robes about them, and prepared to descend the mountain. “And Balaam rose up, and went, and returned to his place; and Balak also went his way.”

CHAPTER IX.

THE DEATH OF MOSES.

THE subjugation of Israel, which the king of Moab failed to secure by sorcery, was almost accomplished by another method. By the counsel of Balaam, who thus proved himself to be at heart utterly opposed to the will of the Lord, the chosen people were gradually allured to the worship of Baal, and thus became guilty of idolatry and grievous sin. This daring and high-handed iniquity was rapidly spreading itself through the whole camp, but was suddenly stayed in its course by the devastating judgments of an offended God. The plague which then glided over the people as a swift angel of death, laid its stilling hand upon the beating hearts of twenty-four thousand, — a larger number than had ever before fallen at one time in punishment for national sin. How humiliating to the people who had so recently shouted their victories over Sihon and Og, and measured their conquests from Moab unto the mountains of Hermon, to behold the hosts of their warriors smitten down in heaps before the relentless enemy of sin. How heart-breaking unto those that feared the Lord was the thought, that this grievous fall was witnessed by the mountain-tops of Canaan; that the echoes of the songs of profane revelry had blended with the warblings of Jordan; that the poisoned breath of pestilence had corrupted and darkened the pure breezes that

blew softly from the west, bidding them welcome to the land of their fathers.

After the ravages of the plague had been stayed, Moses and Eleazer were commanded to take the sum of the children of Israel, from twenty years old and upward, that were able to go forth to war. The result was six hundred and one thousand, seven hundred and thirty. At the former enrolment of the men of war, in the wilderness of Sinai, their numbers were six hundred and three thousand, five hundred and fifty, showing a diminution during the pilgrimage of one thousand, eight hundred and twenty.

A thousand men were then chosen from each tribe, and the army of twelve thousand thus formed was sent forth unto battle with the Midianites. In this contest Israel was victorious; and with the five fallen kings of Midian was reckoned also Balaam, the son of Peor, whom they slew with the sword.

But one great event of the pilgrimage remained to be accomplished, ere the Hebrews should pass over Jordan. How the strong heart of Moses sunk at the thought of that one event,—his own death. Day after day he stood before the door of the tabernacle, in the presence of the great congregation, and in his last addresses set before them the statutes and judgments which the Lord had commanded them to observe in the land whither they went, and to teach their sons, and their sons' sons, to the latest generation. As thus he spake, how did his aspect, so severely spiritual, so meek and commanding, veil a soul filled with unutterable sadness at the thought, that the people whom he had nourished and brought up, from their fair childhood to their strong manhood, should enter upon the bright realization of their long and ardent hopes, and he, their leader, who had borne them thither with every

heart-throb, and wafted them onward by the breath of every prayer, that he should be left behind to die. When alone with his God, how did his struggling emotions overleap all the barriers of his calm, stern majesty of character, as he besought the Lord, even as a son beseecheth a father?

“I pray thee let me go over and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon.”

But the prayers which again and again had warded off swift judgments from Israel, had turned the tide of their battles, and had descended in showers of blessing upon their heads, availed not to remove the penalty of the sin which the great lawgiver had committed at the waters of Meribah. “The Lord was wroth with me for your sakes, and would not hear me,” are his mournful words, as he recounts the effect of his prayer. And the Lord said unto me: “Let it suffice thee; speak no more unto me of this matter. Get thee up unto the top of Pisgah, and lift up thine eyes westward, and northward, and southward, and eastward, and behold it with thine eyes, for thou shalt not go over this Jordan.”

The farewell address of Moses, comprising the whole of the book of Deuteronomy, embraced a general review of the history of the pilgrimage; a repetition of the most important statutes of the law, with some additions and alterations in its code, made necessary by changing circumstances; strong enforcements of the divine sanctions upon which the law rested; earnest exhortations to obedience; a minute development of the conditions on which Jehovah would govern them as a people; and a prophetic unfolding of distant futurity, revealing their national destiny as growing out of their conduct in regard to the Divine law. Moses then delivered a copy of the whole book of the law

unto the priests, the sons of Levi, that they might place it in the sanctuary, in the side of the ark of the covenant. He also commanded that the whole should be read in the hearing of all the people: men, women, and children, in the solemnity of the seventh year, or year of release, at the Feast of Tabernacles.

The official duties of the lawgiver being now closed, Moses proceeded to commission Joshua as a military leader, divinely appointed to conduct the people into Canaan. Did neither glistening eye nor trembling lip betray the swellings of heart within the inner temple of that man of lonely majesty, as he said: "I am an hundred and twenty years old this day; also, the Lord hath said unto me, 'Thou shalt not go over this Jordan.'" And Moses called unto Joshua, and said unto him in the sight of all Israel: "Be strong and of a good courage, for thou must go with this people unto the land which the Lord hath sworn unto their fathers to give them. And the Lord, he it is, that doth go before thee; he will be with thee; he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee; fear not, neither be dismayed." This charge was soon after divinely ratified, when Moses and Joshua presented themselves before the tabernacle, and the Lord appeared in a pillar of cloud, and audibly confirmed the words of his servant.

After this, Moses again addressed the people, no longer in the grand simplicity of the historian, nor the noble diffuseness of the lawgiver; but in the moving power of the poet, as fast from his lips flowed the soul-stirring words of song—words which, in their life and luminousness, should glow in the hearts of the children of Israel, from age to age, and be unto them as a living witness of the loving kindness of God. In his enthusiasm he calls heaven and earth to attend to what might fitly compel the attention of

both, and gives the key-note of his coming song in strains unsurpassed for deep refreshing gladness, and soft mystic harmonies.

"Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak;
And hear, O earth, the words of my mouth.
My doctrine shall drop as the rain,
My speech shall distil as the dew,
As the small rain upon the tender herb,
And as the showers upon the grass."

And Moses spake in the ears of all the congregation of Israel, the words of this song until they were ended. And the Lord spake unto Moses, that self-same day, saying, "Get thee up into this mountain Abarim, unto Mount Nebo, and die in the mount whither thou goest up, and be gathered unto thy people."

Moses heard the summons, clear, distinct, unmistakable, and he knew that his time had come. On the one hand rose Mount Nebo, in full relief against the cloudless heavens; on the other lay scattered the tents over which he had watched as a mother over the cradle of her first-born; he must leave the one, he must ascend the other; yet, ere he went, the overflowings of that mighty heart gushed forth unto the people it had borne for forty years, and he poured upon them the rich fulness of his last inimitable blessing, noticing respectively the several tribes, and embracing all in one grand whole. "And this is the blessing wherewith Moses, the man of God, blessed the children of Israel before his death."

"There is none like the God of Jeshurun,
Who rideth upon the heaven in thy help,
And in his excellency on the sky.
The eternal God is thy refuge,

And underneath are the everlasting arms :
 And he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee ;
 And shall say, Destroy them.
 Israel shall then dwell in safety alone :
 The fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine ;
 Also his heavens shall drop down dew.
 Happy art thou, O Israel :
 Who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord,
 The shield of thy help, and the sword of thy excellency."

"And Moses went up from the plains of Moab unto the mountain of Nebo, to the top of Pisgah that is over against Jericho." What an unutterable interest encircled that lonely man, as he went up from the plains of Moab in the sight of the millions of Israel! Over the faces of the whole congregation tears fell fast as summer rain, and onward, after his departing footsteps, rolled wave after wave of farewells and blessings — the voice of a great multitude, as the rush of many waters. On he moved, slowly, steadfastly, alone. The royal obsequies of a Pharaoh, borne in long drawn grandeur to the stupendous pyramid of his tomb, never equalled the sublimity of the solitary path of Moses unto his own sepulchre.

The plains of Moab were passed, and he stood at the foot of Nebo. Was there a trembling of spirit, as he rested for a little season before its ascent? Did he long to throw himself again upon the sympathies of that warm, universal heart, whose crying and lamentation were still borne to his ear upon the soft spring breeze, mellowed by distance into breathings of an unspeakable sadness? Did he yearn for the companionship of Eleazer or Joshua, to be near him with words of hope and comfort, as he went down into the valley of the shadow of death? Did he shrink with an undefinable dread before the fearful agony of the last struggle? Did he not pray unto the Lord for

strength, as he girded up his loins to go up the mount alone?

The straining eyes of the whole people were still fastened upon that solitary figure, slowly ascending the crags of Pisgah. Perchance it excited not their wonder that no one should accompany him to his death and burial, for he had always moved above them, and not of them. He had been alone in his cradle-ark by the swelling Nile; alone in birth and character, when a child he strayed through the royal halls of Pharaoh's daughter; alone in youth, when he looked calmly down on sceptres and diadems, and chose to suffer affliction with the people of God; alone for forty years in the wilderness of Horeb, maturing a character, which, for strength and solidity, was like the everlasting hills amid which he dwelt; alone as in the grandeur of an enshrined oracle, when he moved in and out before the Egyptian monarch, and, by a wave of his terrific rod, called as subjects of his bidding, hail and blood and locusts and darkness and pestilence; alone climbing, amid thick darkness, up the steeps of Sinai, unto the devouring fire that burned upon the top of the mount; alone in kingly majesty, as he led Israel through the wilderness; alone in his approach to the grave; alone in his death; alone in his burial.

The toilsome ascent was at length accomplished, and Moses stood upon the summit of Pisgah. Where were now the loneliness, the dread, the instinctive recoil of the soul from death, which had weighed down his spirit? They had fled away as mists before the morning sun. They had vanished suddenly, as a dream of the night when one awaketh, before the glorious scene that stretched on and yet onward, in clear, majestic, living beauty before his enraptured vision. Canaan, clothed in robes of a

brighter, purer glory, than those in which the dreams of a life-time had invested her, was miraculously shown in all her length and breadth, from the unbroken expanse of the Salt Sea to the snowy heights of Lebanon, from the rolling Jordan to the blue immensity of the Mediterranean. Yet it was not alone her green pastures and still waters — not her valleys shouting for joy, and her little hills rejoicing on every side — not the excellency of Carmel and Sharon — not her sea-coast, laved by the Great sea which sang its unceasing anthem at her feet — nor Lebanon bearing on high the dazzling crown of glory for her head — not one, nor all of these, filled the soul of Moses with an unutterable blessedness. But even as he gazed, light from above came in upon his soul as a flood, and the earthly Canaan became but as the image of the heavenly; the faint reflection of its brightness, the far-off echo of its joy. He looked downward with no more eager longings to cross the swellings of Jordan. He looked upward, and spread his spirit-wings for a speedy flight unto the open gates of his eternal home.

And who shall say that the marvellous events of Canaan's future were not unveiled before the man of God, while yet he stood upon that glorious mount of vision? Did fifteen hundred years, with their vast unfoldings, become unto him but as yesterday when it is past, or as a watch in the night, as he looked upon the theatre of that one sublime and mysterious event in earth's history, for which Canaan was made holy ground, and Israel set apart from among the nations? Did he behold the white and glistening glory of the angel Gabriel, as he entered within the temple of the Lord's house, with his message unto Zacharias, or hear the rush of his mighty wings, as, bearing eternity's tidings, he flew swiftly unto the virgin of Nazareth? Did he see the star in the east gliding slowly

along in its wondrous brightness, till it came and stood over where the young child was? Did he listen to the angel song flowing forth from a multitude of the heavenly host, hovering in seraphic glory above the plains of Bethlehem? Did he gaze upon the way-sides and hill-sides, the sea-shores and mountain-tops, consecrated by the footsteps of Emanuel? Did he look steadfastly upon Tabor, seeing one standing thereon, whose face did shine as the sun, and whose raiment was white as the light, and beholding as in a glass his own image, standing side by side with that of the glorified prophet, whose brow had never been darkened by the shadow of death? And while compassionating the awe-stricken ones who fell on their faces before that excellent glory, did he remember his own terror, when, drawing near the consuming fire of the same Eternal Presence, he said: "I exceedingly fear and quake," and gratefully adore the milder grace that drew from them the utterance, "Lord it is good to be here." Did his heart stand still in wonder over Gethsemane, in her baptism of sweat and blood? Did he tremble, as quaking Calvary threw her mantle of darkness over the nations? Did he exult, as Olivet lifted up her hands in joyful praises for the glory of her ascending Lord?

But the glorious vision of Pisgah was past; and, if these things appeared not thence unto Moses, how soon were they unfolded unto him when he worshipped on the mount of God above, and walked in the light of Paradise. "So Moses, the servant of the Lord, died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord. And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Beth-peor, but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day. And the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days."

There was one left that had come up out of Egypt, the last remnant of the generation, saving Joshua and Caleb. It was an aged woman. Her cheeks were sunken, her hands withered and trembling, and her hair like the hoarfrost of the morning. An Israelite of princely bearing, in the strength of his early manhood, watched by her couch, and anticipated her wants with reverential tenderness. The tide of life was ebbing fast in her veins; and, as the young man saw that her days were numbered, he exclaimed in anguish: "Alas! Zilpah, mother of my soul, couldst thou but die within the borders of the promised land, then would I close thine eyes in peace."

"It is well, my son," answered the aged saint; "should more be granted to me than hath been vouchsafed to Moses? In thee, my Asriel, I shall enter our glorious Canaan; and, when thy foot first presses its soil, bow thy knee, and pay my vows of gratitude to the God of Abraham, that my seed inherits the land of promise. And now, my son, be strong and of good courage. But I know thee, that thou art an Israelite indeed," she added, changing her tone of entreaty to assurance; "thou shalt become great in Israel. May thy sons possess the spirit of Jubal, thy father, and thy daughters be loved as was Adah, thy mother. Mayest thou be the beloved of the Lord, dwelling in safety by him, and may the Lord cover thee all the day long."

Zilpah then turned her eyes from Asriel, upon whom they had rested in the deep fulness of her blessing, while her expression of devoted faith in the distant future, to which she had long looked in the light of God's word, revealed her ruling passion strong in death. It was the promised glory of her people, burning always in her soul, that now shed its melting light over her aged face, and

kindled fervently the words upon her lips as she exclaimed, in the prophetic language of Balaam:

"Lo, the people shall dwell alone,
And shall not be reckoned among the nations.
Who shall count the dust of Jacob,
Or number the fourth part of Israel?
Let me die the death of the righteous,
And let my last end be like his!
I shall see him, but not now:
I shall behold him, but not nigh.
There shall come a star out of Jacob,
And a sceptre shall rise out of Israel."

The words died away in silence, and Zilpah lay speechless and unconscious of all about her. Yet she slumbered not, while from her uplifted eyes ever and anon shone forth the light that still burned in their undimmed depths, and her withered hands were clasped in strong and yet stronger fervency. So passed the lingering hours of the middle watch of the night, and at length the soul that had long waited on the very threshold of departure, suddenly retraced its steps to utter its last earthly message.

Rousing herself from her unconsciousness as from a long deep reverie, Zilpah laid one hand upon the head of Asriel, who knelt by her couch, and pointing upward with the other, said solemnly: "Listen, my son, and I will show thee what I have seen while like Balaam I have fallen into a trance, having my eyes open: The star of Jacob, was it not shining on my soul with the fulness of peace, even the peace of Him who forgiveth iniquity, transgression, and sin, when lo! as I gazed, it grew fairer, and brighter, and larger, till it became of an exceeding glory, and mounted high and yet higher, till it filled the whole heavens with its beams as an unsetting sun. And

the strange light drew me upward till I stood in the firmament of heaven, yet still the glory burned above me, wondrous and afar. And now I mourned that I could not fly swiftly unto that lofty dwelling-place of light, when behold! I saw three shining ones descending unto me. How my heart leaped at their coming, for I knew them from on high. It was Moses, whose face shone with a brighter glory than of old, yet soft as the moonlight, that I might gaze thereon; and Aaron, robed in radiance, before which the dazzling beauty of the high priest's garments vanisheth as a thing of nought; and Miriam, flooding the wide air with songs which swept the triumphant gladness of the Red Sea into silence in my soul. And they bore me upward upon their strong wings, unto the everlasting mount of rest, where the redeemed ones walk with God. But this mount I may not show thee, because words fail upon my lips, and my tongue cannot utter what I saw. Yet the boundlessness which stretcheth beyond the firmament of stars, and loseth its height above the vision of angels, is filled with a light as of many suns, shining evermore from the presence of God. And this is the same light which first beamed upon me in peace, which drew me upwards by its own exceeding brightness, which maketh the joy of the redeemed to flow forth in songs above the gladness of angels, even the light of the 'star of Jacob.' O, my son, praise the Lord, who hath appeared unto his people as the Angel of the Covenant, as the Unconsuming Presence who shall evermore dwell therein as in the burning bush of Horeb, as the word of holiness from Sinai, as bread from heaven, as living waters from the rock, as bearing Israel even as on eagles' wings, unto himself, as brooding night and day over her tabernacle in the overshadowing cloud of refuge and love.

Praise the Lord, who shall yet reveal himself more wonderfully in the earth. Praise Him for the glorious day of Israel's promise. Praise Him, for behold I ascend into the marvellous light of His presence."

All was hushed. Within the very breath of the land of promise the aged pilgrim had passed through the open gates of the eternal city, and had sat down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God.

The multitudes of Israel stood upon the eastern shore of Jordan. Canaan, the land whose promised glories had been repeated from father to son, from generation to generation—Canaan, the end of their pilgrimage, the goal of their hopes, the home of their nation, lay spread before them in all the bright freshness of morning. How earnestly their gladdened eyes scanned its varied beauties. How eagerly their impatient feet longed to cross the waters of Jordan.

The priests, bearing the ark of the covenant, formed the vanguard of the host, and were commanded of the Lord unto Joshua, to remain in the midst of the Jordan until all the people should have passed over. As they reached the brink of the river, and dipped their feet in the brim of its overflowing banks, suddenly the waters which came down from above stood and rose up upon a heap, and those that came down toward the sea of the plain, even the Salt Sea, failed and were cut off. So the priests walked steadily into the channel of the river, and stood firm on dry ground in the midst thereof, while the armies of Judah, of Reuben, of Ephraim, and of Dan, swept by in long and still increasing procession, with their feet rising and falling in grand marches to the beating of their hearts of gladness, and their banners all floating beneath the royal wave of the Lion of the tribe of Judah.

Arrived on the opposite bank of the Jordan, Asriel reverently knelt and fulfilled the vow he had made in Zilpah's death-hour. As he rose up and gazed upon the thousands of his people joyfully gathering in the land of Abraham, which was to become the praise of the nations and the joy of the whole earth, a lofty enthusiasm illumined eye, cheek, and lip, as the swelling emotions of his soul gushed forth in the blessing of Moses: "Happy art thou, O Israel! Who is like unto thee, O people, saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and the sword of thy excellency?"

PART II.

THE REIGN OF SOLOMON.

THE REIGN OF SOLOMON.

How stately then was every palm-decked street,
Down which the maidens danced with tinkling feet ;
How proud the elders in her lofty gate !
How crowded all her nation's solemn feasts
With white-robed Levites, and high-mitred Priests ;
How gorgeous all her Temple's sacred state !

MILMAN.

CHAPTER I.

THE GATHERING TO THE HOLY CITY.

A BEAUTIFUL country lay stretched along the eastern shores of the Great Sea. Mountains reared their bold, majestic outline round about, and lifted their sublime heads beneath a sky of cloudless blue. Hills, clothed and crowned with fruitfulness, rivalled the luxuriance of their intervening valleys. Plains and rivers, forests and lakes, were grouped in an ever varied beauty. Lofty cedars rose in stately majesty, and towering palms spread their wide branches over cities and thickly clustering villages. Over its whole extent the land rejoiced and blos-

somed as the rose, and a numerous population made it instinct with life, from its centre to its utmost borders.

The chief city of this delightful land was built upon three eminences, and surrounded, except on the north, by a deep valley, which was again embosomed with hills. Power looked down from her lofty towers, and strength engirdled her with a rampart of impregnable mountain. Luxury held court within her walls, and wealth poured its golden tide into her bosom. Splendor was her dazzling sceptre, when the eastern sun illumined her marble palaces, and lit up her golden temple; and beauty was her robe and diadem, when hushed in the silence of moonlight, she listened to the music of the brooks that sang their low song at her feet. In her pride, she said, "I sit as a queen among the nations, a lady of kingdoms," and exultingly gloried in the name by which she was called, "The perfection of beauty, the joy of the whole earth." Thus did Jerusalem sit enthroned amid the hills of her own glorious Canaan, proudly sovereign as an eagle upon her lofty nest, magnificent as a queen in her jewelled robes, and beautiful as Eve in the midst of Paradise.

It was a time of intense public interest in Jerusalem. Its temple, the progress of whose building had been an object of paramount importance in the mind of every Israelite for seven years, was at length completed, and the gathering thousands of Canaan were thronging to her capital, to behold the finished glory of the gorgeous structure which each had offered willingly to build, and to attend the Feast of its Dedication.

On the morrow, which was the eighth of the seventh month, the solemnities were to commence; for the Feast of Tabernacles drew nigh, and it was the will of King Solomon that the people should observe the Feast of the Dedi-

cation for seven days preceding the seven days of the yearly feast, making fourteen days of uninterrupted rejoicing. Moreover, as if all the rays of national solemnity and joy were destined to converge to this very point, the tenth of the same month was the Great Day of Atonement, and the opening of the ninth Jubilee since the possession of Canaan. As the day declined, thousands had already assembled, and were erecting their tents in the valleys and matchless environs of Jerusalem, while every avenue to the city was still alive with the joyous multitudes that were pressing their way thither. The tribes of Asher and Naphtali swept through the fertile plains of Esdraelon. The Joppa road was lined with its pilgrim bands, which had gathered from the shores of the sea. Family after family of the sons of Reuben wound about the sloping declivity of Olivet, and company after company still arrived by the way of Jericho, waving branches of palm trees in their hands. As each successive band caught the first glimpse of their beloved city, their glad voices burst simultaneously forth in sacred song, and Jerusalem was sought unto on every side by her admiring sons and daughters, with joy and praise, thanksgiving and the voice of melody.

Within the city walls all was festivity and rejoicing. Brother again met with brother, and friend with friend; while every citizen of Jerusalem prided himself upon the extent of his hospitalities, and the costliness of his entertainments. The court of every dwelling was filled with guests, to whom its cooling fountains and marble pavements, its luxurious couches and fragrant perfumes, presented a most inviting welcome. Servants moved to and fro, with napkins and silver ewers, and the master of the house, arrayed in his richest garments, courteously bade a

welcome to every guest, and blessed him in the name of Abraham.

A large company of distinguished Israelites were gathered in the court of Ahimaaz,¹ one of the most eminent of the citizens of Jerusalem, a chief counsellor in the court of Solomon, and the son of Zadok, the high priest of Israel. In the apartments of the women, Hadassah, the wife of Ahimaaz, attended by her handmaidens, was ministering the kindest hospitalities to her female guests, while her daughters had led a group of young maidens to the house-top, to behold the scene of eager rejoicing life that swelled and surged as a mighty sea about the thronged city.

The house of Ahimaaz was situated near the eastern brow of Mount Zion, within a furlong's distance of the city wall, and afforded an extended view of Jerusalem and her environs. On the north were the thickly-congregated dwellings of Mount Acra, and the temple which stood in dazzling magnificence upon the massive foundations of Mount Moriah. To the left rose the beautiful palaces and strong towers of Mount Zion. On the right, the immediate view fell upon the king's gardens, which in living beauty lay beneath in the valley; and beyond, upon the evergreen charms of the Mount of Olives. Far to the south, over the valley of Hinnom, stretched a mountainous country of picturesque grandeur, with the road to Bethlehem winding among its hills.

As the young company stood upon the house-top, intently interested in the varied scenes which thronged beneath them, hasty footsteps were heard ascending the stairs from the court below. Instantly the maidens veiled themselves, that they might be prepared for the

¹ Note B.

presence of a stranger, all excepting three, unto whom the well-known step announced the coming of their brother, Azariah. The young man approached his sisters and respectfully saluted their guests, then turned his attention to the bands of rejoicing people that were gathering themselves unto the city.

"Ah, Azariah! how I have wished thee here," exclaimed Sarah, "that thou mightest have heard the sweetness of the far-off music. But look, my brother, at the multitude of tents. Surely all the people of the land have assembled themselves together."

"It is as thou sayest, Sarah," rejoined Ruth, who was but a child of twelve years. "The people have all come up, and we shall hear no more the songs of their rejoicing from afar. Behold, it draweth toward the setting of the sun."

"Nay, Ruth," interrupted Azariah, "yet another band cometh by the way of Bethlehem. Dost thou not see the waving of the palms to the right of yonder hill-top?"

Suddenly an abrupt turn in the path revealed fully the approaching company, and in a few moments more the evening breeze bore faintly upon the ears of the listeners the strains of their rejoicing. Louder and yet louder swelled the melody, till at length were distinctly heard the words of their sacred song:

"Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth,
Is Mount Zion on the sides of the north,
The city of the great king.
God is known in her palaces for a refuge.
Let Mount Zion rejoice,
Let the daughters of Judah be glad;
For this God is our God for ever and ever;
He will be our guide even unto death."

There was a moment's pause, when suddenly a new strain burst forth in another direction from a company that approached by the road from Bethany. It was as if Olivet had caught the echoes of the first song of gladness, and uttered back its responsive notes of joy.

"I was glad when they said unto me,
 'Let us go into the house of the Lord.'
 Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem,
 For there are set thrones of judgment,
 The thrones of the house of David.
 Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:
 They shall prosper that love thee.
 Peace be within thy walls,
 And prosperity within thy palaces.
 For my brethren and companions' sake,
 I will now say, 'Peace be within thee.'
 Because of the house of the Lord our God,
 I will seek thy good."

The songs ceased, and none among the listening thousands that covered the house-tops of Jerusalem were more deeply thrilled by the enthusiasm they inspired than the children of Ahimaaz. The young man, Azariah, had not numbered twenty years, yet the pride of coming manhood was written upon his brow, and beamed from his full dark eyes. His figure had not attained its destined fulness of outline, but an easy grace was revealed in every movement, and enhanced by his loosely-girdled robe of richly-flowing blue. A lofty enthusiasm for the beautiful and the true, an impassioned fervor of being, a deep earnestness of character, were mirrored in the varying lights and shadows of his face. Admiration for the institutions of his people, and deepest reverence for the religion that had been revealed to them by the one true God, had been nursed within him from earliest childhood, by contempla-

tion of the vocation to which he was called: for he was descended in an unbroken line from the stock of Aaron, and was soon to take upon him the vows which would consecrate him a priest in the Lord's house forever.

Of the three sisters, the eldest and youngest, Sarah and Ruth, seemed cast in the same mould of character with their brother, contemplative, sensitive, and poetic, but Bathsheba was a perfect contrast to them all. Laughter sparkled in her eyes and danced ever and anon upon her lips. She seized the pleasure of the present, with no thought of the future, and found matter for enjoyment and mirth in almost any class of externals into which she might be thrown. She lived in the outer world. Azariah and her sisters found their true position in the inner.

The inherent tendencies of Azariah, Sarah, and Ruth, had been greatly strengthened in their development by the instruction and influence of their mother Hadassah. She was still in the early prime of her maturity, and a woman of a beautiful countenance. None were more honored among the daughters of Israel, for she was the wife of Ahimaaz, the immediate successor to the sacred office of the high-priesthood, and the mother of Azariah, who in future years should sustain the same high and holy dignity; yet she meekly waved the frequent distinctions which greeted her, and moved among the daughters of her people with a spirit as meek and lowly as that of Ruth, humbly gleaning the scattered corn. None were more courted by the alluring charms of magnificence and luxury, which marked the brilliant circles of the queen of Solomon, than Hadassah, inasmuch as her husband had been from his early youth as a pillar unto the throne of King David, and now stood among the first of the princes of Solomon; yet she lifted up her soul above the dazzling

vanities that surrounded her, and brought up her children as a true mother in Israel, consecrating them to the Lord with a piety as true and fervent as that of Hannah, when she gave the young child Samuel to the house of the Lord forever.

The sun was set, and the Day of Dedication, according to Hebrew computation, had already commenced, and was ushered in by every family with appropriate solemnities. After the observance of these in the court below, Ahimaaz conducted his guests to the house-top, and the conversation immediately fell upon such subjects as dwelt that night upon every tongue throughout all Israel: the glory of their beloved Jerusalem, the magnificence of their finished temple, the unexampled prosperity and wealth of their nation, the wisdom and royal majesty of their king, and the wonderful guidance and blessing of the Almighty.

"Ah, Benjamin, I bid thee welcome from the seas," said Azariah, respectfully saluting a tall, noble man of middle age, upon whose head rested a turban of Tyrian purple, and whose black shining beard descended in heavy luxuriance to the golden girdle of his crimson robe.

"May the wisdom of thy fathers, Zadok and Ahimaaz, be thy portion, young man," answered Benjamin, returning the salutation of Azariah.

"Thou beholdest Heman, an Ephraimite of Egypt," added Azariah, courteously presenting a friend at his side. "It is but few days since he came into the city, yet we have united our hearts like David and Jonathan. Even this night, for my sake, he hath left the palace of Solomon to sit in the court of Ahimaaz."

"Of Egypt!" repeated Benjamin, addressing the stranger; "who shall say thou wert not of Jerusalem? Of a truth, Egypt hath brought up an Israelite, indeed."

"I rejoice to find this favor in thy eyes, that thou accountest me worthy to be a son of Jerusalem," answered Heman, as his face flushed with pleasure. "My soul loveth the very dust of the land of my fathers."

"Thou sayest well, young man," rejoined Benjamin. "I have been in many lands, in Syria, Idumea, Egypt, and the coasts of the south; yea, I have set my feet in Eden itself, still bright with the beauty which the Lord breathed upon it in the beginning, yet have I seen no land like that of Abraham; and, above Tyre and Damascus and all the cities of Egypt, Jerusalem is still a chief joy."

"Dost thou do business upon the Great Sea, and is thy merchandise with Egypt, or with Tyre?" asked Heman.

"Nay, I have not been upon the sea of the Philistines since the days of my youth," answered Benjamin. "Then I made two voyages from Joppa unto Tyre, carrying thither wheat, barley, and oil, and bringing back choice garments of purple, and divers kinds of vessels, fashioned with cunning work. But now, for many years, I have gone forth from Ezion-geber, where King Solomon hath built the navies of Tarshish. Our course layeth through the Red Sea, and thence afar along the coasts of the south, unto the lands where the sun looks down upon the sparkling gold of Ophir.¹ Truly, there is the place where light dwelleth, for the precious things of the earth below send up answering rays to the glory of the sun above, and the eyes fail for the brightness thereof. And the flowers of that land, ye have not seen their like, as in the dazzling light they spread their wide borders of glory along the path of the golden-bedded rivers. Neither can any land equal the savor thereof. When the spice groves softly

¹ Note C.

tremble by the blowing of the south wind, the soul becomes filled with sweetness, and the eyelids grow heavy with delightful slumber as with new wine. Yet would I not dwell in those coasts for all the riches of Solomon, seeing the spirit fainteth because of the exceeding heat, which none can endure save the inhabitants thereof, even the sons of Ham."

"Surely it must be a delight to thee to look upon the walls of the temple, with their wondrous wealth of fine gold," said Azariah, "and to know that thou hast thyself spent many years in bringing it from afar to beautify the Lord's house."

"It surely is a joy unto me," answered Benjamin. "Five times have I left my country, yea, even my wife and children, by the space of three years at a time, to go down to the sea in ships, and bring the gold of Ophir unto David and Solomon. Yet now I behold the fruit of my labor," he continued, pointing to the temple which shone in the moonlight like the pure and glistening glory of new-fallen snow; "and my children's children shall see what my hands have helped to make. Yet surely it is not meet that I take praise unto myself in this, because from my very youth I would have chosen to be a ship-master rather than a king. Moreover, it was a delight to labor for king David in preparing for the work of the Lord, seeing his whole heart was steadfastly fixed to build a glorious habitation for the God of Jacob. And he set the thing before all the princes and elders of the people, saying, 'Solomon my son is young and tender, and the house that is to be builded for the Lord must be exceedingly magnificent, of fame and of glory throughout all countries. I will therefore now make preparation for it,' so every one offered willingly with a perfect heart unto the Lord. And when

David was old, and full of days, he said unto Solomon: 'Now, behold, in my trouble, I have prepared for the house of the Lord an hundred thousand talents of gold, and a thousand thousand talents of silver; and of brass and iron without weight, for it is in abundance; timber also and stone have I prepared, and thou mayest add thereto.' And truly Solomon hath added thereto both of silver, gold, and brass, cedar-wood, fir-wood, and olive-wood; and he multiplied greatly the workmen for all manner of cunning work which David his father had gathered together."

"The number of workmen employed upon the temple, for seven years and a half, revealeth unto me the magnificence thereof, as much as its exceeding costliness," observed Heman.

"Truly, the number hath been as a vast army," replied Benjamin, "even one hundred and eighty-three thousand and six hundred, of Jews and strangers. Of the Jews, thirty thousand were appointed to cut cedar-wood in Lebanon, working in rotation ten thousand for a month; and of the Canaanites, seventy thousand were bearers of burdens, eighty thousand were hewers of wood and stone, and thirty-six thousand were overseers. Also, over the cunning men that wrought in the fine parts of the work, was one sent by Hiram, king of Tyre, skilful to work in gold and silver and brass, and endued with understanding to grave any manner of graving and to find out every device. I hope thou mayest see this man while thou tarriest in Jerusalem. He is the son of a woman of the daughters of Dan, his father is a man of Tyre, and he is of exceeding comeliness and dignity."

"Yet another thing hath filled my heart more than the costliness or the multiplied workmen of the temple," remarked Azariah. "From a boy of twelve years I have

watched the building thereof, and there hath been no sound of any tool thereon. Its beauty and majesty have ascended year by year, all silently as a dream of the night."

"Truly this is a wonder that I could not have believed without full testimony thereof," rejoined Heman, "seeing that every part is laid with such smoothness and skill as if the materials had naturally united themselves together."

"Yet every stone and every timber was hewn and fitted to its fellow, and every plate of gold and silver was carved and made ready for its place, before it was brought unto the sacred mountain," said Azariah; "and the reverent silence with which every part assumed its own order in the glorious whole, came over my spirit even as the writing upon the high priest's crown, 'Holiness to the Lord.'"

"And in this glorious temple thou shalt soon stand to minister before the Lord," rejoined Heman, in a subdued tone; "yea, by thy lofty birthright, thy feet shall one day enter into the oracle thereof, and thou shalt bow thine head in the secret place of the Most High."

For a moment Azariah answered not; then, in a voice tremulous with emotion, he said, "Pray ye unto the Lord for me, that in that day my soul may abide under the shadow of the Almighty."

"One thing I have earnestly considered," observed Azariah, after another pause of profound silence. "Shall the glorious One, of whom the Lord hath spoken by the mouth of David, ever stand in Zion. And, if the temple lifteth up its everlasting doors unto the coming of the King of Glory, who among the sons of Aaron shall be accounted worthy to minister before Him?"

"Is not Solomon the anointed one unto whom the

gates of the temple shall lift up their heads?" asked Benjamin. "Surely he is a king of glory."

"Thy words are true," answered Azariah, "and yet the promises stretch higher and deeper than Solomon. So, ever since I was a weaned child, hath my mother taught me by the Holy Scriptures."

"Doubtless it is as thou sayest," answered Benjamin; "but I exercise not myself in things too lofty for me. Let the priests and Levites inquire and search diligently concerning them, and it is a praise unto thee, son of Ahimaaz, that thou settest thine heart to the work."

Hadassah, in the mean while, had led her friends through a spacious summer parlor, whose wide doors were folded back upon a delightful garden, appropriated to the especial use of herself and her daughters. This garden lay to the east of the dwelling, and was inclosed by a vine-covered wall, so as to afford a complete retirement. Seats and couches were arranged beneath trees or deeply-shaded arbors, and its whole aspect invited to calm delight, undisturbed meditation, and charmed repose. The plants of gorgeous blossoming were losing their brilliancy in the pale twilight; those of hidden grace filled the air with their perfume; and the fast distilling dew gathered its drops upon the fragrant shrubbery, as a shower of pearls in the early moonbeams. Half a furlong's distance of the garden boundary rose the city wall, girding the brow of Zion and supporting upon its base the bulwark of Ophel,¹ which rose in massive grandeur a little to the left, brought out in bold relief in the silvery light. Below sounded the ceaseless surging murmurs of a great multitude. Beyond, in hushed silence, Olivet sat, in her unceasing watch over Jerusalem.

¹Note D.

After roaming awhile amid the beauties of the garden, the company of Hadassah returned to the parlor which opened upon it, and seated themselves in scattered groups upon the cushions and couches. Upon a table at the farther end of the apartment stood a many-branched candlestick of wrought gold, whose lamps, fed with olive oil, revealed the rich ceilings of the room, exquisitely finished with carved cedar; shedding a mellow radiance over its furnishings of brilliant dyes; and bringing out in picturesque light and shadow the varied groups robed in the graceful costume of the east. At a little distance from the table reclined Bathsheba, by the side of one whom a single glance served to reveal as a stranger in Jerusalem. Her complexion was of a yet deeper olive than that of the Hebrew women around her; her eyes large, soft, and dark as night, were rendered yet more impressive by their deeply-stained eyelids; her hair, long, black, and shining, was braided with chains of jewels, and bound as a crown about her head, from which descended the long graceful veil over her shoulders unto her feet. Her full flowing robe was of purple, heavy with embroidery, and gathered about the open neck with a band of jewels; over this was a shorter robe or tunic, with wide open sleeves, of a pale yellow color, ornamented by a border of pearls. A broad necklace of radiant gems crossed over the breast and depended to the girdle, which was its exact counterpart. Bracelets encircled the arms, and anklets, with their exquisite little bells, softly tinkled over the glittering jewels of the sandalled foot. And now, as the stranger reclined on a low couch beneath the soft lamplight, her apparel seemed as a flashing expanse of radiance. It was the wife of Heman, Hagar,¹ the Egyptian, whose father

¹Note E.

was Hadad, the king of Edom, and whose mother was Nicaule, the sister of Tahpenes, the queen of Pharaoh. Bathsheba appeared both as a counterpart and a contrast to the brilliant Hagar. Her complexion, of a softer olive, was yet more richly beautiful by the glow of youth and health that crimsoned her cheeks; her eyes were as large and dark, and beamed as softly beneath their black, heavy lashes, as Hagar's under her painted eyelids. The braided bands of shining black that were twined about the folds of her veil needed not the borrowed lustre of gems. And her lower robe of softest, purest white, bordered with embroidery of blue, with the upper robe of crimson, wrought after the same pattern in threads of gold, was unto her as the setting of a beautiful picture. Hagar was the embodiment of dreamy, quiet enjoyment; Bathsheba the personification of living gayety.

"Wouldst thou leave Egypt and dwell in Jerusalem?" asked Bathsheba of Hagar, after a long conversation between the two on the relative attractions of their countries.

"Nay, I would choose Egypt as my dwelling-place," answered Hagar, "because there is my mother, and my brother, Genubath, who is very dear unto me. Moreover, the queen, Tahpenes, hath ever been tender and gracious unto me, yea, even Pharaoh hath always treated me as a daughter. Nevertheless, if Heman, my husband, setteth his heart to abide in Jerusalem, I will dwell herein with gladness."

"It will be a joy unto Pharaoh's daughter if thou dost remain," said Bathsheba, "inasmuch as thou art her near kinswoman, and wast brought up in her father's house from a little child."

"She earnestly desireth it," replied Hagar, "and setteth

before me great promises of reward. Truly, the queen of Solomon dwelleth in royal majesty."

"Hast thou been up to the courts of the temple to behold its glory?" asked Bathsheba.

"Yea, truly," replied Hagar. "On the very day after I entered into Jerusalem, I hastened to ascend the sacred mount of thy people, that I might behold, with my own eyes, the exceeding wonder of which so great a fame hath gone abroad. But, when I looked thereon, I said: 'My ears have heard but a whisper thereof, and my eyes fail before the brightness of its glory.' It appeared unto me but as a marvellous dream, which shall vanish when one awaketh; so that, even now, I cannot tell of the workmanship of the temple, nor understand the divisions thereof, nor form in my mind a true likeness of its greatness and beauty."

"Thou hast seen it but once," answered Bathsheba; "and they who speak wisely, say it requireth diligent pondering rightly to understand all the wonders of the temple, and to behold the magnificence thereof. Nevertheless, although my soul escheweth much study, the temple, in its length, and breadth, and height, with its several divisions, and the full adornings of each, and its various courts, and cloisters, and chambers, and the multiplied articles of service required for the ministry of every sacrifice offered therein, is as familiar to me as my own bed-chamber. During all the years of its building I have gone up, from time to time, upon Mount Moriah, with Azariah, my brother, who hath told me all things concerning it."

"One temple would not serve the Egyptians," remarked Hagar, musingly. "If it were dedicated to Isis, where would be the worship of the sun? And, if it were

consecrated to Osiris, where would be the worship of the moon? There must likewise be shrines for the adoration of Arcturus, and Orion, and all the hosts of heaven; for the river of Egypt; for the sparrow, the raven, the eagle, the ox, the ibex, the serpent, yea, and many others."

"May the day never come when our nation shall serve other gods," responded Bathsheba, with a mingled feeling of horror at Hagar's open expression of idolatry, and of pride in the superior dignity and holiness of the worship of the Lord. "We are one people, and may our tribes evermore gather unto one temple to worship one God, beside whom there is none else, either in heaven above or in the earth beneath."

"Nay, for there are many gods both in heaven and earth," answered Hagar. "Are there not in Egypt thousands of priests who offer sacrifice at their altars, and multitudes of worshippers who bow before their shrines? Who would not turn away the wrath of the serpent by offerings of peace? Who would not adore the overflowing river, which filleth the land with bounty, and feedeth the nations from her bosom? Who would not lift up his soul to the everlasting heights, whence the stars look down on the passing generations? Who, that rejoiceth in the light of the sun would fail to bow down before his great glory? or who, that beholdeth the moon walking in brightness, would refuse to worship the queen of the heavens?"

Hagar spake with warmth and earnestness, for she felt that she was called upon to defend the religion of her own country in a strange land, and among those who professed a system of belief that was utterly opposed thereto. Many had listened to her words, which she had addressed only to Bathsheba, and a lively interest in the subject of their conversation soon pervaded the whole company.

"The things of which thou hast spoken are great and glorious," remarked Hadassah, in reply to Hagar, "and therefore do they exalt the Lord our God, because they are all the works of his hand. I know what thou wouldst say," she continued, as Hagar's cheek flushed quickly at this sudden overthrow of her most powerful gods. "Thou thinkest that our people lift up their hearts proudly, and devise presumptuous things, when they affirm that all the gods of the nations are vanity, and that the God of Israel is the one only living and true God. Yet listen, my daughter. The Lord hath revealed himself unto Adam, the father of all nations, and unto Noah, whose family were redeemed from the flood, and hath with them made a covenant for all the races of men. His works from the beginning show forth his unsearchable power and glory, therefore we believe the word he hath spoken. And he hath revealed himself, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, and of all things therein, and the God and Father of all. And, in after ages, he appeared unto Abraham, and called him out from among the people, that he might, through his seed, work out his own mighty purpose in the earth. Truly, we count it an excellent honor, that the Lord hath thus chosen us to unfold the counsels of his will, yet his purposes of mercy shall not visit us alone, neither shall they have their end in Israel. From Jerusalem they shall flow forth as rivers unto the rising and setting sun, according to the covenant which the Lord hath made with our fathers: 'In thee, and thy seed, shall all the nations of the earth be blessed!'"

"But if the God of Israel is also the God of the Egyptians," asked Hagar, "why doth he not manifest himself unto them as he hath unto Israel?"

"I know not," answered Hadassah, "saving that so it

hath not pleased the Almighty. Nevertheless, unto no people upon the face of the whole earth hath he left himself without a witness. Hearken to the words of David, whom God himself hath inspired with wisdom and understanding:

"The heavens declare the glory of God,
And the firmament showeth his handiwork.
Day unto day uttereth speech,
And night unto night showeth knowledge.
Their light is gone out through all the earth,
And their words to the end of the world.
In them hath He set a tabernacle for the sun,
Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber,
And rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race.'"

"What thinkest thou, Hadassah?" asked Naomi, a woman of thoughtful countenance. "Are the glorious promises made unto the seed of David now fulfilled before our eyes, or do they stretch onward and afar, unto times of peace and glory, brighter than the reign of Solomon?"

"In many things we surely behold the performance of what the Lord hath spoken unto David," answered Hadassah; "nevertheless, there are promises which cannot be measured by the present prosperity and joy of Israel, nor by the wisdom and glory of our king. Although there are many who now say, 'We shall never be moved, — we are established forever,' yet Solomon cannot be he in whom the covenant shall stand as long as the sun and moon shall endure, seeing he shall be gathered to his fathers. Whatever may be the ordinances of the Most High concerning us, this much is our stronghold and our defence: that the rainbow of promise, which hath spanned Israel from the beginning, is still set in the firmament; and, if clouds and

darkness shall ever again hang round about us, then will its glory be seen, which now appeareth not, because of the brightness of the sun. For David hath said, 'He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure; for this is all my salvation and all my desire.'

"So have I understood the words of David," returned Naomi, "that his thoughts leaped over his son and his son's sons, and rushed onward through many generations unto the glorious One, unto whom the Lord hath promised the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession."

"Yet surely thou needest not to look forward to the coming ages for the fulfilment of that promise," remarked another of the company. "Have not all the heathen nations, who once dwelt in the land, been subdued and given unto Solomon for his inheritance? Do not his ships take the riches of the uttermost parts of the sea for his possession? Doth not his dominion extend from the Red Sea unto the Great Sea, and from the river Euphrates unto the ends of the earth?"

"Yet there remaineth more in the promise, like the double spirit of a dream," remarked Naomi, again slowly repeating the passage, and solemnly adding its accompanying exhortation :

"Be wise now, therefore, O ye kings;
Be instructed, ye judges of the earth.
Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling.
Kiss the Son, lest he be angry,
And ye perish from the way,
When his wrath is kindled but a little.
Blessed are all they who put their trust in him."

"Who is the Son?" pursued Naomi. "Surely it is not

Solomon. Is it not the promised seed of the woman, the Shiloh, the Star of Jacob, the light of Israel, the hope of the world?"

"How wonderful is this hope which hath brooded over us for ages," rejoined Hadassah, after a thoughtful pause; "even as, in the beginning, the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. Now our eyes grow dim with gazing for the Desire of the nations, where all is without form and void; but how glorious shall be the time when God shall say, 'Let there be light!'"

Near the threshold of the doors, which were still open upon the fragrant garden, sat Sarah and Ruth, intently listening to several of the mothers in Israel, who multiplied traditionary tales of Hannah and Samuel, of Naomi and Ruth, of the exciting reign of Saul, and the intensely thrilling career of David. Ruth listened with delight, while with her vivid powers of conception she lived over the eventful scenes of the past. She wept over the young child Samuel, as, robed in his little coat, with his clustering hair softly stirred by the breezes, he stood just without the court of the tabernacle at Shiloh, and, with quivering lip and tear-swollen eyes, gazed after the departing footsteps of his mother. She fancied herself a guest at the marriage festival of Boaz and Ruth, and would fain have danced in fresh gladness, that unto her was given the name of the great-grandmother of Israel's psalmist and king. She rejoiced over the conquest of Goliath, and conceived in her heart the feelings of David, when, as the hero of that wonderful victory, he heard the triumphant songs of the daughters of Israel, "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands;" and remembered the rebuke of his brother Eliab, "With whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness?" And mean-

while her heart went out unto the maidens of Tyre and Egypt, and was moved with sincerest pity toward every one that had not been born a Hebrew.

Sarah's heart swelled and her eye glistened as she recognized that Divine presence and favor which was so wonderfully conspicuous in every part of her people's history; and, as a swift contrast of the night of the exodus from Egyptian bondage, and the night before the dedication of the temple passed before her mind, her whole soul kindled in fervent praise. Just at this moment Hagar asked of her a song, and, taking her harp, she swept its strings in unison with the thrilling vibrations of her own spirit, and sang one of the soul-stirring psalms of David.

"Praise ye the Lord, praise God in his sanctuary,
Praise him in the firmament of his power.
Praise him for his mighty acts;
Praise him according to his excellent greatness."

Here the slow, solemn recitative of the single voice was succeeded by a responsive chorus, which was joined by all present, save the Egyptian.

"Praise him with the sound of the trumpet:
Praise him with the psaltery and harp.
Praise him with the timbrel and dance:
Praise him with stringed instruments and organs.
Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord.
Praise ye the Lord."

Servants now entered, bearing sweet wine in exquisitely wrought cups of gold, with grapes, pomegranates, and golden citrons upon baskets of open network of silver; and still with music and pleasant converse the hours sped swiftly by, till the moon's waxing crescent, which in early evening rode high toward the zenith, now sank to the western horizon, and slumber assumed her soft sway over the palaces and tents of Jerusalem.

CHAPTER II.

DEDICATION OF THE TEMPLE.

THE temple of Solomon,¹ whose completion thus moved the universal heart of Israel, was built upon Mount Moriah, the eastern of the three hills of Jerusalem. The summit of the mountain was extended by raising perpendicular walls from the valley below, upon the eastern and southern sides, and filling up the intervening spaces with earth. Thus enlarged, the top of Moriah formed a square area of six hundred cubits. In the centre of this area was set apart a square of one hundred cubits, and immediately west of this another square of the same dimensions, called the Separate place, in which stood the temple itself, facing the east, and divided into the Holy Place, and the Holy of Holies, in the same proportion as the tabernacle. Before its front rose a porch, one hundred and twenty cubits high and ten cubits wide, and upon its southern, western, and northern sides were a double range of treasure-chambers, three stories high, with a gallery between them. These buildings, embracing ninety rooms, rose to about one half of the height of the sacred edifice, and, although immediately surrounding it, were in no way fastened thereto. The temple, with its porch, and the thickness of its walls and treasure-chambers, occupied in length the whole one hundred cubits of the Separate place, and in breadth

¹ Note F.

seventy cubits thereof, leaving upon the north and south sides an unoccupied space of fifteen cubits broad.

The square that lay in front of the Separate place was the inner court, or court of the Priests. Around it was a marble railing, dividing it on the west from the Separate place. On the northern, eastern, and southern sides, it was encompassed by ranges of massive marble pillars, forming cloisters or porticos. Upon these pillars rested a solid pavement, fifty cubits broad, which served both as a roof for the porticos and as a foundation for the three stories of chambers, having six large rooms in each story devoted to the use of the high priest, the princes of the courses, and the overseers of the altar, the sacrifice, the treasury, and the sanctuary. The same breadth of fifty cubits, extending westward upon the northern and southern sides of the Separate place, was occupied by the rooms for the officiating course of priests. These were likewise three stories high, with no cloisters beneath. Upon either side of the Separate place, there were twelve rooms in a story, making seventy-two chambers. The corner spaces in this range of buildings were occupied partly by staircases, and partly by a room in each story designed for the preparation of the sacrifices, which were used for food by the officiating ministers. These, being twelve in number, made the sum of one hundred and two chambers devoted to the use of the priests and chief officers of the temple.

The two squares of the Separate place and of the court of the Priests, considered as one space, encompassed on the west by a wall, and on the north, east, and south by the buildings of the priests, formed an area of two hundred and fifty cubits long from west to east, and two hundred cubits broad. Immediately without lay the great court, or court of the people, which occupied a perimeter of one hundred

cubits broad upon every side. This was bounded on the west by a wall, and upon the other three sides by a second range of porticos, whose pillars likewise supported a pavement fifty cubits broad, upon which rose three stories of chambers, containing in all one hundred and two, for the use of the people. Thus, the whole number of surrounding rooms belonging to the temple were two hundred and ninety-four: namely, ninety treasure-chambers, one hundred and two chambers for the priests, and one hundred and two chambers for the people. The row of pillars on the outer side of the second range of porticos adhered to marble walls, which served to bound the cloisters and support the buildings. All this was the Sanctuary, embracing an area of five hundred cubits square. It was encompassed on the four sides by a paved walk fifty cubits broad, called the mountain of the House, which was inclosed by the outer wall of six cubits in breadth and height, which girded the sacred mountain.

The entrances to the temple consisted of four gates in the outer wall, all upon the west; three lofty arched gateways or porticos through the outer range of cloisters, one upon the south, one upon the east, and one upon the north, with their gates opening directly upon the court of the people; and, just opposite these, three similar gateways in the inner range of cloisters, with their gates opening upon the court of the priests.

The immense walls which supported the foundations of the temple from the valley below, together with the pavements of its courts and the pillars of its porticos, were of marble. Its ranges of buildings were of carved cedar, with polished roofs and gates of shining silver. The Sacred House itself was built of cedar-wood, fir-wood, and olive-wood, and was resplendent both within and without by its

overlying surface of fine gold, wrought with elaborate carvings of flowers, palm-trees, and cherubim.

In the centre of the court of the priests, which was likewise the centre of the whole mountain-top, stood the Brazen Altar, twenty cubits square and ten cubits high, surrounded with steps by which the priests might ascend in the ministry thereof. Both upon the north and south sides of the altar were ranged five brazen lavers, for the cleansing of the sacrifices offered thereon. These were supported by large and high bases, curiously contrived with wheels and elaborately ornamented in carved brass. Near the entrance of the eastern gate stood the Brazen Sea, supported on twelve oxen, having their bodies depressed and their faces looking outward. It was of an hemispherical shape, and of an immense magnitude, and was intended for the purification of the priests. The instruments that belonged to the service of the Great Altar, the lavers and the brazen sea, were made of brass, that in splendor was like unto gold.

Solomon also made an immense number of vessels for the general use of the priests, in the varied service of the temple, even twenty thousand golden covered tables, and forty thousand of silver, and ten thousand candlesticks. He also made pouring vessels, in number eighty thousand, and an hundred thousand golden vials, and twice as many silver vials. Of golden dishes, in order therein to offer kneaded fine flour at the altar, there were eighty thousand, and twice as many of silver. Of large basins, also, wherein they mixed fine flour with oil, sixty thousand of gold, and twice as many of silver. The golden censers, in which they carried the incense to the altar, were twenty thousand; the other censers, in which they carried fire from the great altar to the little altar within the temple, were fifty thou-

sand. The sacerdotal garments which belonged to the high priest, with the long robes and the oracle, and the precious stones, were a thousand. But the crown on which Moses wrote the name of God was only one, and hath remained to this day. He also made ten thousand sacerdotal garments of fine linen with purple girdles, for every priest, and two hundred thousand trumpets, also two hundred thousand garments of fine linen, for the singers that were Levites. And he made musical instruments, forty thousand. Solomon made all these things for the honor of God, with great variety and magnificence, sparing no cost, but using all possible liberality in adorning the temple, and these he dedicated to the treasuries of God.*

In the lofty portico of the temple stood two pillars, one upon either hand, of an exceeding size and beauty. They were twelve cubits in circumference, and eighteen cubits in height, being crowned with bowl-shaped chapiters of wrought lily-work. Over the brim of these chapiters hung an exquisitely fashioned network of brass, finished with two rows of chain-work, arranged in seven wreaths or festoons, upon which hung borders of pomegranates, even an hundred in each row. The pillar upon the south side was called Jachin, and that upon the north side Boaz.

The furniture of the Holy Place, consisting of ten tables, ten candlesticks, and the Altar of incense, with the various articles requisite for the service of each, the bowls, the basins, the spoons, the snuffers, and the censers, were all of pure gold. At either end were massive folding-doors: the eastern forming the entrance from the portico, and the western separating the two divisions of the temple. Over these doors hung delicate curtains, or veils, of the

* Josephus' Antiq., Book VIII., ch. 3, sec. 8.

"brightest and softest linen," wrought with embroidery of matchless beauty, which somewhat tempered the dazzling light of the temple, reflecting back from golden floor, and walls, and ceiling, and furniture, the rays of its many burning lamps with almost insufferable brilliancy.

Within the Holy of Holies, the whole breadth of the house, even twenty cubits, was measured by the extended wings of the golden cherubim.

The first service of the day of dedication was the removal of the Ark of the Covenant from the city of David, and its solemn induction into the temple. The priests and Levites, the elders of Israel, and the princes of the tribes, assembled with Solomon upon Mount Zion. After the priests had prepared the ark for removal, the Levites reverently approached and took it up by the golden staves thereof, according to Divine appointment. The thousands of the sons of Levi and of Aaron, headed by Zadok, the high priest, in his glorious garments, formed a sacred guard about the very ark which ages before had first glowed upon Mount Sinai, beneath the overshadowing glory of the symbol of the Divine Presence, which led Israel forth like a flock. These—followed by the princes and elders of Israel, and preceded by King Solomon in royal majesty, who prepared their way with sacrifices which could not be counted for multitude—constituted the magnificent procession which attended the Ark of the Covenant in joyful triumph through the streets of Jerusalem, and up the western ascent of Mount Moriah. Slowly and reverently the sons of Levi went up with their sacred burden. They entered the most northern of the four gates of the outer wall, even the gate Shallecheth, and passed round by the southern pavement of the Mountain of the House, to enter the sanctuary by the

king's gate upon the east. They ascended the seven steps which led to the gateway, and passed beneath its lofty arches on through the court of the people. They mounted the eight steps before the inner eastern gateway, and, having trod its long portico, passed through the court of the priests, even unto the temple. They ascended the ten steps before the lofty porch, crossed the vestibule, moved softly through the Holy Place, entered within the veil of the oracle, and reverently settled the Ark of the Covenant beneath the overshadowing wings of the cherubim.

The band of the Levites, who had been appointed to conduct the music of the temple, stood in the court of the priests, arrayed in white linen, having in their hands trumpets, timbrels, psalteries, harps, and high-sounding cymbals. As they who had borne the ark retreated from the Holy of Holies, the soft strains of the harp blended with the stirring note of the cymbals, and with one accord the whole band lifted up their voices in a psalm of David. The glorious harmony rolled its swell of grand and thrilling praise afar from the sacred hill, and was echoed back by the mountains round about Jerusalem.

"The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof,
The world, and they that dwell therein;
For he hath founded it upon the seas,
And established it upon the floods.

"Lift up your heads, O ye gates,
And be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of Glory shall come in.

"Who is this King of Glory?
The Lord strong and mighty; the Lord mighty in battle.

"Lift up your heads, O ye gates,
Even lift them up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of Glory shall come in.

"Who is this King of Glory?
The Lord of Hosts, he is the King of Glory."

As thus ascended the incense of human praise, the Divine sanction and acceptance were made manifest, the effulgent symbol of Jehovah's presence overshadowed the mercy-seat, and the house of the Lord was filled with a cloud of so overwhelming a glory, that the priests who had in charge the service of the Holy Place could not stand to minister therein. The song ceased, and, although Mount Moriah and her environs were covered with living multitudes, her silence was as breathless as when Abraham led the young Isaac up her solitary steeps. Then on the ear of the listening Hebrews fell the words of their king, as he knelt upon a brazen scaffold before the great altar, and, as the representative of his people, offered the house which they had builded to the service of God.

"The Lord said that he would dwell in the thick darkness. I have surely built thee an house to dwell in, a settled place to abide in forever. And he said, Lord God of Israel, there is no God like thee, in heaven above, or on earth beneath, who keepest covenant and mercy with thy servants that walk before thee with all their heart. And now, O God of Israel, let thy word, I pray thee, be verified, which thou spakest unto thy servant David, my father.

"But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, the heaven, and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee: how much less this house which I have builded.

"Yet have thou respect unto the prayer of thy servant, and to his supplication, O Lord my God, which thy servant prayeth before thee this day.

"That thine eyes may be often toward this house, night

and day, even toward the place of which thou hast said, My name shall be there.

"And hearken thou to the supplication of thy servant, and of thy people Israel, when they shall pray toward this place; and hear thou in heaven, thy dwelling-place; and when thou hearest, forgive.

"Now, therefore, arise, O Lord God, unto thy resting-place, thou, and the ark of thy strength. Let thy priests, O Lord God, be clothed with salvation, and let thy saints rejoice in goodness."

Then heavenly fire fell upon the altar, and kindled with strange and sudden brightness the ready prepared burnt offerings and sacrifices. And when all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the Lord upon the house, they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshipped, and praised the Lord, saying, "For he is good, and his mercy endureth forever."

"Then the king and all the people offered sacrifices before the Lord. And King Solomon offered a sacrifice of twenty-two thousand oxen, and an hundred and twenty thousand sheep. So the king and all the people dedicated the house of God."

After the seven days of rejoicing in honor of the dedication of the temple, the people commenced their preparation for the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles. On the fifteenth of the month the number of tents which had already encircled Jerusalem was greatly increased, for all the inhabitants of the city had left their dwellings, that during the days of the feast they might dwell in tabernacles, according to the word of the Lord by his servant Moses. The tents were now universally covered with foliage, and in many instances entirely formed with thick boughs and

branches of trees. They clustered in the vales, nestled with a pastoral beauty along the valley of Jehoshaphat, climbed the sides of Olivet, and embanked with walls of living green the softly flowing Kedron. Branches of palm and boughs of the graceful willow waved on every side, as the people passed to and fro, bearing them in their hands; and ever and anon the adjacent hills responded to the voice of melody. Jerusalem was surrounded by life and motion, greenness and beauty; and, as Heman of Egypt traversed the southern walk of the mountain of the House, and gazed upon the scene beneath him, bathed in the golden flood of morning sunlight, he exclaimed, in the language of Balaam, "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel."

As each family gathered within its tent on the first day of the feast, happiness beamed upon every face, and joyous words flowed fast from every tongue. After the evening meal, with its customary ceremonies, the children were bidden to ask questions concerning the origin and object of the feast, and to inquire the import and meaning of the various solemnities attached to its observance. In reply, the father recounted the long journeyings of Israel through the wilderness, when for forty years they dwelt in tents as strangers and pilgrims, and taught them that the great design of the feast was to perpetuate forever, throughout their generations, the memory of the goodness of the Lord, who had brought them out of the wilderness into a land flowing with milk and honey. With exceeding care and extreme minuteness of detail, he narrated the particular event or circumstance in their national history which each part of the ceremonies was designed to commemorate. Confirming his words by the authority of Moses, he repeated, as he finished his instructions, "These things thou

shalt diligently observe and do, and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up."

Each successive day of the feast bore witness to some new expression of rejoicing; and, upon the eighth day, the whole congregation, after having once more received the blessing of their king, departed from Jerusalem, "joyful and glad of heart for the goodness of the Lord" unto his people Israel.

CHAPTER III.

THE VISIT TO HEBRON.

It was in the early morning, upon a day in the week succeeding the national rejoicings at Jerusalem, that a small company left the court-yard of Ahimaaz, prepared for a journey. The party consisted of Hagar, Sarah, and Bathsheba, seated upon mules, accompanied by Heman and Azariah, mounted upon horses. The place of their destination was Hebron, a city situated in the hill country of Judah, about twenty miles south of Jerusalem, and the journey thither was undertaken for the sake of Heman, of Egypt, who went to search out, and to salute with messages and gifts, his mother's father, who was a priest dwelling therein.

Heman was the son of Adriel, of the tribe of Ephraim, who in early life had married Hepzibah, of the daughters of Levi, and had gone down into Egypt, where he had been advanced to posts of honor by the king, and abundantly prospered in all the works of his hands. With the multiplying advantages of wealth and station, Adriel had become increasingly disinclined to return to the land of his fathers; and, although Hepzibah had earnestly pleaded that, in this year of the Jubilee, he would go up and take possession of the inheritance which he had sold many years before, he had steadily resisted all arguments and persuasions, and at length avowed his unalterable determination to live and die in Egypt.

(172)

did any of his sons choose to leave their Egyptian homes, save Heman, the youngest born, whose heart had from very infancy been drawn to the land of Abraham. Therefore his father gave unto him alone the fair inheritance upon the plains of Sharon, which, according to the Hebrew law, reverted to its original owner, or his heirs, in the year of Jubilee.

But one obstacle prevented Heman from making preparations to enter upon the possession of the inheritance thus granted unto him. His wife, Hagar, to whom he had been betrothed from early youth, and married but one year, shrank from the imagined loneliness of a dwelling-place in the country of the tribe of Ephraim.

The father of Hagar was Hadad, the king of Edom. In the eleventh year of his reign, King David conquered Edom, and attached it to his own dominions. During the war preceding this conquest, while Joab, the captain of David's host, had left Edom to bury the slain of his army, many of the Edomites fled. Among these were servants of the king's household, who carried with them Hadad, then a little child, and brought him for protection unto Pharaoh, king of Egypt. As Hadad grew up, he found great favor with Pharaoh, who gave him in marriage to Nicaule, the sister of Tahpenes, his queen. Genubah, the first-born son of this marriage, was weaned by Tahpenes in the royal palace, and brought up with the children of Pharaoh, among whom was the "chief or first-born of her mother's children," who afterwards became the queen of Solomon. Several years after, Nicaule became the mother of a daughter, Hagar, who was likewise brought up in the palace of Pharaoh, as the chosen companion of the "little sister," to whom the Hebrew king alludes in his song to his spouse.

15*

At the first meeting of Nicaule, the wife of Hadad, king of Edom, and Hepzibah, the wife of Adriel, the Ephraimite, a mutual attraction had drawn each to the other, which eventually strengthened into a warm and enduring friendship. As a result of this, their children, Heman and Hagar, often met, and dated from their earliest childhood the affection which was at length consummated in marriage.

As the year of Jubilee drew nigh, and Hepzibah felt that she must resign all hope of going herself into Canaan, she diligently pondered the subject of Heman's departure thither, which moved her heart with conflicting thoughts. On the one hand, it was to remove from her eyes her youngest and dearest son, and to take likewise from her friend a well-beloved daughter. On the other hand, it was to assure her that one at least of her children would count his inheritance in Israel, and assume his precious birthright among the peculiar people of God.

The announcement that the dedication of Solomon's temple was to be observed, with the opening of the coming Jubilee, excited in Heman's mind fresh desires to go up to Jerusalem. Hagar was likewise well pleased to accompany him upon a visit thither, not only that she might see the finished glory of the temple, but also that she might greet her kinswoman, Pharaoh's daughter, and behold the royal state in which she dwelt as the queen of Solomon. Hagar moreover promised, that, if in this visit the land of the Hebrews appeared favorable in her eyes, she would consent to make her dwelling-place therein.

With a royally furnished camel for the travelling equipage of Hagar, and an Arabian horse for the use of Heman, accompanied by servants for personal attendance, and ser-

vants having in charge the camels, laden with the accommodations for the journey, and presents for friends in Canaan, the travellers joined a large caravan that was going up to Jerusalem by way of Gaza, Hebron, and Bethlehem; and, after a prosperous journey, were joyfully welcomed as guests at the palace of Solomon.

On the very night of his arrival at Jerusalem, Heman met Azariah. With that instinctive recognition which the soul, overleaping the waymarks of progressive acquaintance, makes of true companionship, each of the young men found in the other a friend after his own heart; and an hour's converse served to render them as cordially familiar as if their mutual confidence had been the growth of years.

In accordance with the wishes of Azariah, Heman and Hagar had been bidden to the house of Ahimaaz on the day before the dedication of the temple, and from that time had been frequent guests therein. After the close of the Feast of Tabernacles, Heman addressed himself to the duty of saluting the kindred and friends of his parents, unto whom he bore letters and presents from Egypt. First among them he hastened to go unto his grandfather, the aged Eleazar, whom, with many tears, Hepzibah had commended to his honor and love. He earnestly desired Azariah to accompany him in his journey to Hebron; and, as Hagar craved the same favor of Sarah and Bathsheba, that they might become her female companions on the way, a party of six, including a maid-servant of Hagar, set out for the dwelling of Eleazar.

With hearts full of pleasant anticipations, the travellers descended the steep sides of Zion, and, having gained the outskirts of the city, lingered awhile about the royal gar-

dens, admiring the noble trees and fragrant shrubbery, whose unwithering green was ever nourished by streams which, conducted from the Kedron, interlaced the whole grounds like a shining network of silver. Passing on southward from these, through the valley of Himmon, they crossed the brook Gihon, and entered upon the road which wound with ever-changing views through the grand scenery of the hill country of Judah. Sometimes the path lay between hills, which on either hand were terraced to their very summits, to afford soil for olive-yards and vineyards, while villages embowered in the deep shade of palms and fig trees, clustered in half-hidden beauty at their feet. Sometimes the way conducted through a town or village, situated upon a hill-side, affording on the one hand a view of the delightful homes of the children of Judah, and on the other, well-watered valleys, interspersed with rich pasture-lands and harvest fields. And yet again the road led up the gradual ascent of some eminence, from whose summit were seen browsing herds and snow white flocks, with their mountain shepherd boys, while the whole range of vision was filled by hills still rising on hills in the blue distance, and in their varied aspects of form and grouping, light and shadow, presenting every gradation of picturesque beauty and lofty grandeur. Within a few miles of Hebron, the scenery assumed a character more severely wild and stern, abounding, especially upon the left toward the region of the Salt Sea, in abrupt precipices, rock-bound chasms, narrow defiles, and deep caves of the earth.

The city of Hebron was situated upon an eminence, near the beautiful plains of Mamre, with surrounding vales of richly cultivated corn fields, and about these the outward setting of a delightful region, thickly dotted with flocks and

herds. The party from Jerusalem approached it as it drew near the setting of the sun, for they had not travelled during the heat of the day, and inquired of a man coming out of the city for the dwelling of Eleazar, a priest well stricken in years, who had ceased to minister before the Lord:

"Surely I know him of whom ye speak, and I will show the way unto his house," answered the man, with native courtesy; "but it is a marvel if he be within, for at this hour he goeth forth daily unto the field of Machpelah." The place was soon reached, — an ancient dwelling, not far from the house which had been honored for seven years by the residence of King David. A man-servant answered the summons of the travellers at the porch of entrance, and confirmed the words of the stranger, that his master had gone forth, as was his wont, to meditate at eventide.

"Nevertheless, I will hasten forth to tell him the glad tidings of the coming of friends from Jerusalem," continued the servant. "Let the damsels alight without delay, and I will call the handmaidens to minister unto them. Come this way into the court, and, while ye refresh yourselves after your journey, I will bring Eleazar unto his house."

"Nay," answered Azariah, "Heman and myself would also go forth with thee, save that we would not disturb the heavenly musings of thy master."

"Fear not," returned the servant; "it is ever a delight for him to greet his friends, and to bid them welcome to Hebron."

A middle-aged woman-servant now came forward, with a face full of benevolent cheerfulness, and led Hagar with her companions to the apartments of the women, where she anticipated their wants with motherly care and tenderness. Then, calling her two young daughters, Keturah and

Tirzah, she bade them bring water and napkins, with pleasant ointment, and cool linen garments, that the guests might array themselves therein and be refreshed. And, when she had assured herself that all things were prepared for their comfort, she departed, to make ready a supper which she would deem worthy to set before them.

"Hath Eleazar neither daughter nor daughter-in-law to dwell with him, and is there no mistress in the dwelling?" asked Bathsheba of Keturah.

"Eleazar's wife died four years ago," answered Keturah, "being old and full of days. Since she hath departed, my mother, in whom the heart of Eleazar doth safely trust, hath ordered all things for the household."

"What a joy will the coming of Heman be to him who hath thus dwelt alone and desolate-hearted," remarked Sarah.

"Thou sayest truly," answered Hagar. "It was in his heart to come hither before the rejoicings at Jerusalem. Indeed, he could hardly be restrained from leaving the caravan as we passed through Hebron; but the days were then so few, after we arrived from Egypt, that we deemed it best to wait until now, that he might tarry here for a season."

"Forgive the presumption of thine handmaid," exclaimed Keturah; "but, tell me, is it the son of my master's daughter who hath gone down into Egypt, who hath now come unto him?"

"Even so," answered Hagar; "and he hath brought with him a heart full of love for his fathers, and for the land of his people."

"Let me run, I pray thee, with the glad tidings unto my mother," said Keturah, suddenly dropping the half-braided bands of Bathsheba's hair; for it was with Hep-

zibah, the daughter of Eleazar, that she was brought up from a little child.

"Go, if it pleaseth thee," answered Bathsheba. "Surely I would not take from thee what thou deemest so great a joy."

"Behold, if the work of my hands be according to thy pleasure," said Keturah, as after fulfilling her coveted mission, she had completed the arrangement of Bathsheba's hair; and, as she spoke, she handed her a small mirror of silver.

"Thou hast a wonderful skill, Keturah," answered Bathsheba, with an evident expression of satisfaction at the result of the handmaiden's labors, "and thine ointment hath proved a marvellous refreshing unto my head."

"Is there aught further wherein I can serve thee?" asked Tirzah of Sarah, when she had finished her ministrations.

"Nay," answered Sarah, "I have no more need of thy kindness, save that thou wilt lead us to the house-top. Before the daylight fadeth, I would fain see from Hebron the mountains and the wilderness of Ziph."

"Give no heed unto the thing," said Bathsheba unto Hagar, who rose to accompany Sarah. "Is it not enough," she added, turning to her sister, "that we have this day ridden all the way from Jerusalem, and gazed until our eyes were weary upon all the hills that were ever trodden by all the patriarchs, but that now thou wouldst have us look afar over the desolate wilderness? Surely, in the days thou remainest at Hebron, thou canst search out all the hiding-places of King David, and possess thyself, if thou wilt, of his strongholds and caverns of the earth."

"Beware, my sister," said Sarah; "knowest thou not

that it is a reproach and a sin unto thee to speak lightly of our great psalmist, prophet, and king?"

"All shall be as thou desirest," answered Bathsheba. "Truly, a solemn countenance putteth away the folly of them who are overshadowed thereby."

"Wilt thou never cease from vain words?" answered Sarah. "Of a truth, I believe the sad countenances of all the elders of Jerusalem would not drive thy folly from thee."

"But I would see the mountain of Ziph, just after the glory of the sun-setting," resumed Sarah, "even as it appeared unto our king, when, at the mouth of some cavern in the wilderness, he looked up unto the strongholds of its defence, and sang unto his harp the lofty words:

"My soul, wait thou only upon God,
For my expectation is from him.
He only is my rock and my salvation:
He is my refuge; I shall not be moved;
In God is my salvation and glory;
The rock of my strength and my refuge is in God."

And I would look afar on the wilderness, as it groweth dim in the fading light of the eventide, and remember the softly melting praises of the exiled and the anointed one:

"O God, thou art my God,
Because thy loving kindness is better than life;
My lips shall praise thee,
My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness,
And my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips,
When I remember thee upon my bed,
And meditate upon thee in the night watches.
Because thou hast been my help,
Therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice."

Meanwhile Heman and Azariah had followed the servant of Eleazar out of the city unto the field of Machpelah, which was upon the side of a hill sloping to the southwest. Upon the summit of this hill the young men lingered a moment to gaze upon the beautiful plains of Mamre, while Azariah pointed out to his companion various localities in view, each one of which was consecrated by some event in the life of Abraham. Hastening on, they followed the servant down the declivity, who turned suddenly a sharp angle in the path, formed by a projecting rock, and led them on a few paces to the mouth of a cavern, deeply shaded by the foliage of overhanging trees.

Just before the rock-bound entrance to this cave reclined an old man, with his head resting against one side of the grassy mound that sloped down upon either hand from the summit of the cavern. His hand, wasted by age, held a half-opened roll; his hair and long flowing beard of silvery whiteness were softly stirred by the freshening evening breeze; and his eyes, steadfastly bent upon the ground, showed him so absorbed in thought as to be unaware of coming footsteps.

The voice of the servant from a little distance roused Eleazar from his reverie, and, as he perceived the approach of strangers, he immediately rose to salute them.

"I have brought a friend unto thee," said Azariah, presenting Heman to Eleazar; "yea, perchance thou mayest find in him a near kinsman."

"A near kinsman!" repeated Eleazar. "Blessed be thy words, son of Ahimaaz; but the thing cannot be." Then, as a sudden light broke upon his mind, he said quickly, "Tell me, hast thou brought me a son out of Egypt?"

With quickly flowing tears, Heman fell upon the old

man's neck and kissed him. In the fervent embrace of the aged and the young, long prolonged in its tearful delight as was that of Jacob and Joseph, was sealed the beautiful love of kindred; and Eleazar at length lifted his whitened head from the supporting shoulder of his grandson, saying, with an expression of holy gratitude, "It is enough; God hath given unto mine eyes to behold a son before I die."

Eleazar sank back upon the ground, overcome by his deep emotions, and the two young men seated themselves upon either side of him, till his strength should revive to return into the city.

"How often my mother hath told me of this very spot," remarked Heman,— "of the hill-side, and the trees, and the cave of Machpelah, till I had treasured in my heart an image thereof, which answereth truly unto the open vision."

"Blessed of the Lord be the teachings of thy mother," said Eleazar, "who in a strange land hath not suffered thee to forget the sepulchre which Abraham bought for a burial-place of the sons of Heth. Within that cavern, how precious is the dust unto Israel."

"How sacred is this place," said Azariah. "A strange sadness cometh over me, as I see in spirit the fast-dropping tears of our great father, when he had hidden the well-beloved Sarah forever from his eyes; and listen to the sighings of the stricken Isaac, as, sorrowing for his mother, he walked in this field at eventide; or hear from afar the wailing and lamentation of that great company, who came up with Joseph out of Egypt, to fulfil the dying request of Jacob, 'Bury me with my fathers in the cave, that is the field of Machpelah. There they buried Abraham, and

Sarah his wife; there they buried Isaac, and Rebecca his wife; and there I buried Leah.'"

"And the well-beloved Rachel," observed Eleazar,— "how often have I mourned that she is not gathered with her husband and her kindred, but sleepeth in her lonely grave, in the way to Bethlehem Ephrata."

"And was it not on the journey to Hebron that Rachel died?" asked Heman.

"Even so, my son," answered Eleazar; "it was when Jacob came with all his family from Padan Aram, where he had dwelt twenty years, to behold again the face of Isaac, who sojourned in Hebron. He presented unto his aged father, Leah and his twelve sons; but his rejoicing was turned into mourning, for the desire of his eyes was no more; and the infant of days was cherished by Jacob with a double tenderness, as the dying gift of the beloved one, who in departing had named him 'Benoni, son of my sorrow.'"

"But surely this night was made for rejoicing," said Eleazar, changing his tone, "and I will sadden your hearts no more, my children, with thoughts of the departed. Now we will go into the city, that ye may eat and be refreshed."

"My roll!" exclaimed Eleazar, as, after advancing a little distance, he missed his treasure; "wo is me if any mischief have befallen it."

Azariah hastily retraced his steps, and presently returned with the roll, which Eleazar, with many thanks, stretched out his hand to receive.

"It is the Psalms of David," observed the old man; "how precious are they unto my soul. Herein is wisdom:

“It cannot be gotten for gold,
Neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof.
It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir,
With the precious onyx, or the sapphire;
No mention shall be made of coral or of pearls,
For the price of wisdom is above rubies.
The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it,
Neither shall it be valued with pure gold.”

“O, that thou wouldst instruct me in the law and the Psalms,” exclaimed Azariah. “Would that I might daily sit at thy feet, and learn wisdom from thy lips.”

“Blessed be the Lord, who openeth thy heart unto instruction,” answered Eleazar. “Remember the words of David :

“I have more understanding than all my teachers,
For thy testimonies are my meditation;
The entrance of thy words giveth light,
It giveth understanding to the simple.”

The conversation now turned again into the channel whence it had been several times diverted, concerning Heman's friends in Egypt, and questions and replies quickly succeeded each other regarding the welfare of the long absent and beloved, until Eleazar stood with his guests within the court of his own house.

After the removal of sandals and washing of feet, which took place in the outer court, Eleazar led the way through the inner court to a secluded apartment, where the evening meal presented a most inviting welcome, as with its delicate meats, freshly-baked cakes, fruits, and wine, it waited upon a low table, surrounded by carpets and cushions, all glowing in the cheerful lamplight.

“Now, I have one favor to ask at thy hand, my son,” said Eleazar unto Heman. “Before I eat, I would fain

bless thy wife, whom thou hast brought up out of Egypt.”

“It will be a delight to me, and to Hagar likewise,” answered Heman; and Eleazar bade a maid-servant to entreat the presence of Hagar and the sisters of Azariah in the inner court.

As the three young women, with their faces shaded by transparent veils, entered the presence of Eleazar, his serene and lofty dignity awakened their heartfelt reverence, and moved in them an instant obedience to the command of the Lord by Moses, — “Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honor the face of the old man.” Heman led forth his wife, and presented her unto Eleazar. The beautiful Egyptian meekly knelt before the aged man, who placed his hand upon her head, saying: “The God of Israel be with thee, my daughter. May He who hath overshadowed thee by the way, multiply unto thee seven-fold the blessings of the land whereunto thou art come. May thine heart dwell richly satisfied in the love of thine husband and of his kindred, and mayest thou henceforth say unto him, ‘Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.’”

Eleazar likewise blessed the daughters of Ahimaaz, saying: “May ye be as olive plants in your father's house, and as corner-stones polished after the similitude of a palace unto Israel. May the Angel who hath appeared unto our fathers embrace you both in the everlasting covenant, and give unto you an inheritance in the sure mercies of David.”

With hearts deeply thrilled by the fervent solemnity of the man of God, Hagar and her companions returned to the apartment of the women. Their conversation, which before had flowed on with innocent mirth, was checked in

its course, as each seemed absorbed in the earnest thought which had been suggested by their short interview with Eleazar.

"Wilt thou take the harp, Sarah," said Hagar, at length, "and sing for me one of the psalms of David? It shall befit the rich blessing which hath been poured as precious ointment on my head. It shall serve as an offering of praise unto the God of thy people. Dost thou know that all the music of Egypt, — yea, all the skilful players of Pharaoh's palace, — cannot move my soul like thy songs unto the harp. They make my spirit to tremble, and mine eyes to overflow with a strange joy; yea, they lift me up on high, whence I look down afar on the earth."

"It is because they speak of the infinite and only God," answered Sarah, "who hath given unto his seryant David wisdom and understanding to praise him according to his excellent greatness." And she sang:

"Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous,
For praise is comely for the upright.
Praise the Lord with harps,
Sing unto him with the psaltery,
And an instrument of ten strings.
By the word of the Lord were the heavens made,
And all the hosts of them by the breath of his mouth.
Let all the earth fear the Lord,
Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him.
He spake, and it was done,
He commanded, and it stood fast.
The Lord bringeth the counsels of the heathen to nought:
He maketh the devices of the people of none effect.
The counsel of the Lord standeth forever,
The thoughts of his heart to all generations.
Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord,
And the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance."

The harp-strings now changed their swelling fulness of harmony to the vibrations of a softer and more persuasive touch, as the young minstrel, pouring all the deep fervor of her soul into her melody, sang parts of other psalms, which sprang spontaneously to her lips.

"Hearken, O daughter, and consider,
And incline thine ear;
Forget also thine own people,
And thy father's house.
For the Lord God is a sun and shield,
The Lord will give grace and glory.
No good thing will he withhold
From them that walk uprightly.
O Lord of Hosts,
Blessed is the man that trusteth in thee"

CHAPTER IV.

RETROSPECTIONS OF THE PAST.

IN the humble yet pleasant apartment of Eleazar, the evening meal was finished. Two servants were performing their customary ministrations with ewers and napkins, of whom one poured the water over the hands of the guests, and the other held the basin beneath. Before their task was completed, a handmaiden came to say that the servants of Heman, with two camels, stood in the courtyard, awaiting the commands of their master.

"They have come from Jerusalem with burdens," said Heman unto Eleazar, "among which are divers presents unto thee, from Egypt, wherewith my father and mother testify their honor and love, and my brethren seek to find favor in thine eyes."

As the camels were unladen, Heman presented before Eleazar his gifts, among which were many changes of raiment, both inner and outer garments, with turbans, girdles, and sandals; rolls of Egyptian papyrus, cassia, cinnamon, and Arabian frankincense. As a special token unto her father, Hepzibah had sent a staff of almug wood, of rare and curious workmanship, whose exquisite carvings were ornamented by the setting of fine rubies; and unto her brother's widow, boxes of wrought ivory, inlaid with gold, which were made with cunning work, after the form of palaces, and were filled with the precious and costly spikenard.

(188)

"Truly, the Lord hath greatly blessed my daughter and her children in basket and in store," said Eleazar, as he beheld the rich and varied presents which Heman spread before him. "May He multiply unto them a hundred-fold the kindness with which they have ministered unto their father, from whom they dwell afar, and may He grant that unto them may be granted the honor they have shown to the hoary head."

After the gifts from Egypt had been duly admired, Eleazar and his young friends reclined near the fountain, which, overshadowed by a palm tree, occupied the centre of the inner court.

"Hast thou spent thy time in Jerusalem with Adah, thy mother's sister?" asked Eleazar of Heman.

"Nay," answered Heman, "Pharaoh's daughter would not suffer that I should take Hagar elsewhere for an abiding place, but to the palace of Solomon; so I have dwelt therein, save that my feet have been often drawn unto the court of Ahimaáz."

"But thou hast surely been unto the house of thy kinswoman?" remarked Eleazar.

"Yea, verily," replied Heman, "I have sat in the court of Ithamar, and have several times met both his wife and his daughter therein. Surely, among all the daughters of Jerusalem, there is none of more exceeding beauty than Miriam."

"Miriam, Ithamar," exclaimed Azariah, starting suddenly from a reclining to an upright posture. "Tell me, Heman, dost thou speak of Ithamar the priest, who dwelleth on Mount Zion?"

"Even so," returned Heman. "I have surely spoken unto thee of my kindred."

"But thou hast not before mentioned their names," said

Azariah. "Truly, it seemeth to me a strange thing that Miriam is thy near kinswoman."

"And is it indeed a truth, that the mother of Miriam is thy daughter?" asked Azariah of Eleazar. "Truly, I thought her father had been long dead, because she was brought up in Jericho by one of the tribe of Benjamin."

"Adah, the mother of Miriam, is indeed my daughter," answered Eleazar, "although her heart oftentimes strangely forgetteth the old man that dwelleth in Hebron. Listen my sons, and I will speak of the troubles which in former years caused me to cry out with Job, 'I would not live away,' and which in later time have borne in my heart the fruit of the Lord's will concerning me, making me to say, with David, 'It is good for me, that I have been afflicted.'"

"In my youth I married, according to my father's will, Leah, the daughter of Phineas; but my heart was not fully given to the maiden, and therefore my marriage was not a joy unto me. For many years I was childless, and at length the Lord gave unto me two daughters and a son. My first-born, Hepzibah, who was evermore unto my heart as the coming of the spring-time, married Adriel, of the sons of Ephraim, and left my house to dwell in the beautiful inheritance of her husband, upon the plains of Sharon. My heart rejoiced in the goodly heritage of her lot, and I promised myself great comfort in her courts, when my limbs should grow feeble and mine eyes dim, by reason of age. But Adriel set his heart to go down into Egypt, and nought could keep him in his own land. Thus I have no more beheld the face of Hepzibah, and this night, for the first time, my eyes have been gladdened by the sight of one of her children."

"Grieve not, my father," interposed Heman. "If so be

that I make my dwelling-place in the land of Abraham,— which thing, I trust, shall surely come to pass,— I will go down unto Egypt, and bring my mother unto me for a season. Yea, whatever shall betide, I will surely bring her unto thy courts, that thou mayest see her face, and that she may receive thy blessing before thou goest hence in the way of our fathers."

"May the Lord fulfil unto thee the desires of thy heart," returned Eleazar. "My second daughter, Adah," he continued, resuming his narrative, "was of an exceeding comeliness. Now my wife's sister had married Elon, a Benjamite, who dwelt in Jericho. This man waxed exceeding rich in the merchandise of India and Ethiopia; and, as no children were born unto him, he and his wife earnestly besought that they might take Adah and bring her up as their own child. The thing pleased me not; but my wife, who grieved that her children were the portionless daughters of a priest, and who was therefore greatly moved by the rich dowry which Adah would receive, pleaded that the matter might be according to the wishes of her sister and of Elon. The heart of the young damsel was fully set in her to depart; and, because Hepzibah was then a virgin in her father's house, and I had no thought that ever she would leave her own land, I consented unto the departure of Adah. So, from a child of twelve years, Adah dwelt no more in Hebron, but in Jericho; and, when she was come to years, she was given in marriage to Ithamar, of Jerusalem, a priest of the stock of Aaron. Her vast dowry of gold and silver hath enabled her to make her dwellings overflow with costly and pleasant things, but her heart is not satisfied therewith. Sometimes she cometh unto Hebron, and tarrieth a day in my courts, but she cleaveth not unto her father as did Hepzibah. She hath

buried three sons, and hath only one daughter left unto her. She hath mourned for her children, but not as Ithamar. Truly, he is a righteous man, and my soul hath taken sweet counsel with him as we have talked of the ways of the Lord, and acknowledged that his judgments are right, though they are past finding out."

"How can the thing be," asked Heman, "that Adah should marry one of the sons of Levi, while unto her is coming an inheritance in Benjamin? Is it not a law of Israel, that every daughter who standeth as an heir must marry in her own tribe?"

"Thou art right, my son," answered Eleazar; "but unto Adah cometh no inheritance, saving of gold and silver. She receiveth no possession of land in Israel. Elon hath brought up his brother's son as the heir, unto whom shall fall his portion among the families of his tribe."

"The genealogy of Miriam is without a blemish, both in the line of her father and her mother," observed Azariah, abstractedly.

"Thou sayest truly," replied Eleazar. "Not one of her ancestors, for five generations, have married out of Levi. In this thing she is worthy to be the wife of the future high priest of Israel. Have I heard truly that Miriam, among all the daughters of her tribe, is the chosen one of Ahimaaz for his first-born son?"

"The thing hath been spoken of," answered Azariah, with evident reluctance, "but no covenant hath been made, nor is aught settled concerning it."

"And now cometh the bitterness of my tale," resumed Eleazar, after a pause. "My son, mine only son, Eleazar, went down quickly into the grave, while his life was yet in its morning. He was the staff of my life, the light of my eyes, and the joy of my heart. He had married one of his

own tribe, and made his dwelling-place in Hebron. Upon a certain time he went up to Jerusalem, intending to tarry over the feast of the new moon, which was near at hand. He abode in the house of his friend Zimri, with whom was also another guest, one Machir, a man of Tyre. On the day of the feast, Zimri returned to his house with Eleazar, who remained in the court, while Zimri passed on to the apartments of the women, seeking his wife. As he drew near the door, behold, Machir — I know not what madness possessed the man — came forth therefrom. Instantly the rage of Zimri burned as a devouring fire. 'Thou monster, thou vile heathen!' he exclaimed, suddenly seizing a sword and waving it above his head for a fearful thrust.

"Nay, nay, hear him; he hath mistaken the door of the summer parlor," interposed Eleazar, striving to restrain the fury of Zimri, and to turn it aside from Machir; but alas! that descending sword turned a joyful wife into a desolate widow, and whitened the head of an old man, mourning bitterly for his only son. Machir escaped into his own land, and Zimri fled without delay unto a city of refuge, lest I, the avenger of blood, should overtake him. But there was no need for his haste, for he was safely within the walls of Shechem before the dread messenger of death reached me at Hebron."

"And doth he still dwell there?" asked Heman, quickly.

"He hath since removed to Ramoth Gilead," answered Eleazar. "Thou knowest, my son, of the six cities of refuge in our land, — three on this side of Jordan, Kadesh of Naphtali in the north, Shechem of Ephraim in the middle, and Hebron of Judah in the south; and on the other side Jordan, Bezer of Reuben, Ramoth Gilead of Gad, and Golan of Manasseh. Only in one of these doth Zimri consider himself safe until the death of Zadok, the high

priest. Nevertheless I have sent unto him, that he need not bind himself to a city of refuge, for I will molest him not if he cometh forth. I have made a vow that I will not avenge myself of mine adversary, but I will commit my cause and my judgment unto the Lord."

"The Lord hath indeed laid his hand upon thee," said Azariah. "We, who are young in years, cannot feel with thee the heaviness of His smiting, nor see the thick darkness of the clouds that have encompassed thy head."

"Truly, while I walked through the deep waters of my trouble," rejoined Eleazar, "I sought to lift up mine eyes unto the Lord, and saw only clouds and darkness round about him; but at length he revealed himself unto me in great light, and put away my tears with marvellous tenderness. Then I saw that he was leading me through floods of sorrow, that he might guide my feet unto his holy habitation; and with David I praised him, saying: 'Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation, and thy right hand hath holden me up, and thy gentleness hath made me great.'"

"On the morrow I would fain visit the grave of thy son," observed Heman.

"I will lead thee thither," answered Eleazar. "There I have also laid my wife, and I rejoice that the Lord hath brought a son unto me, who shall there gather me unto the generations of my fathers. The sepulchre is in the vale, near the brook Eschol."

"The brook Eschol," repeated Heman; "how full is this place of remembrances of the past. Surely, no city in the land should be more honored than Hebron."

"Thou sayest well, my son," answered Eleazar. "The whole region round about shall be sacred ground to our people, through all generations. Hebron is one of the

most ancient of cities, for it was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt. Here was the dwelling-place of Abraham when he first settled himself in the land."

"Did not Abraham first receive the promise of the Lord concerning the land in Bethel, near Shechem?" asked Heman.

"Yea, verily," answered Eleazar; "when he came forth out of his own country, he passed through Canaan, and, wherever he pitched his tent, he builded likewise an altar unto the Lord. Then he went down to Egypt because of famine, and returned again even unto Bethel, where he had received the promise in the beginning. After this he journeyed southward, and separated from Lot, who chose the plain of Jordan, in the way toward Sodom, while Abraham pitched his tents in the plain of Mamre, where was room for his multiplied flocks and herds, and dwelt in the vale of Hebron. Then how were the plains of Mamre lighted with a strange glory, by promises, and visions, and visits of angels. On the morrow I will lead thee unto places where God appeared unto Abraham nine hundred years ago, and thou shalt seem to hear a voice saying unto thee, 'Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.' I will show thee the grove beneath whose shadow Ishmael was born, and Isaac was promised, and the chosen generation was first consecrated by the seal of the covenant. I will lead thee to the tree beneath whose far-spreading shadow the angels came unto Abraham, as he sat in his tent-door in the heat of the day. I will show thee where he stood the next morning, when he looked towards Sodom, and beheld the smoke of the country going up as the smoke of a furnace. Thou shalt see the spot where, with a heart full of grief, he gave bread and water unto the departing Hagar, and

turned aside in anguish from the young child Ishmael; and thou shalt stand where he stood before the sons of Heth, when he bought of Ephron the Hittite the field and cave of Machpelah, that he might bury his dead.

“Thou shalt walk in the field where, at eventide, Isaac met the servant of his father, as he came from Padan Aram, with the fair damsel Rebecca. Thou shalt sit in the well-shaded vale, where Jacob sat when he sent Joseph unto his brethren at Shechem, and where, after many days, he met his returning sons bringing back the well-known coat of the beloved one, with its heart-rending tale of blood. Thou shalt see where, in after years, the stricken father pleaded earnestly that Benjamin might not go down into Egypt, saying, ‘His brother is dead, and he is left alone; if mischief befall him by the way in which ye go, then shall ye bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave.’ And thou shalt rejoice afresh as the marvellous tale cometh down through the long generations over thy spirit, even the tidings which made him exclaim: ‘It is enough; Joseph, my son, is yet alive. I will go and see him before I die.’”

“Neither doth the fame of Hebron belong alone to the days of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,” remarked Azariah. “It hath been of great renown since our fathers came up out of Egypt.”

“Even so,” replied Eleazar. “When Moses sent the spies out of the wilderness to view the land of promise, they came unto Hebron, even unto the brook Eschol, where they gathered grapes, which spake of abounding fruitfulness. In those days the giants, the children of Anak, dwelt herein, before whom they were as grasshoppers. And when Joshua had conquered the land, he gave Hebron unto Caleb, according to the words which he

spake unto him in Gilgal. ‘Thou knowest,’ said Caleb unto Joshua, ‘the thing that the Lord said unto Moses, the man of God, concerning me and thee in Kadesh Barnea. Forty years old was I when Moses, the servant of the Lord, sent me from Kadesh Barnea, to espy out the land, and I brought him word again, as it was in mine heart. And Moses sware on that day, saying, ‘Surely, the land whereon thy feet have trodden shall be thine inheritance, and thy children’s, forever, because thou hast wholly followed the Lord thy God. And now behold the Lord hath kept me alive, as he hath said, these forty and five years, even since the Lord spake this word unto Moses, while the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness, and now, lo! I am this day four score and five years old. And Joshua blessed him, and gave unto Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, Hebron for an inheritance.’”

“And did Caleb possess nought but this city?” asked Heman.

“His inheritance was likewise the region round about, even the fields and villages thereof,” answered Eleazar. “Joshua also made Hebron a refuge for the manslayer, and it afterwards fell by lot unto the priests from among the cities of Judah. Moreover, Hebron is a royal city,” continued Eleazar. “Here, after the death of Saul, David was anointed king over Judah, and he reigned in Hebron seven years, before the thirty and three years that he reigned in Jerusalem, over all Israel.”

“And here,” remarked Azariah, “came the rebellious Absalom—let his name perish!—when he had stolen the hearts of the men of Israel, and had commanded that, at the sound of the trumpet, all in league with him should proclaim throughout the land, ‘Absalom reigneth in Hebron.’”

“Alas! for those days of darkness,” murmured Eleazar,

in a voice of heartfelt sorrow. "I remember how my heart burned with fierce anger as those words of treason resounded through Hebron, and my heart sank in dismay for King David, whose chief enemy was his lordly and beautiful son—his well-beloved Absalom. I hastened speedily unto Jerusalem, that I might be ready for the service of the king. As I approached the city, I beheld a large multitude coming forth therefrom. The foremost had already passed over the brook Kedron, and still the people pressed forth from the city gate over against Mount Zion, a very great company. I joined the ranks of the priests and Levites, who, with Zadok and Abiathar, the joint high priests, at their head, were bearing the Ark of the Covenant, while reverently, at a few paces distance, followed the heart-stricken king. As we reached the foot of Olivet, David said unto Zadok: 'Carry back the Ark of God into the city. If I shall find favor in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again and show me both it and his habitation. But if he thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold here am I,—let him do to me as it seemeth good unto him.'

"Zadok and Abiathar, therefore, returned into Jerusalem with the Ark of God, and tarried there, that they might be able to certify the king of whatsoever should come to pass therein; while David, and all the people that were with him, turned their faces toward the way of the wilderness. Woe is me when I remember how David ascended Mount Olivet, with covered head and barefoot, and all the people that were with him weeping as they went up.

"It was on this occasion that our sweet Psalmist, overwhelmed with sorrow at the treachery of Absalom, and the treason of his chosen counsellor, Ahithopel, uttered that

psalm, whose words come forth as the bitter, despairing cries of one who struggleth in deep waters:

"Give ear to my prayer, O God,
 And hide not thyself from my supplication.
 My heart is sore pained within me,
 And the terrors of death have fallen upon me.
 Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me,
 And horror hath overwhelmed me;
 And I said, O that I had wings, like a dove,
 For then would I fly away and be at rest.
 Lo, then would I wander afar off,
 And remain in the wilderness.
 For it was not an enemy that reproached me,
 Then could I have borne it.
 Neither was it he that hated me, that did magnify himself against
 me,
 Then I would have hid myself from him.
 But it was thou, a man mine equal,
 My guide, and my acquaintance.
 We took sweet counsel together,
 And walked to the house of God in company.
 The words of his mouth were smoother than butter,
 Yet war was in his heart.
 His words were softer than oil,
 Yet they were drawn swords.
 Cast thy burden upon the Lord,
 And he shall sustain thee;
 He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved."

"But why did David flee?" interrupted Heman, earnestly. "Why did he not call together his men of war? Surely Joab, the mighty captain of his host, should have driven the people of Absalom as chaff before the wind."

"Nay, my son," answered Eleazar, "there were many men with Absalom; and David knew full well the caverns and mountain fastnesses about Hebron, wherein the rebellious could entrench themselves. He had himself

dwelt in the wilderness of Ziph, while his life was hunted by Saul; and he saw that it were madness to attack an enemy in the strongholds, where ten might put a thousand to flight. Therefore he fled from Jerusalem northward, to draw the revolting army thither unto battle. Thou knowest how David, in his flight, directed his friend Hushai, the Archite, to return into Jerusalem, and there defeat for him the words of the wise Ahithopel, who had become one of the conspirators with Absalom. The device was successful. The rebel king adopted the plans of Hushai, and the counsel of Ahithopel was turned into foolishness. The sons of Zadok and Abiathar stayed by the fountain of Enrogel, which is at the foot of Mount Zion, waiting for tidings from within the city. Thither a damsel carried them the messages of Hushai, with which they hastened to King David. Thou hast great honor in thy father, young man," added Eleazar, turning to Azariah. "Israel shall never forget Jonathan, the son of Abiathar, and Ahimaaz, the son of Zadok."

The expressive face of Azariah flushed with quick pleasure at this tribute unto his father; and he said, "Ahimaaz, from his youth up, hath counted it a duty and a joy to serve his king."

"It seemeth to me a strange thing that, at one time, there should be two high priests in Israel," observed Heman.

"It happened in this wise," answered Eleazar; "but surely thy father hath told thee of the thing, how that the high priest, Ahimilech, gave the shew-bread unto the famishing David and his followers, when he was wandering as a chased roe, from the huntings of Saul; and how that, for this thing, Saul sent to slay all the priests of Nob, from which slaughter Abiathar, the son of Ahimilech, only escaped, and fled to David for protection. Then

Saul made Zadok high priest, who was of the house of Eleazar, the son of Aaron; whereas, Abiathar was descended from Eli, who was of the house of Ithmar. And when David became king over Israel, because he could not find in his heart to put away Abiathar from the holy office, he caused that both Zadok and Abiathar should retain the sacred heritage; which thing continued until the time of Solomon, who thrust Abiathar from the high-priesthood, and banished him from Jerusalem to Anathoth, because he had joined the party who had sought to make Adonijah king. Thus Zadok stood alone in the holy office, and the high-priesthood hath again become established in the house of Eleazar, as it was in the beginning. And by these things was fulfilled the word of the Lord unto Eli, 'And thou shalt see an enemy in my habitation, in all the wealth which God shall give Israel, and there shall not be an old man in thy house forever, and all the increase of thine house shall die in the flower of their age.'

"After the tidings from Hushai," resumed Eleazar, "David proceeded to Mahanaim, where Ishbosheth, the son of Saul, reigned two years over Israel, while David reigned in Hebron, and where of old the angels met our father Jacob, when he came forth with his family from Padan Aram. The king, with his weary, fainting followers, was gladly welcomed by the people of Mahanaim, and all they of the region thereabout came forward joyfully to supply his present necessities. Shobi, of the children of Ammon, and Amniel, of Lodebar, and Barzillai, the Gileadite, brought beds, and basins, and earthen vessels; and wheat, and barley, and flour, and parched corn, and beans, and lentiles, and parched pulse, and honey, and butter, and sheep, and cheese of kine, for

David, and the people that were with him, to eat; for they said, 'The people is hungry and weary and thirsty in the wilderness.'

"And now David, having been driven away from the holy altar of Mount Zion, and having wandered, a fainting exile, in the wilderness, beholding the sudden vanishing of his royal state, and deeply feeling the nothingness of all earthly good, lifted up his soul above the clouds that were round about him, and sent forth those yearning desires after hope and comfort in God, which have since been to the people of the Lord as the voice of an angel, calling them upward from the earth to the secret place of the Almighty.

"As the hart panteth after the water brooks,
So panteth my soul after thee, O God.
My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God.
When shall I come and appear before God?"

"O, my God, my soul is cast down within me;
Therefore will I remember thee, from the land of Jordan,
And of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar.

"Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waters;
All thy waves and billows are gone over me.
Judge me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation.
O, deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man.

"O, send out thy light and thy truth;
Let them lead me.
Let them bring me unto thy holy hill,
And to thy tabernacles.

"Then will I go unto the altar of God:
Unto God, my exceeding joy.
Yea, upon the harp will I praise thee,
O God, my God.

"Why art thou cast down, O my soul?
And why art thou disquieted within me?
Hope in God, for I shall yet praise him,
Who is the health of my countenance and my God."

"At Mahanaim, the true-hearted assembled themselves unto their king, and David numbered them, and divided his host into three bands, which he gave in charge severally unto Joab, and Abishai, and Ittai, the Gittite, saying, 'I will surely go forth with you myself also.'"

"But the people answered, 'Thou shalt not go forth; thou art worth ten thousand of us; therefore, now it is better that thou succor us out of the city.'"

"And the king said unto them, 'What seemeth you best, I will do.'"

"Many years have passed since that day," continued Eleazar, "and I am now an old man; but, even as if it were yesterday, I behold King David standing by the side of the gate of Mahanaim, as his people went out by hundreds and by thousands to meet the armies of Absalom, who had gathered in the forest of Ephraim, on the east of Jordan. 'Deal gently with the young man for my sake, even with Absalom,' said the king unto the mighty Joab, as he led on the vanguard of the host in the excellency of strength, and again and again that same earnest charge sounded along the moving lines, bearing the heavy burden of a father's yearning heart. As I passed by the king, my spirit was moved within me when I saw his look of heart-breaking anguish. I wept afresh for mine own son, who but a little while had lain low with the dead; and, although I had hitherto devised bitter things against the treacherous one, my whole soul went out after those words of earnest, beseeching love, — 'Deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom.'"

"Yet the people heeded not the words of the king," observed Heman.

"Because it was for the peace of the land that Absalom should be slain," answered Eleazar. "I beheld him as, in the wood of Ephraim, his long, heavy hair caught in the low branches of an oak tree, and lifted him suddenly from his mule, which passed on from beneath him; and a certain man at my side ran and told Joab, 'Behold, I saw Absalom hanged in an oak.'"

"'And behold thou sawest him!' exclaimed Joab. 'And why didst thou not smite him there to the ground?—and I would have given thee ten shekels of silver and a girdle.'

"And the man said unto Joab, 'Though I should receive a thousand shekels of silver in mine hand, yet would I not put forth mine hand against the king's son; for in our hearing the king charged thee, and Abishai, and Ittai, saying, 'Beware that none touch the young man Absalom.'

"'Then Joab drew near with three darts in his hand, and thrust them through the heart of Absalom as he hung alive in the midst of the oak. And ten young men that bare Joab's armor compassed about, and smote Absalom, and slew him, and cast him into a great pit in the wood, and laid a very great heap of stones upon him.' Thus perished the son of treason, slain ingloriously, while his own hands could not turn aside the weapons of war, driven away with curses, and cast out from the sepulchre of his fathers."

"My father hath told me of the battle in the forest of Ephraim," said Heman, "although it was after he had gone down into Egypt. It was surely a day of darkness unto Israel."

"Thou sayest truly," replied Eleazar. "The wood

devoured more than the sword, and in that day was a very great slaughter, even twenty thousand men."

"Didst thou see the king when he received the tidings of Absalom's death?" asked Heman.

"Nay, my son," replied Eleazar. "Who might match the speed of Ahimaaz, the son of Zadok? for he it was that earnestly besought Joab, saying, 'Let me run and bear the king tidings how that the Lord hath avenged him of his enemies.'

"'This day thou shalt bear no tidings,' said Joab, 'because the king's son is dead.'

"'Then,' said Joab to Cush, 'Go tell the king what thou hast seen.' And Cush bowed himself unto Joab and ran.

"'But howsoever let me run, I pray thee, after Cush,' said Ahimaaz yet again to Joab.

"'Wherefore wilt thou run, my son,' asked Joab, 'seeing thou hast no tidings ready?'

"'But howsoever,' said Ahimaaz, 'let me run.'

"'And Joab said unto him, 'Run.'

"Then Ahimaaz ran by the way of the plain, and overran Cush. And David sat between the two gates of Mahanaim, waiting with an aching heart for tidings from the battle.

"And the watchman cried and told the king, 'Behold, a man running alone.'

"'If he be alone, there is tidings in his mouth,' said the king.

"'Behold another man running alone,' called the watchman.

"'He also bringeth tidings,' answered the king.

"And the watchman said, 'Methinks the running of

the foremost is like the running of Ahimaaz, the son of Zadok.'

"And the king said, 'He is a good man, and cometh with good tidings.'

"And Ahimaaz called from afar, and said unto the king, 'All is well.'

"Then, as he drew near, he fell down to the earth upon his face before the king, and said, 'Blessed be the Lord thy God which hath delivered up the men that lifted their hand against my lord the king.'

"'Is the young man, Absalom, safe?' asked David.

"And Ahimaaz answered, 'When Joab sent the king's servant, I saw a great tumult, but I knew not what it was.'

"And behold Cushi came, saying, 'Tidings, my lord the king; for the Lord hath avenged thee this day of all them that rose up against thee.'

"'Is the young man, Absalom, safe?' repeated David; and all that heard those words of beseeching, agonizing earnestness, saw only that he was a father, and forgot that he was a king.

"And Cushi answered, 'The enemies of my lord the king, and all that rise against thee to do thee hurt, be as that young man is.'

"'O, my son Absalom,' wailed the stricken father, as bowing low beneath the crushing might of his sorrow, he went up to the chamber over the gate; 'my son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom! my son, my son.'

Both Azariah and Heman were silent; for so dear was David unto Israel, that the tale of his sorrow touched the fount of quick and living sympathy in the heart of every Hebrew, and the young men were present in spirit with

the royal mourner whose tears fell fast and bitterly in the chamber over the gate at Mahanaim; and they grew indignant at the remembrance of the stern chidings of the victorious Joab, which, as merciless weapons of war, wounded afresh the crushed and bleeding heart of the stricken king.

"Ye see, my children, the wages of sin," remarked Eleazar, readily divining the thoughts of his guests. "This was now the third son, by whose untimely death David was smitten down unto the earth. He had fasted, and wept, and prayed in deepest sorrow, for the life of the young child, unto whom he clave with an exceeding love, even the elder brother of Solomon; but he read at last, in the faces of his trembling servants, the tidings which they dared not speak, — 'The child is dead.' His spirit had been wrung in shame and anguish for the sin and death of Ammon, and now he drank the full cup of bitterest agony, as he saw Absalom treasonably assuming his father's crown and sceptre, sending twenty thousand men of Israel quickly from the light of the living, and going down himself into a grave, from whose thick darkness came forth no ray of hope. All these were smittings of the rod of judgment, which trembled ever and anon over the head of David, after his sin in the matter of Uriah the Hittite."

"I know not how it is," remarked Azariah; "but, when I read the bitter repentings of our king, my heart forgetteth his presumptuous sins, and longeth to take up the words of his penitent spirit, 'Cleanse thou me from secret faults.'"

"It is because he therein offereth the sacrifice of an humble and contrite heart, which the Lord will not despise, and which they whose souls are converted by His law

delight to render unto him," answered Eleazar. "Many times have mine eyes rained down with tears, as I have bowed in spirit with David, saying :

"Have mercy upon me, O God,
According to thy loving kindness ;
According to the multitude of thy tender mercies,
Blot out my transgressions."

"This psalm of the repentings of David sounded forth from the depths of a great sorrow, and all Israel hath wept because of it. Alas! that he who had trodden upon the high mountains of praise, where his harp-strings trembled beneath his lofty songs of the unsearchable glory of God, should have ever gone down into the horrible pit and miry clay, whence his wailing sighs, his agonizing supplications, his voice struggling as through choking tears of bitterness, shall stir the hearts of unborn generations. I think of the strains of that harp which shall evermore be of a matchless sweetness in Israel, and of the heights to which they lift the soul, as on eagle's wings, unto views of the Almighty, all glorious as the open vision of Moses upon Sinai ; even the song which David sang when the Lord delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies, and from Saul.

"I will love thee, O Lord, my strength.
The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer ;
My God, my strength, in whom I will trust ;
My buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.
He bowed the heavens also, and came down,
And darkness was under his feet.
And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly ;
Yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind.
He made darkness his secret place ;

His pavilion round about him were dark waters
And thick clouds of the skies.
The Lord also thundered in the heavens,
And the Highest gave his voice ;
Hail-stones and coals of fire.
Yea, he sent out his arrows, and scattered them,
And he shot out lightnings, and discomfited them.
Then the channels of waters were seen,
And the foundations of the world were discovered at thy rebuke,
O Lord,
At the blast of the breath of thy nostrils.
The Lord liveth ; and blessed be my Rock,
And let the God of my salvation be exalted."

"Alas for the days of darkness," added Eleazar, "when the strong wings of David's spirit were folded in sin and sorrow, and he who had soared on high sat upon the ground in sackcloth and ashes : when the harp, which had been tuned before the pavilion of the Almighty, wailed forth its touching notes of woe, as from the valley of the shadow of death.

"I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing :
I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me.
I am weary of my crying : my throat is dried :
Mine eyes fail while I wait for my God.
O God, thou knowest my foolishness,
And my sins are not hid from thee.
Reproach hath broken my heart,
And I am full of heaviness.
And I looked for some to take pity, but there was none ;
And for comforters, but I found none.

"My tears have been my meat, day and night,
While they continually say unto me, Where is thy God ?"

"Orion maketh known the middle watch of the night,"

remarked Azariah unto Heman, pointing upward through the open court to the sparkling heavens, "and surely it is a reproach unto us to keep an old man from his bed, and take away slumber from his eyes."

"Nay, nay, my children," answered Eleazar, "I am not weary; ye have refreshed my spirit as in the days of my youth. Nevertheless, it is well that we should lie down and sleep, and on the morrow we will walk about Hebron, and I will lead the way unto the sepulchre of Eleazar, by the brook Eschol."

"And on the day after, if it seem good unto thee, we will journey in the wilderness of Ziph," said Azariah, "for so Heman desireth; and I have likewise promised my sister Sarah that I lead her into the cave of Adullam, and the strongholds of Engedi; yea, she desireth a journey of many days, that she may go down and behold the dwelling-place of David, in the wilderness of Maon."

"And wilt thou likewise take thy wife with thee?" asked Eleazar of Heman.

"Nay," answered Heman, "Hagar and Bathsheba will remain at Hebron, because of the weariness of the way; but Sarah forgetteth toil and danger if she may but walk in the footsteps of David, and behold the rocks and mountains which have uttered back their voices to the songs he has sung."

"This night, my children," said Eleazar, as he rose to give the young men his blessing, "I have spoken of King David in the precious praises he hath recorded for the children of Israel, and in the sorrows which came upon a father's heart when he had transgressed the law of the Lord. At another eventide we will look unto the bright fields of promise that open far and wide before the vision of David the prophet, and listen to the words of him, who,

standing as on a lofty watch-tower, beholdeth the glory of the future ages, and speaketh glad tidings of things to come, waxing strong as the voice of the trumpet upon Sinai, and full of hope and blessing as the words of the Angel of the Covenant."

CHAPTER V.

THE CONSECRATION.

UPON a bright summer day, nearly a year after the dedication of the temple, Azariah sat alone, and deeply buried in thought, in the court of his father, Ahimaaz. An awning was drawn nearly over the court to protect it from the fierce sunbeams, for it was just past noontide, while a fountain was freshening the air by its breath of coolness, and making pleasant melody by its plashing of falling waters. Everything invited to repose: the prostrating heat of the climate, the cushioned couches ranged along the sides of the court, and the lulling music of the fountain, which was the only sound that broke upon the silence of the dwelling, in that hour, consecrated to slumber. But the busy thoughts of Azariah would not suffer him to sleep. For a long time his reverie went on undisturbed; but at length footsteps approached along the corridor surrounding the court, and a door opened to the entrance of his mother, Hadassah.

"Hath aught troubled thee, my son?" asked Hadassah, seating herself by his side, and noticing his abstracted air and earnest countenance.

"Thou knowest that the Feast of the New Moon draweth nigh," answered Azariah, hardly lifting his eyes from the ground.

"I know it well," rejoined Hadassah, "and that thou on that day art to be consecrated a priest in the Lord's house

forever. But surely this troubleth not thy spirit. It rather giveth thee cause for rejoicing. Truly, my son, thou art highly favored; for to whom are the eyes of all the people turned, but unto thee, that in future years thou mayest bear up the honors of thy fathers, and become the high priest of Israel?"

"Thy words are true, my mother," replied Azariah; "yet oftentimes my spirit fainteth, when I look onward and afar along the high path which the Lord hath marked out for my feet. From my earliest thoughts thou hast thyself brought me, as it were, again and again into the presence of God. Thou hast taught me his commandments. Thou hast rehearsed unto me his counsels and his awful judgments. Thou hast made me tremble before his holiness. And when I remember his marvellous doings in the land of Egypt, and at the Red Sea, in the wilderness, and at the Mount of Sinai; when in the night watches I look upward on the moon and stars which he hath ordained, and meditate upon his unsearchable greatness; when I feel, with David, that neither heaven nor earth, neither the wings of the morning nor the uttermost parts of the sea, can hide me from his presence; and know likewise, that this overshadowing God, whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, chargeth even his angels with folly, then my heart melteth for fear of Him; for who am I, that I should minister before the God of all the earth, even in his holy temple?"

"It moveth my heart to thanksgivings, that thus thou dost regard thy holy vocation," answered Hadassah. "It is good that thine own soul be abased, that the Lord may lift thee up. Fear not, my son. When thou standest before the altar of the Lord, he who called David from the sheepfold shall gird thee with strength, and shed upon thy

head the oil of gladness. While thou meditatest on the greatness and holiness of the Lord, forget not his loving kindness. Remember his mercy in choosing the sons of Jacob unto himself, and in ordaining for them a priesthood who shall minister before Him throughout their generations. Remember that the Lord hath given unto thee thy portion as the first-born son of Ahimaaz, and holdeth in his hand thy lofty heritage in the high-priesthood of Israel. Fear not, my son; thy God is thy Father. He shall commune with thee between the temple and the altar. He shall call upon thee as upon the young child Samuel, and thou shalt answer, 'Here am I.'

"Thy words are to my soul as a lasting heritage, my mother," answered Azariah; "even an heritage of strength and joy. When thus thou speakest, my soul forgetteth its trembling, and layeth hold on the help of the Lord. Then, as I stand in spirit before the bleeding sin-offering, or the smoking of the kindling incense, I delight in the service of the Lord, and glory that I am of the sons of Aaron. And, as the far-off future comes to me in brightening visions, when my heart shall beat beneath the sacred breast-plate of Aaron, when my limbs shall bow before the unveiled mercy-seat, and over my head shall hang the overshadowing glory of the cherubim; then, even while my spirit is abased in the dust, doth it go forth in exulting praise to the God who hath chosen me, even me, to so glorious an inheritance, and spread before me honors more excellent than the crown of Solomon."

"May thy own spirit still lie low in the dust, my son. May thy glorying evermore be in the Lord," answered Hadassah, fervently.

"When He cometh, who is the light of promise, shall he be a priest unto Israel?" asked Azariah.

"'The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent.' 'Thou art a priest forever, after the order of Melchisedek,'" answered Hadassah, in the words of David.

"How can these things be?" rejoined Azariah. "Surely, the glorious One to come shall be of the seed of David, of the tribe of Judah. And shall Judah take the ministry of Levi? Hath not the Lord given his altars in charge to the sons of Aaron forever?"

"'A priest forever,' not of the sons of Aaron, but 'after the order of Melchisedek,'" repeated Hadassah; "after the likeness of him who was king of Salem, and priest of the most high God, long ages before Aaron was. Seest thou not, my son, that this foreshadowing of the Holy One betokeneth not only a kingdom, but a priesthood, higher and greater than that of Aaron, before whose sacrifice the offerings of Levi shall hide themselves, even as, in dreams, the sun and moon and stars bowed in reverence to him whom the Lord appointed to become a star of hope in Egypt, the deliverer and saviour of his people."

"Yet what shall be that sacrifice of the Anointed One?" pursued Azariah; "for David speaketh in his name, saying, 'Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened; burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required.'"

"What shall be the sacrifice of the Holy One we cannot tell," answered Hadassah, "because the Lord, in his wisdom, hath not yet opened our eyes concerning it. Neither doth it become us, who are but the children of yesterday, and know nothing, to seek with rash hand to unlock the counsels of the Almighty. Remember the words of Moses, 'The hidden things belong unto God;

but the things that are revealed belong unto us and our children forever.”

“‘A priest after the order of Melchisedek.’ ‘A prophet like unto Moses.’ ‘A king whose throne shall endure as the sun,’” said Azariah. “How glorious shall be the promised One of Israel. May his coming be hastened.”

“How blessed shall be their eyes upon whom that light shall shine,” said Hadassah. “Then truly the earth shall rejoice afresh, as in the day when the Lord ‘laid the corner-stone thereof.’ The morning stars shall again sing together, and all the sons of God shall shout for joy.”

Both mother and son were silent, as each sought to penetrate, in spirit, through the long vista of prophecy, yet dimly lighted from on high. At length Azariah rose, and paced to and fro, with slow tread and still anxious countenance. Hadassah saw that the subject of his thoughts was changed, and that another burden was now weighing upon her son; but she spoke not, waiting till he should reveal unto her all that was in his heart. After a long interval of abstracted silence, he said, abruptly, “My father, Ahimaaz, desireth that, after the days of my consecration to the priesthood be fulfilled, I become betrothed to Miriam, the daughter of Ithamar.”

“And doth not the thing please thee, my son?” inquired Hadassah.

“Nay, my mother, for my heart can have no communion with the maiden. She delighteth only in riches and splendor, in many changes of raiment, and in glorious apparel. She taketh no pleasure in the dealings of the Almighty with his people. She forgetteth the hand that hath led us out from bondage. She lifteth not her eyes to the glory of the promises, though they shine fair and bright as the bow of the Covenant. When she singeth to her

harp, the Psalms of David fall from her lips ‘as a tale that is told;’ and I marvel if her soul kindle, should she stand on the shore of the Red Sea, and listen there to the triumphant strains of our renowned prophetess, by whose name she is called.”

“But, my son,” answered Hadassah, “thou knowest that Ahimaaz hath long since chosen Miriam for thee, among all the daughters of our tribe; that Ithamar already regardeth thee as a son; and that the souls of Ahimaaz and Ithamar have been as those of David and Jonathan from their youth up.”

“These are the things that so greatly trouble me,” answered Azariah. “I would not break the commandment, ‘Honor thy father and thy mother;’ but can I take the vows of marriage with Miriam, when my soul loveth her not? Wilt not thou plead my cause, my mother? Wilt not thou entreat Ahimaaz, that he put this thing altogether from his counsels?”

Ithamar, the chosen friend of Ahimaaz, and a priest renowned in the law, had again and again been smitten by the loss of children, until not one son was left unto him to bear up his name, and inherit his sacred office in Israel. He had, therefore, been deeply gratified by the proposal of Ahimaaz, that a covenant of betrothal should be formed between Azariah and his only daughter. Although his own sons were cut off, his daughter’s sons might yet minister before the altar, and bear the sacred honors of the high-priesthood. Irrespective of this, Ithamar greatly loved Azariah; the purity of his life, and his fervent devotion to his high calling, rendered him the one, above all others, whom Ithamar would have chosen for a son-in-law. On the other hand, whom could Ahimaaz choose more worthily for the wife of his son, than the daughter

of Ithamar? Her Levitical, even her Aaronic, genealogy was traceable in an unbroken line for several generations, and the damsel was fair to look upon. But, as Azariah approached maturity, the consummation of the covenant was put off at his request from time to time, while he became increasingly convinced that Miriam could never become the wife of his heart. The chosen companion of his imagination was one who could, like his mother Hadassah, appreciate the duties of his high vocation and reverence its honors; one whose spirit could sympathize with the meditations of his own, or soar in unison with his loftiest aspirations; one who should meekly walk in the deep-toned faith and fervent piety springing from a heartfelt devotion to the God of Abraham.

The delay of Azariah with regard to the betrothal, was felt by none more deeply than by Miriam herself. The circumstances of her life had but strengthened the natural bias of a character naturally imperious and haughty. Her position in society had commanded universal respect, and her rare beauty had gained the instinctive admiration of all, till she came to regard herself as one whom it was an honor to serve and obey. She had not been ignorant of her father's choice of a son-in-law; and as, from time to time, she had met with Azariah, she discovered that she had no place in his heart. At first she was merely surprised at this; but, as time wore on, and she observed that Azariah, while he neglected not, in her presence, the forms of Hebrew courtesy, never betrayed, by the least look or tone, the slightest partiality in her favor, her spirit was roused within her. Mortified pride, together with a sense of the difficulty of the attainment at which she aimed, daily strengthened her determination, that he, who alone among the sons of Jerusalem had dared to treat her with indiffer-

ence, should become subservient to her power. As she contemplated the character of Azariah, its dignity, founded on the principles of truth and righteousness, commanded her reverence. His high sphere of thought and feeling awakened her admiration; the universal esteem in which he was held, together with his heirship to the highest office of the Hebrews, aroused her pride; and, under the combined influence of these sentiments, her affections became interested to their full degree of susceptibility in a superficial and selfish character.

It was the day before the new moon, that Azariah, bearing a message from his father, passed along the streets of Mount Zion into the dwelling of Ithamar. It was yet early in the day; but Ithamar had gone out from his house, and Azariah seated himself in the court, awaiting his return. This court was twenty cubits square, and was surrounded on every side by a cloistered colonnade, over which ran an open gallery. The roof of the gallery was supported by richly-carved pillars of cedar, which rested on the pavement of the court beneath, and its balustrade was likewise formed of open work of cedar, of rare and curious devices. The wall of the cloister, which surrounded the lower part of the court, was formed of sculptured stone, and ornamented at equal distances by costly stones of exceeding size and beauty, which were fitted in settings of shining gold. The floor was inlaid with marble, where the richest variegations of color contrasted with purest white, and all was fitted together with the skill of a cunning workman. The smoke of fragrant odors curled gracefully from golden urns, of massive size and gorgeous workmanship; and the central fountain, constructed with most elaborate art, waited to purify the air by its cooling showers. Around were arranged couches, whose cover-

ings of vermilion dye were decked with embroidery of gold, and mats whose elastic softness gave forth no sound from the heaviest footfall.

As Azariah stood admiring the delicate blossoms of a climbing plant, that had been trained along the wall in one angle of the court, there fell upon his ear the tones of a harp, with an exceeding sweetness. The strain was plaintive even to sadness, and its tones of lonely sorrow flowed forth in trembling, dying notes, —

“That fall as soft as snow on the sea,
And melt in the heart as instantly.”

Azariah partook largely of the prevailing characteristics of his people, — a passionate love of music, — and, as he listened, entranced with delight, to touches that moved the fount of tears, slowly the notes of hope and joy became blended with the harmony, like light arising out of darkness; and, as these became its ruling expression, a voice of melody melted upon the air in the words of David.

“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures,
He leadeth me beside the still waters.
Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil:
For thou art with me;
Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.”

“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
All the days of my life:
And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”

The song ceased. Its lingering sweetness yet flooded the soul of the rapt listener, and in breathless silence he awaited its renewal, but in vain. The door of that apartment of the women whence the music had evidently pro-

ceeded, was slightly opened from the gallery above, and its windows of lattice-work were shaded by falling curtains; but no further sound or motion revealed its living occupant. At length Azariah, deciding to defer his message unto Ithamar to another hour, went forth from the court, vainly attempting to divine who was the author of the melody. Still did its tones linger in his spirit all the day long, and in the stillness of the night-watches, till they seemed but the audible response to those deep vibrations to which his own heart had trembled, as over it swept the breath of spiritual harmonies.

The Feast of the New Moon, which now approached, was distinguished above the common monthly observances of that festival, in its occurring on the first day of the seventh month, which was likewise the commencement of the civil year. It was, therefore, hallowed with peculiar solemnities, and ushered in by a special blowing of trumpets, whence it was called the “Feast of Trumpets.”

The courts of the temple were filled before the hour of morning sacrifice on the hallowed day; for, besides the great interest with which it was usually regarded, was now added the circumstance that it was the appointed time for the consecration of the grandson of Zadok, the high priest of Israel. In addition to the customary sacrifices appointed for the Feast of the New Moon, the sacrifice of a bullock, a ram, and seven lambs, was presented for a burnt-offering, and a goat for a sin-offering, with their various accompanying solemnities, which were specially ordained to hallow the beginning of another year, and to consecrate the first fruits of its time unto the Lord.

At length these were all accomplished, and the assembled people awaited the coming of Azariah. All eyes were turned upon him, as, conducted by priests, he

passed through the court of the Israelites. As he reached the steps which led to the court of the priests, he, with his conductors, paused in reverent awe, while a single voice of rich melody broke forth from the band of the Levites:

“Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord,
And who shall stand in his holy place?”

And, accompanied by the full-swelling peal of psalteries and high-sounding cymbals, of stringed instruments and organs, the full choir of singers uttered the sacred response:

“He that hath clean hands and a pure heart;
Who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity,
Nor sworn deceitfully.
He shall receive the blessing from the Lord,
And righteousness from the God of his salvation.”

The required purifications were then performed at the brazen laver, after which Azariah was solemnly clothed in the priest's garments, — the robe, the girdle, and the mitre. Then followed a sin-offering for his atonement; a burnt-offering in token of his dedication to God; a sacrifice of consecration, whose blood was applied to his ears, hands, and feet, expressing that his whole powers were hereafter sacred unto the Lord; and the sprinkling of blood and of holy oil, all typical of the unsullied purity of the God who had ordained them, and of the entire and perpetual consecration of him who assumed them to His service forever.

In the southern area of the court of the Israelites, in a situation which commanded a full view of the solemnities of consecration, knelt Hadassah, with her three daughters. Gratitude and holy joy struggled for the mastery in her

heart, as she looked upon her beloved son, kneeling with folded hands and uplifted eyes before the steps of the sanctuary, while over his garments was sprinkled the holy oil and the blood of sacrifice, by the hand of Ahimaaz his father. Sarah's pious heart trembled within her as she realized the sacredness of those life-long vows which he was now assuming, who from earliest childhood had been her play-mate and dearest companion; and Ruth, whose love for Azariah amounted almost to reverence, silently prayed, with the beautiful faith of childhood, that her brother might evermore abide beneath the shadow of the Almighty. At a little distance knelt Miriam, the daughter of Ithamar, her heart swelling with the tumult of its contending emotions; and by her side bowed one, whose feet then first trod the temple courts, whose breath of prayer for the first time ascended before its sacred oracle, and before whose eyes its dazzling magnificence arose as a marvellous vision. As the stranger maiden first gazed upon the temple's gorgeous splendor, she said, in her heart, “Lo! the half hath not been told me; I have heard by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth.” With a kindling spirit she watched the burning sacrifices, the smoking incense, and the veiled oracle; and, as she witnessed the consecration of Azariah to the ministry of that imposing service, he seemed to her fervent soul as allied to the beings of a heavenly sphere, bright with the light of purity, and clothed with the excellency of dignity. And when at length the various ceremonies were all performed, and the voices of the Levites once more swelled through court, and cloister, and pillared corridor, in the subdued harmonies of song, then her spirit overflowed with its strange delight, and she wept in the fulness of her bliss. The psalm was one that deeply stirred the sympathies of

Israel, first expressing the feelings of him who had been set apart to minister for them before the God of their fathers, and then responding thereto with assurances unto him of divine strength and protection, which came with the swellings of joyful tears, and the swift-winged breath of prayer, from the hearts of the congregated thousands of Mount Moriah :

“ I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills,
Whence cometh my help.
My help cometh from the Lord,
Which made heaven and earth.

“ He will not suffer thy foot to be moved :
He that keepeth thee will not slumber.
Behold, he that keepeth Israel
Shall neither slumber nor sleep.
The Lord is thy keeper ;
The Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand.
The sun shall not smite thee by day,
Nor the moon by night :
The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil ;
He shall preserve thy soul.
The Lord shall preserve thy going out
And thy coming in,
From this time forth, and even forever more.”

The services of the consecration were finished ; the people slowly dispersed from the temple courts, many of them yet lingering in the mountain of the House. The priests were busied in preparing the altars for future service, and Azariah, with a full heart, sought the solitude of his chamber in the cloisters, rejoicing in the ordinance which required him to depart not, for seven days and nights, from the sacred inclosure of the temple.

CHAPTER VI.

FULFILLED HOPES.

It was the day after the seven days of Azariah's consecration to the priestly office were fulfilled, and about the third hour. In the high-walled garden, which lay to the east of the dwelling of Ahimaaz, beneath an arbor deeply shaded by myrtles and roses, reclined Bathsheba, in a half-waking, half-dreaming state, of just the order to enjoy the conscious luxury of rest. Here and there a stray sunbeam quivered through the deep foliage with soft and shadowy light ; the slight breezes shook out the fragrance of flowers upon the morning air, and the hum of life in the city below was softened upon Mount Zion into pleasant murmuring sounds as the song of distant waters.

Meanwhile Sarah came forth from the open doors of the summer parlor, and, passing slowly along the garden, stopping now to search for the budding of a favorite plant, and again to admire the blossoming of another, she at length entered the arbor where lay her half-sleeping sister. As she seated herself with her embroidery in her hand, Bathsheba slightly raised herself, saying : “ Art thou never weary, my sister ? Thy fingers have wrought upon that tapestry since the second cock-crowing.”

“ My heart taketh pleasure in the work,” answered Sarah. “ Dost thou not see the beauty of the devices ? ” she continued, as she spread out the costly fabric of Tyrian purple, and displayed its delicate embroidery of blue and

gold. When it shall be finished, the hangings of the chamber of Pharaoh's daughter shall not surpass it. But I would thy hands were diligent to do cunning work, that thou mightest give me thy help; for I have wrought a long time, and now I marvel if the work be complete before the Feast of the Passover."

"It is nought but a weariness," replied Bathsheba; "mine eye loveth to gaze upon its beauty, but my fingers will I not vex therewith."

"But, my sister," pursued Sarah, "dost thou not know that it is a praise to a daughter of our people, that her heart be wise, and her hands skilful to do curious needle-work? Hath it not been told thee, that diligence is her dowry and her crown?"

"Thou sayest well," replied Bathsheba; "but the day waxeth warm, and mine eyelids are heavy with slumber." So saying, she re-arranged the cushion for her head, and again composed herself to rest. The half-bound braids of her shining hair fell loosely over her neck and shoulders; her cheek borrowed a yet richer tint from its crimson pillow; her eyes became more and more closely veiled, till their long lashes lay upon her cheeks, and she walked once more in the golden light of dreams.

Hasty footsteps approached the arbor, and a maid-servant brought the tidings that Azariah had returned from the temple, and craved the presence of Sarah in the court.

"Welcome, thrice welcome to thy father's house!" said Sarah, warmly returning the salutation of Azariah. "Hast thou seen our mother, Hadassah?"

"Yea, verily," answered Azariah, "I have held converse with her for an hour, but now she hath gone unto her maidens; therefore I besought that thou mightest come unto me."

The thoughts of the brother and sister naturally retraced the time of their separation; and Azariah related to Sarah his various experiences on the eventful day of his consecration, and during his week's sojourn in the temple, and his anticipations of the great day of Atonement, which, occurring on the tenth of the seventh month, was now just at hand. At length, in a pause in the conversation, during which Sarah had resumed her embroidery, Azariah asked abruptly, —

"My sister, hast thou seen the maiden that now tarrieth in the dwelling of Ithamar?"

"I have seen her," answered Sarah. "She is of a beautiful countenance."

"Whence doth she come to Jerusalem?" asked Azariah.

"Indeed, my brother, I know not," replied Sarah, without lifting her eyes from her work; "I have heard the name of her dwelling, but now it hath gone from me."

"Hast thou not heard the name of the damsel," continued Azariah, "and who is her father in Israel?"

"Her name is Zillah," replied Sarah, "and she hath come hither because of affliction, that she may" —

"Nay, my sister," interrupted Azariah, with a sudden impatience of tone, so foreign to his usual manner that Sarah dropped her embroidery, and lifted her eyes in surprise. "Nay, my sister. Is she of the tribe of Levi?"

"Of Levi," repeated Sarah, as if striving to collect her scattered thoughts. "She cometh from the borders of the sea, I think from among the dwellings of Ephraim; yet, even now I bethink me, my brother, the damsel is of our own tribe; for I remember the words of Adah unto Hadassah, our mother, concerning her. She is an orphan of Levi."

"Hear me, my sister," said Azariah, after a short pause. "The great day of Atonement draweth near, and, after that, thou shalt ask this favor at the hand of Hadassah; that she make a feast, and bid thereto Adah and Miriam, with the stranger that tarrieth within their gates; and thou shalt bring thy guests to the house-top at an early hour, and there will I meet thee, for I would fain see this damsel of whom I have spoken."

"Beware, my brother, said Sarah, "lest thy heart be taken captive with the beauty of the maiden. Thou rememberest Miriam, and the wishes" —

"Thy words are vanity," exclaimed Azariah, "and my soul is weary thereof. Forgive me, my sister, if with hasty speech I have wounded thy spirit, for I am troubled."

It was the middle watch of the night. The lamps shed their mellow light over the luxurious apartment of Miriam, revealing, in softened beauty, its rich appointments, and costly odors slowly burned in delicately wrought urns of the purest alabaster. But the maiden had sat alone since eventide. It was then that she, with her mother and guest, had been bidden to the banquet of Hadassah; and, through the tale-bearing of a maid-servant, she had learned that this banquet was made at the request of Azariah, in honor of her stranger guest. Several other circumstances, slight in themselves, but weighty in their testimony to her jealous spirit, convinced her that the orphan Zillah had gained a place in the thoughts of the son of Ahimaaz, which had never been given unto herself. Through the long midnight hours, jealousy, anger, revenge, and pride, all raged in wild tumult, each struggling for the mastery in her soul. At length Miriam rose, and essayed to depart from her chamber. But as she passed a polished

mirror of silver, she stopped suddenly at the vision it presented. "Not thus will I go," she murmured, as she gazed upon her dishevelled hair, and a face whose every feature was marked by traces of passionate tears. So saying, she bathed her swollen face, arranged her disordered robe, and poured fragrant ointment upon the gathered bands of her hair. Again she approached the door of her apartment, and stepped into the gallery of the court. All was hushed. She leaned for a moment upon the balustrade, and gazed upon the starry gloom of night; but its solemn quiet accorded not with her tumultuous feelings, and she passed with noiseless steps to the door of an apartment at a little distance from her own, which she opened with trembling hand, and entered.

A solitary light near the couch betrayed the occupant of the room, the orphan Zillah, in the silence of slumber. A happy dream was evidently upon the soul of the maiden, for the cheek which was partially pillowed upon the hand was glowing with emotion, and the lips were once and again parted as if to speak. Yet still, upon the curtained eyes and polished brow there lay a calm so profound, and over the whole countenance so matchless a charm, that Miriam, in spite of herself, gazed upon her with admiration. But it was only for a moment. The sleeper, as if half-conscious of the presence of another, suddenly opened her eyes; and, as she saw one standing by her couch, she would have uttered a cry; but Miriam put her finger on her lips to enjoin silence, and said, in a low tone, "I have somewhat to say to thee, maiden."

The gentle Zillah trembled in every limb, as a strange sense of impending evil crept chillingly over her spirit; but she raised herself upon her couch, and inquired, "Dost thou require anything at my hands?"

"I require nought of thee," replied Miriam, in a tone of withering bitterness, "but that thou depart from Jerusalem, and get thee to thine own place. Dost thou think in thy heart that I do not know of thy wiles? Hast thou not sought to beguile the heart of the son of Ahimaaz? Did he not behold thee, when he walked in the mountain of the house, during his days of consecration, and thou didst lift up thy veil, when thou hadst reached the top of Moriah, with the feigned intent to look upon the glory of Jerusalem? And again, when thou wentest to the temple with Adah, didst not thou tarry by her side while she spake unto Azariah in the court of the Israelites? And this very evening didst not thou seek, with soft speech, to find grace in his eyes, while he sat in the court with Ithamar, and listened unto the words which thou spakest unto a maid-servant in the gallery? All this thou hast done to steal away the heart of him, who, hadst thou not come hither, would soon have spoken in my ears the vows of betrothal. Think not that this grieveth me aught; for my soul scorneth tears. If the son of Ahimaaz counteth it a light thing to possess the hand of Miriam, let him know that the prince of Issachar hath entreated me of my father; that Zimri, renowned in riches, and, like Absalom, praised in all Israel for his beauty, hath sought to find favor in my eyes; and that Necho, the son of Pharaoh's sister, hath offered to become a proselyte of the gate for my sake. My own spirit shall counsel me, and the son of Ahimaaz shall know that he is unto me but as a passing cloud of the morning. But shalt thou, a nameless orphan in Jerusalem, exalt thyself above Ithamar's daughter? Deceive not thyself with the thought, maiden. Cast away thy vain fancies; and presume not in thy foolish heart to aspire unto the highest honor that a

daughter of our people can attain, even that from her shall descend the future high priests of Israel."

Zillah's first emotions were those of amazement at the words of Miriam; but, as she listened to her charge of treachery and guile, the spirit of the Hebrew maiden was roused within her, and, while an indignant scorn, blended with the calm dignity of conscious innocence, sat upon her face, she answered: "Daughter of Ithamar, thy speech is false. Even thy own heart beareth witness to thee against thy words. If Zillah's heart were full of subtlety, as thou hast said, blessed be the grave which hath hidden my mother's eyes from the light."

"But thou hast wronged me, maiden," said Miriam, with a burning brow, "thou hast sought" —

"Nay," interrupted Zillah; "repeat not thy rash words. I have wronged thee not. I marvel," she continued, in a softened tone, as tears gushed from her eyes, "that thou canst willingly thus afflict the soul of the desolate orphan, whom the Almighty hath smitten."

"Maiden," said Miriam, "thou sayest thou hast not dealt treacherously with me. Wilt thou give me this night a pledge of the truth of thy words? Wilt thou bind thyself by a vow that thou wilt never be the wife of Azariah, the son of Ahimaaz?"

"Nay," replied Zillah, as again the insulted pride of woman sent the crimson tide over her face; "I will utter no rash vows, and in no covenant whatsoever will I bind my soul. On the morrow I will depart from Jerusalem, and I will not again speak with thee concerning this matter, either less or more."

It now drew near the close of the vintage, and from the hills of Jerusalem the surrounding country seemed alive with rejoicing laborers, who bore upon their heads the

heavily-laden baskets of grapes, or trod the wine-presses with songs and shouts of gladness. But a few days remained for the work, and the spirit of industry imparted new vigor to every muscle, and spread a fresher glow upon every face, as all worked diligently, that the ingathering might be accomplished before the approaching Feast of Tabernacles.

This scene of life and beauty lay outspread before the guests of Hadassah, as they walked upon the house-top of Ahimaaz. Aside from the several groups that were scattered here and there, Bathsheba and Ruth had led the Egyptian Hagar, who now dwelt in Jerusalem, to the eastern side of the dwelling, overlooking a small garden in the valley at the foot of Mount Zion, which was ringing with the shouts of children. "It will make thy heart glad to watch the sports of these merry ones," said Bathsheba. "See, they have stained their faces with the juice of grapes, till they look like a band of young Ishmaelites; and mark the leader of the gambols, so wild doth he look in his coat of camel's hair, that I marvel if he be not a true son of Ishmael."

The children were arranging a caravan after the manner of those of Egypt. A part of the number were bowed with their heads and knees upon the ground, to supply the place of camels, while others carefully laded their backs with various parcels. As the burden-bearers began to imitate the slow, stately step of the camel, ever and anon their piles of mock merchandize came tumbling to the ground, which circumstance seemed to be received as a matter of joy, rather than as an untoward accident, so ringing with gladness were their accompanying peals of laughter.

"Where is the stranger-maiden?" asked Azariah of

Sarah, in a low tone, as he came, according to his word, to walk upon the house-top at eventide.

"On this very day she hath departed from Jerusalem," answered Sarah, "and returned to her own place."

"Unto the inheritance of Ephraim," exclaimed Azariah.

"Thus saith Miriam," answered Sarah, "unto the borders of the Great Sea."

"There are yet two days unto the Feast of Tabernacles," soliloquized Azariah, as, leaving Sarah, he bent his steps to the solitude of his own chamber; "and, when the feast is past, I will come into the presence of this maiden, though I search for her from Dan to Beersheba. Meanwhile, on the morrow I will go down unto Hebron, that I may hold converse with the aged Eleazar."

"Thrice blessed be thy coming, now thou art a priest of the Lord," said Eleazar, as on the next day he welcomed Azariah to his house. "Truly, the Lord remembereth me in great mercy."

The hour was yet early, and Azariah seated himself at the feet of Eleazar, recounting to him, with gratifying minuteness of detail, the various services of the two recent annual festivals, — the Feast of Trumpets, and the Great Day of Atonement. But suddenly he stopped in the midst of his words, for from the closed apartments of the women breathed forth the music of a harp unto a sacred psalm. Azariah hushed every pulse in breathless silence; the melody, the voice, the exquisite touchings of the harp-strings, all came over his spirit as a living utterance of the inexpressible sweetness of a remembered dream, and he listened again to the very song he had heard in the court of Ithamar.

"Tell me, Eleazar, who singeth that song?" exclaimed

Azariah, when the last tones of the voice had died away in silence.

"It is Zillah, the daughter of my son Eleazar, who hath perished with the sword," answered the aged man.

"And hath she not of late tarried in Jerusalem, in the house of Ithamar?" asked Azariah.

"Even so," answered Eleazar. "It was but yesterday that she came down unto Hebron."

"But they told me she had returned unto her dwelling-place in the borders of Ephraim," pursued Azariah; "and now thou sayest she is thy grand-daughter, even the brother's daughter of Adah, the mother of Miriam. If she be thy son's daughter, why hath she not dwelt in Hebron? And, if she be Miriam's kinswoman, why hath she never visited Jerusalem?"

"Listen, my son, and I will tell thee," replied Eleazar. "Tamar, the wife of my son, and the mother of Zillah, had a twin sister, Tirzah, who was married unto Eshton, one of the sons of Ephraim, and the hearts of these sisters were as one. Now, when Eleazar was laid in his sepulchre, Tamar could dwell no longer in Hebron, because it had become unto her as a well of bitterness; therefore, I gave unto her my blessing, and she took her infant daughter in her arms and went unto her sister, whose husband dwelt in his inheritance on the coast of the Great Sea. There, upon the beautiful plains of Sharon, the widow and the fatherless were nourished and cherished in love; and Tamar, as a true mother in Israel, diligently taught her daughter the law of the Lord. There, from a little child, did Zillah sit upon the seashore, where the fast-coming waves leaped over her feet; and there did she listen to the marvellous records of our people, as they fell from her mother's lips, like psalms unto the music of the sounding

sea. Thus hath she learned to ponder the wonderful history of our people, to look forward unto our glorious promises, to glory in being a daughter of Israel, and to worship in reverence before Israel's God.

"Many times have I gone unto the seashore, that I might behold the child; but now for many years I have seen her not, until at length she hath come unto me. One year ago, even just before the time of the dedication of the temple, Tamar was seized with a sickness by which she pined many months, till she went down into the grave. And, because Zillah still mourned bitterly for her mother, Tirzah besought her to come unto Jerusalem and Hebron, that her spirit might be revived within her. She came first unto Hebron, because her kinsfolk in Jerusalem were strangers unto her; and truly her visit was unto me as a precious oil of anointing, for she put afar her own spirit of heaviness, that she might fill an old man's heart with gladness.

"As it drew near the Feast of Trumpets, Zillah made ready to go up to Jerusalem, to the house of Adah, that she might remain therein until after the Feast of Tabernacles. But even yesterday she came back unto me to Hebron, even as Noah's dove that returned unto the ark, finding no rest for her feet.

"And I said, 'Why abidest thou not in the holy city, my daughter? Was not thy heart glad to go up unto the house of the Lord?'

"'Jerusalem overfloweth with pleasant things,' answered the maiden, 'and her temple is wondrous to behold; but my heart grew lonely because there was no one to rejoice in my joy, or remember the orphan's tears. In the gatherings in court and chamber I was a stranger. Even in Jerusalem my heart went out unto

mine own home. In the morning mine eyes longed to look afar on the glorious sea, and at eventide my soul waited for the low, deep music of its perpetual song."

"These are the words with which Zillah hath returned to me," continued Eleazar; "nevertheless, I yet hope that she may remain in Hebron, for a few weeks at the least, for she is a light unto my tabernacle."

"But whither goest thou, my son?" inquired Eleazar, as Azariah girded his robe, and bound his sandals upon his feet, in preparation for immediate departure.

"I return unto Jerusalem," answered Azariah; "and if on the morrow Ahimaaz shall stand in thy court, and entreat for me at thy hand, thy son's daughter, I beseech thee say him not nay."

That same evening a closely-veiled female passed along the streets of Mount Zion, unto the spacious dwelling of Ithamar, and craved audience of the master of the house. Ithamar soon appeared in the court, and to his surprise saluted Hadassah.

"I come in the name of Ahimaaz," said Hadassah, "because his heart failed him to bring unto thee the tidings which I bear. Our son, Azariah, hath asked a wife at the hands of his father; but, instead of seeking the hand of Miriam, thy daughter, he hath besought him for the sake of Zillah, the grand-daughter of Eleazar, of Hebron, who hath lately tarried within thy courts."

Instead of the expression of indignant and insulted feeling which Hadassah expected as a reply to her words, Ithamar bowed his head in his hands, and remained long in silence.

"The thing proceedeth from the Lord," he said at length, while the paleness of his face, so strangely contrasting with the shining black of his flowing beard, re-

vealed the conflict of his spirit, "neither can I speak concerning it, either bad or good. The Lord hath decreed of me, as of Eli, that my seed shall not stand within his holy place. Thou knowest," he continued, as his voice slightly trembled, "that two of my sons were hidden in the grave, ere yet their lips had said, 'My father;' and the third, the beautiful Asaph, how like an angel of comfort did he come to my smitten heart. But my soul trembled, even through the short ten years of his bright life, with a strange sense that its cup of brimming gladness should be broken; and, when the voice was still which had poured living music on my ear, and the feet, which had ever bounded to meet me, were laid low in the tomb, then was I stricken to the very dust. But, while yet I wept bitterly for my only son, Ahimaaz spake concerning Miriam, to be the wife of thy son, Azariah. And I bethought me, perhaps the Lord will yet remember me, and grant that my daughter's sons may one day minister, even in his most holy place. But, in his wisdom, he hath decreed that this, my last hope, be cut off. If the young man, Azariah, desireth not Miriam, he is free; no covenant hath been made touching the thing; and the words which have been spoken unto me in friendship, shall henceforth be as water, that cannot be gathered up."

Within three months Miriam was the wife of Zimri, and mistress of a dwelling in Jerusalem, which, in its spacious splendor and costly adornings, might almost vie with the palace of Solomon.

Both Eshton and Tirzah desired that the festival of Zillah's betrothal with Azariah might be celebrated in the home of her childhood. But the aged Eleazar pleaded so earnestly that the only daughter of his only son might take the solemn vows in his own court, that his request

was granted. The covenant of betrothal was, therefore, solemnized at Hebron; after which Zillah returned, with her mother's kindred, to dwell with them for a season.

In the ensuing spring-time, a nuptial band came unto the beautiful plains of Sharon, and the voice of the bridegroom called unto the bride in the ever-living poetry of their king:

"Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away;
For, lo! the winter is past—the rain is over and gone
The flowers appear on the earth;
The time of the singing of birds is come,
And the voice of the turtle is heard in our land;
The fig tree putteth forth her green figs,
And the vines, with the tender grapes, give a good smell.
Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away."

CHAPTER VII.

THE GREAT DAY OF ATONEMENT.

THIRTEEN years had passed since the dedication of the temple, and Solomon had completed his magnificent palace—the House of the Forest of Lebanon.¹ This gorgeous structure was situated upon Mount Zion, and was connected with the temple by a causeway, extending from Zion to Moriah, directly over the intervening valley. The building was of vast size and curious arrangement, being composed of different edifices, each appropriated to its own especial use, and all combined in one grand and symmetrical whole. The first building, which was somewhat similar to the court of an eastern dwelling, was one hundred cubits long, fifty cubits broad, and thirty cubits high, having a roof supported by pillars of cedar. Being sufficiently capacious to accommodate a multitude of persons, it was devoted to the hearing of causes, taking cognizance of suits, and general matters of state; over against this was a quadrangular structure, of thirty cubits, which conducted to a large and glorious temple, containing the throne of Solomon, whereon he sat in judgment. This throne was built of ivory, and overlaid with gold, having an ascent of six steps, guarded by twelve golden lions, one on either side of every step, and was, by universal consent, the finest and richest in the world. Adjoining the temple of the throne was the magnificent range of apart-

¹ Note G.

ments, known as the house of Pharaoh's daughter. Also, in the symmetrical order of arrangement which marked all the vast works of the king of the Hebrews, were disposed the other edifices necessary for the accommodation of his vast household, and the support of his royal magnificence. There were subterranean apartments, and multiplied ranges of rooms for sleep, for food, and for pleasure, and an immense banqueting-hall, whose table furniture was all of gold. Long colonnades, of massive cedar pillars, stretched onward, on every side, through the vast palace, giving a beautiful significance to its name, the House of the Forest of Lebanon; while the intervening corridors conducted to surrounding gardens and groves, of delightful shade; and the galleries above opened through long vistas upon extended prospects of the unrivalled scenery about Jerusalem. The internal finish of the apartments was of exceeding costliness and beauty. Some of them were wainscotted with choice stones, of rarest fineness and polish; others were ornamented with divers devices of colors and pictures; and yet others revealed the most elaborate art in their exquisite sculptures, "whereby were represented trees, and all sorts of plants, with the shades that arose from their branches, and leaves that hung down from them. These trees and plants covered the stone that was beneath them, and their leaves were wrought so prodigiously thin and subtle that you would think they were in motion." And Solomon made the whole building entirely of white stones, and cedar-wood, and gold and silver. He also adorned the roofs and walls with stones, set in gold, and beautified them in the same manner as he had beautified the temple of God.

When all was completed, and Solomon had established himself in his royal abode, he made a great feast, that they

who were bidden might behold the finished glory of his palace, and congratulate him upon his riches and wisdom.

The opening of the festival was celebrated by a royal banquet, which, according to the custom of the East, was the commencement of several days' festivities. As the evening of the appointed day drew nigh, the pomp and splendor of the known world seemed represented in the House of the Forest of Lebanon. The governors of distant provinces, and ambassadors of foreign nations, princes of India and Ethiopia, Tyre and Damascus, queens of the east, and princesses of Egypt, together with the flower and pride of the Hebrew nation, formed the assemblage of that brilliant court. Solomon, "arrayed in all his glory," sat upon his throne of dazzling splendor, and received the tributes of loyalty and congratulation which were tendered by his distinguished guests. At length, one approached the throne who was received by Solomon with a deferential reverence—equal to that which had been universally awarded to himself. He was an old man, with flowing hair, and beard of venerable whiteness; and his slow steps were supported by one whose kingly dignity of bearing was beautified by the graces of a lowly spirit. It was Zadok, the high priest of Israel, and he leaned on the arm of his son's son, Azariah.

At a little distance stood Heman, the Ephraimite, whom Solomon had made one of the chief princes of his court; and, when Azariah had led the aged Zadok to a couch, he returned to his friend, and, turning aside from the brilliant throng, the two walked to and fro through the long corridors of the palace, earnestly conversing in the stillness of strength of their early friendship.

The lofty banqueting-hall was all radiant with light from its multiplied golden candlesticks.

the king reclined at the sumptuous feast, where the dainties of many lands were displayed in luxurious array, and the richest wines sparkled in goblets of shining gold. Pharaoh's daughter had likewise made a feast for the women in her own apartments, where voluptuous couches upon beds of ivory invited to soft repose. The incense of sweet odors floated along the graceful folds of gorgeous tapestry, and the breath of music from invisible harps shed over all a mystic charm, till it seemed that here silken-footed Luxury held undisputed sway, and called on Ease, and Fragrance, and Beauty, and Song, but as ministers to do her bidding. At the banquet, the place of honor on the right hand of the queen was given unto Hadassah, as the wife of the prospective high priest, and that on the left hand unto Hagar the Egyptian, thus honored as the daughter of the king of Edom, and the near relative of the queen of Solomon. By her side reclined Zillah, the wife of Azariah, who was warmly beloved by Hagar, and greatly cherished because she was a near kinswoman of Heman her husband, and the wife of his chosen friend. At a little distance was Miriam, the wife of Zimri, whose beauty shone resplendent in the fulness of her adorning. Her robe of richest purple was decked with embroidery of emeralds and gold. Jewels sparkled in starry splendor mid the darkness of her night-black hair, glittered upon her arms and shining girdle, and gleamed from beneath her flowing robes upon her sandalled feet. In the midst of pleasantries and mirth, Zillah was again and again conscious that the eyes of Miriam were deeply fixed upon her. During the long years she had dwelt in Jerusalem, the wife of Zimri had never until now deigned to cast a look upon her whom she had never before seen her supplanter. At length Zillah re-

turned the glance, and each knew that the other thought only of their midnight meeting beneath the roof of Ithamar.

It was before sunrise, one morning, soon after the close of the festival, that Zillah stood upon the house-top with her three young sons, awaiting the hour of the morning sacrifice. The house was near the royal palace, commanding a full view both of it and the temple. Through all the streets of Jerusalem many were bending their course towards Mount Moriah; and the long flights of steps, which led to the four gates on the western side of the consecrated hill, were covered by the still ascending worshippers. The gates of the palace that opened upon the causeway leading from Zion to Moriah were opened, and the king, attended by a few followers, came forth to go unto the altars of the Lord. The golden east glowed brighter and brighter before its coming glory; rays of living light streamed afar over the land, and the uprisen sun, "coming forth as a bridegroom from his chamber, and rejoicing as a strong man to run a race," sent forth his first glance over Olivet upon Jerusalem. How glorious was the answering salutation of the golden city, as she sent back from tower and palace and dazzling temple a radiance as of another sun. The silver trumpets sounded from the sacred hill, the kneeling people bowed their heads in worship, and Jerusalem hushed her many voices, to acknowledge in silence the presence of her God.

"Now our father will kindle the incense," said the little Asaph unto his brother Heman, as he heard from afar the first sound of the trumpet. "Hath he now taken the fire from the brazen altar, my mother?"

"Nay, my son," answered Zillah, "thy father carrieth not the fire, because it is his lot to burn incense before the Lord. He now goeth into the holy place, with his censer

of frankincense in his hand, and another priest beareth a vessel of coals from the great altar, who, when he hath placed them upon the golden altar, will again go out."

"Now Azariah standeth alone in the holy place to minister before the God of all the earth," said Zillah to her sons, as in a moment more the insufferable effulgence of the temple was softened by the ascending cloud of incense and the smoke of the morning sacrifice.

After the people had dispersed from the temple, Zillah still remained with her sons upon the house-top, that they might see the king ride forth in state unto the gardens of Etham, as was his frequent custom in the morning.

From the eastern gates of the palace gardens came forth the long retinue of Solomon. A numerous band of young men, selected for stature and strength from the whole Hebrew nation, clothed in garments of Tyrian purple, having long, flowing hair, powdered with dust of gold, and burnished armor, reflecting back the sunbeams, were seated upon Arabian horses of great beauty and swiftness, and exceeding richness of adorning. In the midst of the royal cavalcade, Solomon, clothed in kingly raiment of softest white, sat on high in his chariot, "the pillars thereof being of silver, the bottom thereof of gold, and the covering of it of purple;" and thus was he escorted in his progress unto the gardens of Etham, which lay at about six miles distance from Jerusalem.

Connected with these gardens were the pools of Solomon, and the aqueduct with which Jerusalem was supplied with water. The pools were three in number, every one surrounded by a double row of noble palms; and they lay on different levels, one below another, on a sloping ground. They were of an oblong form, the highest being one hundred and sixty paces in length, the second two hundred,

and the third two hundred and twenty, and all ninety paces in breadth. The subterranean springs of the fountain of Etham, which supplied the reservoirs with water, were situated about one hundred and fifty paces above them. Some twelve feet below the surface of the hill whence the fountain sprang was an excavated vaulted room, at one side of which the water, flowing out of the rock in a copious and pure stream, descended by an underground conduit to the pools, whence it was conveyed by an aqueduct around the sides of the hills to Jerusalem. The whole formed a stupendous work of art, destined, by the solidity of its construction, to become a perpetual memorial, both of the king by whom it was designed, and of the times when silver was in Jerusalem as stones.

Below the pools, and watered by streams conducted from the fountain, lay the gardens of Solomon, a work equally admirable in their kind. They were situated in a wild and picturesque valley, inclosed by high hills, and adorned with all manner of trees for refreshing shade and pleasant fruits. In this delightful glen, where the charms of nature harmoniously blended with the most exquisite touches of her imitative handmaiden, Art,—Solomon often sought a retreat from the cares and fatigues of royalty. In its calm retirement, and from the fountain of Etham, sealed with his own signet ring, he derived his imagery when he sang, "A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed." Here the soul of the poet-king went out unto the thousand charms of beauty that surrounded him, in those full responses of song which have cast their perpetual spell of enchantment over the gardens of Etham. Over all their scenery, the orchards of pomegranates, the trees of frankincense, the fountains of the gardens, the valleys of lilies,

the beds of spices, rests evermore a rich and slumbrous light, the light in which the soul of genius hath enrobed them. All are stirred in trembling joy, as by the breath of the south wind, by the song of songs, which is Solomon's. And from the bright realms of his imagery did the strong spirit of the "wisest one" soar above into the spiritual truths which were reflected thereby. Did he discern from afar the meek and lowly beauty of Him who was to come, when he spake, saying, "I am the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valley?" And did he behold the glory of his coming kingdom when he exclaimed, "Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, clear as the sun, fair as the moon, and terrible as an army with banners?"

The circling seasons had again completed their round, and it was now the twenty-fifth year of the reign of Solomon. Once more the tenth of the seventh month, the Great Day of Atonement, had come. Rest from all earthly pleasure and care, and strict fasting, was observed by every Hebrew, and the whole people manifested the outward symbols of humiliation and penitence. With the great solemnity invariably attached to this day, there was added at this time a peculiar interest; for the people were to witness the first ministrations of a new high priest. The aged Zadok slept with his fathers, and Ahimaaz was to enter for the first time within the Holy of Holies.

The temple-courts were thronged by the assembled thousands of Israel, who waited in solemn silence while the high priest performed alone the purifications requisite for his services of awful import. When these were accomplished, he appeared before the people, clothed in garments of pure white linen, with the victims that were to

be sacrificed for his own sins and those of his own house, even a bullock and a ram. Then receiving, in the name of the whole nation; two goats for a sin-offering and a ram for a burnt-offering, he solemnly cast lots upon the two goats, to ascertain which should be offered in sacrifice and which should be sent forth into the wilderness, typically to bear away the sins of the people.

After first offering the bullock in sacrifice for his own sins and those of his house, he put sacred fire within a golden censer, and threw sweet incense thereon. Then, with the smoking censer in his hand, he entered within the Holy of Holies, and bowed in deepest abasement before the mercy-seat.

It was a moment of thrilling interest to the waiting people. The mysterious veil, whose folds were lifted but on one day in the whole year, had been drawn, and within their intercessor bore the incense whose ascending cloud should veil the awful glories of the Shekinah, before which he ministered. Soon the high priest came forth with the censer, and, taking of the blood of the sacrifice he had offered for himself, he again entered the oracle, and sprinkled it seven times before the mercy-seat. After he had thus made an atonement for himself and for the priests, he approached the altar of burnt-offerings, and slew the goat, which the lot had determined to be offered in sacrifice for the people. A third time he entered the Holy of Holies with the blood of the victim, sprinkling it in like manner seven times before the mercy-seat. In deep solemnity the people bowed their heads, for now the typical blood of atonement was being presented for their souls before the visible symbol of Jehovah's presence, and they whose hearts were faithful sought in deep penitence of spirit the forgiveness of the God of holiness and truth.

Once more the high priest came forth from the oracle, nor was its sanctity again invaded by human presence through the revolving circle of another year. Again he took of the blood, both of the bullock and of the goat, applying it to the horns of the golden altar, and sprinkling it seven times thereupon. Then, coming forth from the holy place, he laid his hand on the head of the scape-goat, and, confessing his own iniquities and those of the people, with all their transgressions, in all their sins, he delivered him to the hand of another, to be led away into the wilderness.

After these ceremonies were performed, Ahimaaz put off the linen robes, and again appeared before the people clothed in the glorious garments of Aaron. The blue robe, with its rich ephod and girdle, and its border of pomegranates and golden bells, enrobed him in a vesture all bright for glory and beauty. The crown of gold, with its sacred inscription, "Holiness to the Lord," rested upon his head, and the breast-plate, bearing amid its dazzling gems the names of the twelve tribes of Israel, was beautifully emblematic of the interest with which every Hebrew was cherished in the high priest's heart. After sending away the bodies of the bullock and the goat, whose blood had been offered in sacrifice, to be burned without the sanctuary, as altogether polluted and unclean, Ahimaaz ascended the steps of the brazen altar, and offered the two rams as a burnt-offering, one for himself and one for the people, closing by this sacrifice the public appointments of the Great Day of Atonement.

The people slowly departed from the temple; the priests who ministered in course sought their chambers in the cloisters, and Ahimaaz was left alone in the holy place. What thronging thoughts passed swiftly through his soul, as he reviewed the circumstances of that eventful day!

As he realized that he, as the representative of the whole people, had confessed a nation's sins, and sprinkled the blood which was emblematic of the only expiation which those sins merited at the hands of a holy God, did not his heart quail with a deep sense of the awful solemnity of the service in which he had been engaged? As he reviewed the ordinances of the great annual atonement for sin, blending in one finished whole the several features of the system of priestly sacrifice, and bringing a complete concentration of typical images into a single, full, and harmonious exhibition of all, how unanswerable were his questionings concerning the great salvation unto which they pointed. How his baffled spirit returned hither and thither, consciously borne over the surface of a sea of mystery, and seeking in vain where he might sound its unfathomed depth. And if, on that awful day, the high priest was blessed with a sense of divine acceptance, and a true and spiritual communion with the God before whom he ministered, was not his spirit flooded with a strange and reverent joy, which, as he came forth from before the veil of the sanctuary, illumined his countenance with a light akin to the living radiance that shone upon the face of the Hebrew lawgiver, as he descended from the vision of Sinai.

It was evening, and Jerusalem, all silent in the pale moonlight, was still invested with the holy solemnity of the great day of Atonement. Azariah reclined upon the house-top, and against his bosom leaned his first-born son, Johanan, unto whom he spake of the ministry of Ahimaaz, in the Holy of Holies, and of the consecration to God which should mark him who held the birthright of that high and sacred dignity even from a little child. In a

chamber below lay the little ones, Heman and Asaph, awaiting the coming of their mother.

"One thing we seek," exclaimed the children, with united voice, as Zillah entered; "it is that thou wilt talk to us of all we have this day seen in the temple."

And the young mother in Israel sat by the low couch of her children, and nurtured their souls with the momentous truths which had been that day so solemnly exhibited before their eyes. She told them of the infinite greatness of God, of his inaccessible glory, of his spotless holiness, of his wonderful love. She spoke of the one great and bitter evil of disobedience unto God, and instructed them, by the blood of the sacrifice which had flowed in their sight, that the fruit and the curse of sin is death. She opened before them, with words of deepest gratitude, the condescension of Jehovah in devising an atonement for sin, and in accepting the blood of the sacrifice rather than the life of the sinner. She dwelt upon the love of God in permitting the high priest to come before the mercy-seat as a daysman betwixt him and his people; and upon the fulness of his forgiveness in commanding that the scape-goat should bear away their sins afar off into the wilderness, that they should no more be remembered before him. Thus did the Hebrew mother diligently instruct her children in the great doctrine of an atonement for sin, and the love of God as revealed thereby; although on her pathway shone only the pale reflected beams of the Light that was to come.

The children slept; and, after bending over them with breathings of prayer, Zillah descended to her own chosen room, which was now filled with the sweetness of frankincense and myrrh from its adjacent garden. A few moments she sat alone; then footsteps approached, and her

name was pronounced by the voice which ever wakened gladness in her heart.

"My husband, here am I," she answered; and, as Azariah seated himself upon the cushions she arranged by her side, in the coolness of the open doorway, she said: "I have been talking with the young children; and Heman, yea, and the little Asaph, have asked of me questions before which my tongue failed to reply. And, as I thought of these things, my soul hath gone onward unto the days when He shall come, in whom all nations shall be blessed. Ah! my husband, what shall be the blessing the Glorious One shall bring? Shall he not remove the mountains of our transgressions forever from us? After his coming, shall the scape-goat still be led year by year into the wilderness? Shall the rivers of the blood of sacrifice flow on forever?"

"Concerning these things, both priest and prophet grope as the blind in an untrodden wilderness," answered Azariah. "If the Anointed One be a priest, he shall surely appear before the Lord with sacrifice; yet what offering shall he bring that hath not already been presented unto Jehovah?"

"But he shall not need, as the sons of Aaron, to make an atonement for himself," said Zillah, "seeing he shall be of a spotless righteousness. Doth not David speak concerning him, saying, —

"Thou lovest righteousness and hatest wickedness,
Therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee
With the oil of gladness above thy fellows'?"

"And again, doth he not utter the voice of his coming Lord, when he saith, —

“Lo! I come;
 In the volume of the book it is written of me,
 I delight to do thy will, O my God,
 Yea, thy law is in my heart’?”

“Thou sayest truly, Zillah,” answered Azariah. “If the Holy One cometh with sacrifice, it shall be not for himself, but for his people, seeing the Almighty hath said unto him, ‘Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee.’ But what shall be his sacrifice for his people? How often, in former days, have I sought counsel of thy grandfather, the aged Eleazar—blessed be his memory—in respect to this very thing; how have I sat at his feet while he spake words of far-seeing wisdom concerning the prophecies which David uttered of the Lord’s Anointed. Yet, in many things, Eleazar walked in darkness. He understood not the words of David, when he said, concerning Him who hath been promised as his son and his Lord, ‘Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.’ Yea, when he had inquired and searched diligently of these words, he said unto me, as he drew near the gates of the grave: ‘I know not what they signify, neither shall I know upon the earth. Blessed be the angel who shall read them unto me, when I walk with Moses and Aaron.’”

“And now Eleazar dwelleth with God, where days of atonement are known no more,” observed Zillah, musingly; “but for us the blood of sacrifice must yet flow, and the smoke of burning must still ascend unto the heavens. May the Lord deal graciously with us, and accept the offering of our souls. And may He come speedily, who hath been promised unto Israel,—our priest, prophet, and king.”

“Amen, and amen,” answered Azariah. “This is our

sure hope, even the everlasting Rock of Israel. He who dwelt in the pillar of cloud and fire, the unconsuming Presence of Hóreb, the Angel of the Covenant, shall yet appear gloriously for his people. He shall come as a priest, who shall bring us unto God; as a prophet, before whom hidden things shall be revealed, and darkness shall be made light; as a king, who shall reign over the whole earth in righteousness and truth.

“He shall come down as rain upon the mown grass,
 As showers that water the earth.
 In his days shall the righteous flourish;
 And abundance of peace as long as the moon endureth.
 Yea, all kings shall fall down before him,
 All nations shall serve him.
 He shall spare the poor and needy,
 And shall save the souls of the needy.
 He shall redeem their souls from deceit and violence,
 And precious shall be their blood in his sight.”

CHAPTER VIII.

A VISIT TO PETRA.

HEMAN the Ephraimite, and his wife Hagar, had come into the land of Canaan, in the eleventh year of the reign of King Solomon, and had thenceforth made their dwelling-place in Jerusalem. Once they had visited the land of their birth; and now, in the thirty-first year of Solomon's reign, they prepared to go down a second time into Egypt, again to greet their-kindred.

On a certain day, as it drew near the time for the departure of the caravan with which they were to take their journey, as Hagar reclined in her bed-chamber during the heat of noon, a handmaiden entered, and presented her with a small parcel, enwrapped in a closely tied bag or casing. Unfastening this cover, the surprised Hagar drew forth a small roll of Egyptian papyrus, upon whose enstamped wax, at either end, she immediately recognized the royal seal of Edom, which she had not before seen since her childhood.

"Who hath delivered this into thy hand?" she demanded of the servant before her.

"A stranger," answered the handmaiden, "who calleth himself an Edomite of Petra. He standeth even now in the porch, until thou shalt return answer unto the message he hath brought."

"But I cannot read it, because I am not learned," exclaimed Hagar, impatiently breaking the seals, and looking

hopelessly upon the unintelligible characters; "and thy master, Heman, is in Hebron, whence he will not return until eventide."

"Moreover," added the servant, "the stranger biddeth me say that, if it pleaseth thee, he will read the letter in thy hearing."

"Nay, it needeth not," answered Hagar, after a moment's hesitation. "Thus shalt thou say unto the man: 'Return hither on the morrow, and thou shalt have answer to the message of thy hand.'"

A servant awaited the coming of Heman, as he returned to his house; in accordance with whose words he repaired immediately to the apartments of his wife. Hagar placed the roll in his hand, and waited with intensest interest to hear what it would reveal. The words of the epistle were these:

"MEHETABEL, OF EDMOM, UNTO HAGAR, DAUGHTER OF KINGS.

"It hath been told me by Zalmon, overseer of King Solomon's tribute in Edom, that it is in thy heart to go down into Egypt. Now, therefore, I send beseeching thee to come in thy journey to Petra, that a near kinswoman may once behold thy face. Come, that thou mayest see the strength and pride of the lofty city that dwelleth in the clefts of the rock. Come, and behold the wondrous works of the children of Esau; and thou shalt say that, Teman hath understanding, and Jerusalem is not alone the dwelling-place of wisdom. Come, and walk within the sepulchres where thy fathers of many generations lie in glory. Come, and I will tell thee things which thou knowest not, and unfold counsels which shall be unto thee more precious than fine gold.

"May the blessings of the dew of heaven above, and the fatness of the earth beneath, abound unto thee in the

name of thy fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Esau. These words are written by Eliphaz, the son-in-law of Mehetabel, and borne unto thee by Lotan, of the sons of Edom."

"Truly, it shall be a delight unto me to greet this kinswoman," exclaimed Hagar; "yet I know not who she may be. Surely, I thought that Hadad alone escaped of his father's house, when the lordly ones of Edom fell before the sword of the mighty Joab, in the days of King David. What sayest thou, my husband? Wilt thou bring me unto the strong city of Edom?"

"Yea, verily, if it pleaseth thee," answered Heman. "I myself would also look on the strength and glory of Petra."

The extensive commerce, carried on at this time between Jerusalem and her dependencies upon the Red Sea, and thence to India and Ethiopia, found its great thoroughfare through the country of Idumea; and caravans, laden with the richest merchandise, were frequently passing between Jerusalem and Ezion Geber, the chief port upon the Red Sea. Placing their camels under the general escort of one of these caravans, Heman and Hagar took their journey along the western shores of the Salt Sea, and through the fertile valley of El-Ghor, whose broad extent was bounded, on either hand, by continuous ranges of towering mountains. Soon after entering this valley, the lofty head of Mount Hor could be traced upon the southern sky, growing more and more distinct in its outline by the shortening distance, and more and more sublimely alone amid the vast groups of surrounding mountains; until at length, after many hours' travel, the caravan wound about its eastern base, as an exceedingly little thing, overshadowed by the excellency of strength.

"The mount of the children of Esau!" exclaimed

Hagar, as the immensity of Mount Hor became fully revealed to her eyes.

"The burial-place of Aaron," responded Heman.

It was but a little distance from the south of Mount Hor unto Petra. The city was situated in an amphitheatre some two or three miles in extent, and entirely surrounded by mountain-like cliffs, of solid rock, from four to five hundred feet in height. Within the amphitheatre were arranged its streets and dwellings, after the manner of the cities of the east; while in the surrounding cliffs were hewn ascending terraces, with flights of steps conducting from the lower to the upper. These terraces served as streets, leading the way to dwellings and palaces, whose chambers were excavated from the solid rock, and whose fronts were adorned by sculptured columns, which rose, tier above tier, in massive grandeur. Along each terrace ran horizontal grooves, for the distribution of water, as it flowed from cliff to cliff, and the summits of the heights above were wrought into towers and pyramids. Thus the whole internal face of the cliffs presented a still extending array of terraces, and columns, and lofty towers, whose grand and symmetrical beauty was a fit surrounding to the nave of one of nature's most magnificent temples.¹

The caravan entered the massive outer gates of Petra on the north, and, passing through a broad defile, excavated from the rocks, were admitted at the inner gateway. The northern gates, being in a high position, brought the travellers into the city, upon an eminence which commanded an entire view of the magnificence of Petra. The sun was sinking low in the west, throwing into deep shadow the colonnaded cliffs upon the right, and pouring floods of golden glory upon the sculptured fronts of the hidden

¹Note H.

palaces, which swept round in severe and lofty grandeur from the left of the amphitheatre.

"How excellent in strength, and in power, and in defence, which can never be moved!" exclaimed Heman.

"How lofty in sovereignty, how glorious in pride!" replied Hagar. "How could it be delivered into the hand of an enemy?"

"Surely, it was only because the Lord had purposed to give it unto David," answered Heman. "Without his will, no device formed against it could prosper."

The camels slowly descended the steep path in the highway from the gate; and, as they reached the foot of the cliff, a person advanced to the leader of the caravan, and inquired for Heman and Hagar, of Jerusalem.

"I am Eliphaz, of Edom," said the stranger, when they whom he sought had been presented to him; "and I come, in the name of Mehetabel, to bid you welcome unto Petra." So saying, he conducted the visitors through the broad street, that formed the outer circle of the amphitheatre, unto the western side of the city. At the foot of a flight of steps they alighted from their camels, and ascended to the second terrace of the cliffs. Entering beneath a massive portico, supported by lofty columns, they advanced to the broad, two-leaved doors of a dwelling, which receded considerably beyond the front of its projecting portico. These doors opened upon a large apartment, which was fitted up after the manner of an eastern court. As the visitors approached, Mehetabel came forth to meet them. She was a woman of three score years; yet her tall, noble figure was still full of grace and dignity. Gray hairs mingled with the locks, whose length and abundance still bore testimony to their former beauty; while her strongly-defined features, and

the light that ever and anon gleamed from her deep-set eyes, revealed an indomitable firmness of character, and hidden fires of impassioned feeling. Her dress was in perfect keeping with her figure: a lower robe, long, full, and flowing, relieved, both in color and in general effect, by a girdled upper robe, and a veil, whose transparent folds were turned aside from their legitimate purpose of shading the face, and bound about her head.

After the first salutations, Mehetabel put aside Hagar's veil, and gazed earnestly upon her face. She seemed well satisfied with the scrutiny. A gleam of tenderness softened her countenance; and again she said, warmly, "Many thanks and blessings that thou art come unto me."

The evening meal was already spread in the large apartment where the travellers were received; and, after the customary rites of hospitality, Eliphaz bade Heman to the table, and, with pleasant courtesy, served his guest at supper. After this, he led him forth to the portico of entrance, where the two sat long in the fading twilight; now looking upon the people traversing the streets of Petra, which presented its scenes of busiest life at the opening and closing of the day; or observing the order and dignity of the garrisons of Solomon, who paced to and fro upon the battlements of the fortress; or Heman listened unto Eliphaz, as he pointed out towers, and palaces, and sepulchres, and recounted the tales of olden times concerning them. Then the conversation fell upon the absorbing themes of present interest,—of Edom, Syria, and Israel; of Hadad, Rezon, and Solomon,—and thus continued, hour after hour, with increasing warmth and earnestness, long after Petra lay in solemn silence beneath the star-lit firmament, which, in that clear, pure atmosphere, sparkled and burned with resplendent glory.

Meanwhile, Mehetabel had led Hagar, with her hand-maiden, through a long, narrow passage, dimly lighted by lamps, whence she opened a door into a bed-chamber, furnished with the necessary means of comfort and refreshment after a journey; and, saying that she would shortly return, she left her to the ministrations of her servant.

After a little time Mehetabel again appeared, and, conducting her guest about an abrupt turn in the passage, she proceeded several paces, and again opened a door upon a spacious chamber, nearly equal in size to the entrance-room of the dwelling. The apartment was brilliantly lighted, and revealed, in every part, the luxurious appointments of the palaces of Jerusalem. The air, in itself of a delightful coolness, was filled with the perfume of sweet incense. Brilliantly colored mats were spread around the sides of the marble floor, and delicate cushions rested on couches of carved olive-wood, inlaid with ivory. The walls, wainscoted with richly variegated stones of finest polish, displayed in the brilliant light the resplendent colors of the rainbow; while, in its table furniture, its vessels of incense, and its several adornings, the room glittered in the splendor of "barbaric gold."

As Hagar entered this chamber, she stood for a moment overwhelmed with delighted surprise, not by its splendor, to which she had always been accustomed, but at the group that presented themselves so unexpectedly before her eyes. On a couch, at the end of the apartment, reclined a young woman, with a lyre in her hand, whose music suddenly ceased as the door opened; and, at the same moment, two young children, at a little distance, stopped their accompanying dances.

"I bring unto thee Hagar, the daughter of Hadad," said

Mehetabel, addressing the woman; and, turning to Hagar, she added, "Thou beholdest Judith, my only child, and her twin daughters." Although Judith was many years younger than Hagar, so close was the resemblance between them that each saw, as in a mirror, the reflection of the other's image, and each heart was inspired to go out unto the other in the warm embrace of kindred.

Hagar then approached the children, Adah and Anah, who welcomed her with kisses, and a manifest delight which they ventured not to express in words.

"These little ones have so rejoiced that thou art come," said Judith, "that I have been entreated to make music for their dances of gladness."

"Now tell me, I pray thee," exclaimed Hagar, turning to Mehetabel, "wherein do I stand, and who are the kinsfolk among whom I am come?"

"Thou shalt know all in due season," answered Mehetabel; "meanwhile, thou shalt eat and be refreshed." So saying, she led the way to the other end of the apartment, where was spread an inviting banquet. The company sat about the low table, and a maid-servant arose to minister to their wants.

After the meal was finished, Mehetabel reclined upon a couch against the wall, while Hagar and Judith, with the little Adah and Anah, were seated on cushions in a group before her.

"If thou inquirest concerning me," said Mehetabel, addressing Hagar, after an interval of silence, "know that I am thy father's sister, even the sister of Hadad, king of Edom, and the widow of Alvah, son of Duke Teman. Listen, and I will tell thee all that hath befallen me since the beginning of my life.

"Thou knowest that three score years ago King David

conquered the children of Esau, by the sword of the mighty Joab, and took possession of the strong city of Edom. Thy father Hadad, being then a little child, was carried down unto Egypt by the Edomites, who fled from their own land. At that time I was but an infant of days. The nurse who had me in charge, after accompanying certain ones of the king's household a short distance, stole away from them in the night, and returned into Edom. Yet she came not into the city, but dwelt in a cavern of the mountains for many years, where she nourished and brought me up as her own daughter. At length, when I was grown, she returned into the city; and, when Alvah entreated me in marriage, she first told me the story of my birthright. Her words were as good tidings to me, yet I wondered not greatly thereat, seeing that from my very childhood my soul had swelled loftily with the pride of kings. From that hour the captivity of Edom hath been my burden, day and night. In the day I have craved weapons of war, as if my own hand could dispossess the garrisons of Solomon from the mighty fortress of Edom; and in the night I have devised far-reaching counsels, by which the yoke of Jacob should be broken from the neck of Esau. The slow, dragging years have again and again mocked my hopes, but they have not quenched the strong fires that have still burned in my heart for the freedom of my people. Now the day of deliverance draweth nigh. The chains of Edom shall be snapt asunder. The children of Esau shall again rejoice in their own free heritage."

"But surely all the subjects of Solomon have a goodly heritage," observed Hagar. "And the king of Israel seeketh to ally himself with the nations that pay him tribute, in bonds of prosperity and peace."

"Will the unicorn be willing to serve thee? Canst thou

bind the wild ass of the desert?" demanded Mehetabel, with bitterness. "Shall the yoke be sweet to the free? Shall the chain cease its chafing because it is overlaid with gold? It is true, Solomon hath taken many wives from Edom. Doth he thereby think to honor us? Nay, for Esau is before Jacob. When Judith, who now sitteth at thy side, was a virgin, the messengers of Solomon saw her exceeding comeliness, and they came entreating that they might take her unto Jerusalem, that the king might behold her beauty, thinking to do me honor. How my heart burned against the men. 'Let the damsel abide with me a few days,' I said, 'at least seven; after that, ye shall come and take her,' because I feared the commands of the king. And when the men came again unto me, they found me sitting in sackcloth, with mourners round about, and I said unto them, 'Ye see my calamity and my grief; for my daughter is laid in the sepulchre.' Surely I did hide her in the chambers of my father's tomb, until the time when the men should come to me was overpast. Then I brought her forth, and kept her in strict ward until I gave her unto Eliphaz, her husband."

"But thou canst not deny that Solomon exceedeth all the kings of the earth in riches and wisdom," pursued Hagar. "His chariots of state are a thousand and four hundred, with forty thousand stalls of horses, and twelve thousand horsemen. Twelve officers over the whole land provide month by month the meat of his household,—thirty measures of fine flour and three-score measures of meal, thirty oxen and an hundred sheep, besides harts, and roebucks, and fallow deer, and fatted fowl, being the provision of one day alone. A thousand wives, daughters of kings and princes, make his palaces all glorious within. He hath made Jerusalem and her suburbs famous among

the nations, by the vast works he hath wrought therein: her palaces and royal gardens, her fountains and pools of water, yea, and her glorious temple, unto which there is no likeness in the whole earth. He hath built and fortified great cities; even now he layeth the vast foundations of Tadmor in the wilderness, in the way toward Syria, which shall rise as a perpetual memorial of his fame. He hath sent forth his ships to bring unto him treasures from every land under the sun. He hath poured forth all precious things as water. He hath made gold as silver, and silver to be nothing accounted of. And who shall measure his wisdom, excelling the wisdom both of Egypt and the East? Hath he not spoken of trees, from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop that springeth out of the wall; of beasts also, of fowls, and of creeping things, and of fishes? Are not his proverbs three thousand, and his songs a thousand and five? Yea, hath not God given him wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand which is on the seashore? And the fame thereof hath gone forth into all nations. Kings have sent their counsellors to sit in the light of Jerusalem, and the queen of Sheba hath come in royal state from the uttermost borders of the South, to behold the glory and to see the wisdom of Solomon."

"Thou recountest the riches of Solomon," returned Methabel, "and the ships which pour the gold of Ophir into Jerusalem as stones. Unto whom belonged the revenues of that traffic of gold? Whose was Ezion-geber and the ports of the Red Sea? Whose was the secret, star-guided path, leading silently over the waters unto the precious things of the earth? It was all in the right hand of Edom. It is still his rightful heritage. Thou speakest of the great works of Solomon, even of his wondrous temple. Who instructed him therein? Whose were the cunning hands

that wrought the curious carvings of cedar, the matchless devices in gold, and silver, and brass? Did he not send unto Tyre for workmen of skill and understanding? yea, and were not some of these very men the sons of the Edomites who fled thither, in the reign of king David? The temple of Solomon testifieth to the handiwork of the children of Esau.

"Thou sayest that the king of Israel is wiser than all men. But wisdom had not her birth in Jerusalem. She hath dwelt before on the earth. Hast thou forgotten Bildad, Zophar, and Eliphu; Eliphaz the Temanite, and Job the man of Uz, men who spake before Israel came up out of Egypt?¹ Canst thou measure the height or fathom the depth of their words? Doth not Job follow hard after the footsteps of the Almighty, who spreadeth out the heavens, and treadeth on the waves of the deep? Doth he not stand as in the presence-chamber of God, when he shaketh the earth on her trembling pillars, and taketh hold on the doors of the sea? Doth he not mount up to the heights of heaven, and walk serenely with Arcturus and Orion and the Pleiades? And, as thus he soareth to and fro through the heavens and the earth, doth he not utter one cry? 'Where shall wisdom be found, and where is the place of understanding?' The Depth saith, 'It is not in me,' and the Sea saith, 'It is not with me.' Destruction and Death say, 'We have heard the fame thereof with our ears.' Yea, doth not Job search out the dwelling-place of wisdom, till he finds it in the beginning with God? The wisdom of the book of Job shall stand to all generations, neither is it of Israel. Some of the men who speak therein were of Idumea; yea, Job himself dwelt not far from the borders of Edom.

"Moreover," pursued Mehetabel, "who hath taught Egypt, and Tyre, and the nations of the earth, to tell the hosts of heaven by name, and mark the paths of the stars on high? Who hath instructed them to make ships, which sail afar from the shores of the sea, having wings moving with the wind? Who hath unfolded to them the device of preserving their counsels for their children's children, by writing down the words thereof by letters in a book? These three things come of the children of Esau, and the glory thereof belongeth unto the Edomites through all generations."¹

"Truly, these things are as a crown and sceptre unto Edom," answered Hagar, "and I see that the land of my fathers is worthy of great honor."

"Neither shall the crown of Edom be longer trampled in the dust," answered Mehetabel. "He shall arise, and set it upon his head. Hadad hath come up out of Egypt. Even now he hath gone into Syria. There he perfecteth his counsels to sit upon the throne of his fathers."

"So it hath been said in Jerusalem," observed Hagar; "but the thing is not wise. Edom seeeth not the end thereof."

"Fear not," answered Mehetabel; "Edom understandeth his own counsels. He sitteth as the eagle who mounteth up at the command of the Almighty, and maketh his rest on high. He dwelleth and abideth on the rock.

"'Upon the crag of the rock, and the strong place,
From thence he seeketh the prey,
And his eyes behold afar off.'"

"But surely a revolt from Israel is a thing of folly,

¹ Note J.

persisted Hagar. "Hath not Hadad already sought to establish himself in Edom, and failed to move the heart of the people to forsake Solomon, because of the strong garrisons by which he guardeth the land? Who shall set himself against the king of Israel and prosper, seeing his sceptre stretcheth over Moab, Ammon, and Seir, even unto Egypt; and his dominion is from the Euphrates to the Great Sea?"

"Woman, thou knowest not what thou sayest," exclaimed Mehetabel, with flashing eyes. "The kingdom of Israel is but of yesterday. Was not Edom a kingdom when Israel was a bondman in Egypt? Was not Edom governed by a long line of dukes, then by eight successive kings, and then again by dukes, before there reigned any king in Israel? Hath not Jacob, the supplanter, taken both the birthright and the blessing from Edom? And shalt thou, whose blood hath been the life of the kings of Edom, talk smoothly of the thing? Surely, thy wrath should kindle before it, and thy words should come forth as the breath of a furnace.

"Behold, thou seekest to make Edom afraid as a grasshopper. Nay, for even now, as the war-horse unto whom God hath given strength and clothed his neck with thunder,

"'He mocketh at fear, and is not affrighted;
Neither turneth he back from the sword.
He saith among the trumpets, Ha, ha!
And he smelleth the battle afar off;
The thunder of the captains, and the shouting.'

"Daughter of Hadad," resumed Mehetabel, "for this purpose I have sent to bring thee unto the strong city of Edom — that thou mightest see the land of thy fathers, and the loftiness of thine heritage; that thou mightest hear the

history of thine own people, from the lips of thine own kindred; that thou mightest learn the power in thine hand of serving them, when thou returnest unto Jerusalem, by testifying unto me whatever shall come to pass concerning Edom, by the mouth of my husband's kinsman, Lotan, whom I will send unto thee; and that thou mightest choose, whether thou wilt still dwell an alien in Israel, or take unto thyself thine own royal birthright in the coming kingdom of Edom."

"Thou considerest not," answered Hagar, "that my husband is an Israelite, and that my friends and acquaintances dwell in Jerusalem."

"Thine own people shall multiply friends unto the daughter of their rightful king," returned Mehetabel, "and gladly spread honors at her feet. Judith shall be a sister unto thee, and these children shall be as thy daughters. Moreover, thy husband shall be made a chief prince in Edom, second only to Genubah, the son of the king."

"The thing cannot be," answered Hagar; "so great is the love of Heman for the land of his fathers, that not even the crown of Edom would tempt him to leave Jerusalem."

Mehetabel was silent. Disappointment, anger, and grief were written upon her face, as she beheld her long cherished purpose suddenly swept away before her eyes. At length she said, "Thou turnest away from country and kindred; wilt thou also refuse to serve Edom out of Jerusalem?"

"I beseech thee, ask not the thing at my hands," exclaimed Hagar. "How should I deal treacherously with the land which hath received me, as a mother her youngest born?"

"And thou wilt hear the counsels of Israel plotting

against the freedom of Edom, and reveal them not," said Mehetabel, bitterly. "Thou wilt behold the armed men coming as an overwhelming flood unto thy father's land, and utter no warning thereof. Thou wilt see the kindling of devouring fires, and seek not to smother their burning. Thou wilt know that swift destruction is prepared for them of thine own blood; that naked swords hang over the heads of my daughter and her little ones, yea, and over my own gray hairs; that death standeth in thy father's path, — and yet thou wilt shut thy mouth, and fold thine hands, and sit calmly in Jerusalem. Surely," continued Mehetabel, suddenly rising to a sitting posture, and fixing her burning eyes upon Hagar, "if thus thou canst look upon the swift consuming of thy kindred, let them curse and not bless thee. Yea, let this right hand shower upon thy head the rain of terror and trembling" —

"Spare, spare thy cursing, I entreat thee!" besought Hagar; "yet, if thou cursest me, I cannot fulfil thy words. I have given myself away unto Israel, and I cannot deal subtly with the land of my adoption. When first I went into her borders, an aged priest of the living God laid his hand upon my head in blessing, and in that hour I took this solemn vow upon my soul, saying unto my husband, 'Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.' This vow I cannot, I will not annul. My feet shall still stand in Zion, and I will worship in her holy temple. My right hand shall seek her prosperity, and my soul shall pray for her peace. I will live and die in Jerusalem, and there will I be buried."

On a certain evening, between the Feast of the Passover and the Feast of Harvest, in the fortieth year of the reign of Solomon, a large family gathering assembled in

the court of the high priest of Israel. Ahimaaz and Hadassah had numbered three score years and ten, and they beheld about them a large company of their children and children's children, even to the fourth generation. Azariah and Zillah; Sarah, Bathsheba, and Ruth, with their husbands; and Heman and Hagar, who, by many ties, were counted as of the family of Ahimaaz, were present, with all their sons and daughters. Many of these had likewise become the heads of families. The eldest son of Sarah had married a daughter of Heman; one of the sons of Heman now rejoiced over his bride, the only and beautiful daughter of Azariah and Zillah; and a group of thirty children of the fourth generation were as a crown to the hoary head of Ahimaaz.

As the evening wore on, there were scattered groups through the whole dwelling. House-top, parlor, and chamber, gave forth the cheerful voices of pleasant converse, while court, corridor, and garden resounded with the overflowing mirth of children. Azariah was seated near Hadassah by the central fountain of the court. Earnestly he listened to her words, as in days of old, and most beautiful seemed the noble dignity of the son, bending in reverent tenderness before the silvery locks of the mother.

"Would that I could see the bright days for Israel which the Lord hath graciously made to shine upon my posterity," said Hadassah, after gratefully recounting the dealings of the Lord with her family; "but surely I discern the gathering of the storm that shall ere long break over our people."

"It is true," answered Azariah, "that of late the adversaries of Solomon have bitterly stirred themselves against him. But, now Hadad the Edomite hath regained the eastern part of Edom, and reigneth therein, and Rezon

hath likewise made himself king over Syria in Damascus, let us hope that their hatred of the land of Israel will cease, and the spoiling wherewith they have spoiled us will be ended."

"Even so," answered Hadassah; "but I thought not of Hadad nor Rezon when I spake of the clouds and darkness of Israel. I was mourning in spirit over the iniquities of Solomon. Alas! that he whom the Lord hath so highly exalted should turn aside from his commandments, by marrying strange wives of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites: nations of whom the Lord hath said unto Israel, 'Thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son, for they will turn away thy son from following me, that he may serve other gods.' What a perpetual reproach unto Israel, that the beautiful mountain which looketh from the east upon the holy temple should become the mount of corruption, defiled by the high places built unto Chemosh, the god of the Moabites, and Moloch, the fiery idol of the Ammonites, and Ashtoreth, the abomination of the Zidonians. What mountains shall cover our shame, what rivers shall wash away our sin, that incense and the smoke of sacrifice unto the gods of the heathen have gone up from Jerusalem, the city of which God hath said, 'I have chosen me to put my name there.'"

"What atonement shall cover the sins of Solomon," responded Azariah, "who with royal hand hath brought idolatry into the holy city? How hath he gone astray from the footsteps of David, his father. How greatly hath he transgressed the law of the Lord. As now he lieth low in the House of the Forest of Lebanon, doth he remember the prayer he offered in the dew of his youth before the altar of Gibeon? Doth he recall the gracious

answer to that prayer, 'Behold, I have done according to thy words; lo! I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart, so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee. And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches and honor; so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee, all thy days.' And yet, crowned with this divine heritage, Solomon hath turned away from the God of all the earth, and descended to the idols of heathen women."

"Yet I trust, my son, that the king repenteth him of his sins," said Hadassah, "and that he may obtain mercy of the Lord ere he go down to the grave."

"He hath spoken words of an unutterable sadness," replied Azariah, "now that the evil days have come unto him, when man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets. He hath written upon the vast magnificence of his glory, 'Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.' Before his mournful spirit passeth a vision of the time 'when the silver cord shall be loosed, and the golden bowl broken; when the dust shall return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return to God who gave it.' Looking backward with bitterness on the years that have past, he uttereth the counsel, 'Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man;' and looking forward with trembling, he publisheth the fearful truth that standeth as an angel with a drawn sword in the pathway of his soul, 'For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil.'"

"Evil is determined against Israel," resumed Azariah, after a little pause. "Jerusalem shall yet pass through judgments fierce as the fires of Moloch, because of her

sins. Forgive me, my mother. In thy presence I have long set bounds unto my lips, that my tongue should not utter forth the burden of my heart for Israel, lest I should make thine eyes to overflow, and bring down thy gray hairs with sorrow to the grave. But this night I have spoken; yea, I can refrain no longer. My soul longeth for the exalting power of thy words, even as in the days when a young man I stood in fearfulness and trembling before the gates of the sanctuary. The prophecy of Ahijah, the Shilonite, unto Jeroboam, the son of Nebat! It maketh my ears to tingle. It drinketh up my spirit. It overshadoweth the land as a cloud of darkness. It soundeth afar as a wail over Israel. 'Behold, I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee.' Shall the sons of Jacob set themselves one against another as enemies? Shall 'the peculiar people, the holy nation,' be rent asunder? Shall Israel no more dwell together in unity? And shall ten tribes, even the great body of the people, be taken from the house of David? Who shall measure this great calamity? What evil shall be laid in the balances therewith?"

"Truly, it ariseth before us as a bitter judgment," said Hadassah; "but the children of men may not measure the doings of the Lord, nor weigh his counsels in balances. Although he will grievously smite us for our sins, he will not forget his covenant with David. While he giveth ten tribes unto Jeroboam, still he saith concerning Solomon: 'Unto his son will I give one tribe, that David, my servant, may have a light always before me in Jerusalem.' And this one tribe, even Judah, is he in whom is bound up the hope of the promises."

"But Israel, all Israel!" pursued Azariah, "would that it might grow up before the Lord strong, and fair, and

whole, as our own glorious temple, with its twelve tribes as twelve pillars, for the knowledge and worship of the one true God in the earth ; and its precious promises as a glorious crown of light, revealing hope and blessing for all nations."

"How doth my whole soul go out in praise before the glorious vision," responded Hadassah ; "but, if this be not fulfilled before thine eyes, my son, be not dismayed. In days of sorest trouble take up the words of David, and say :

"The Lord reigneth ; let the earth rejoice ;
Let the multitude of isles be glad thereof.
Clouds and darkness are round about him ;
Righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne !"

"The Lord hath made an everlasting covenant with David, ordered in all things and sure, and He prepareth his own way before him for the establishment thereof. And, when the time of his counsels shall be fulfilled, a king shall spring from Judah, before whose everlasting kingdom the glory of Solomon shall fade away, as the waning moon before the light of the morning.

"His name shall endure forever,
His name shall be continued as long as the sun,
And men shall be blessed in him ;
All nations shall call him blessed.
Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel,
Who only doeth wondrous things.
And blessed be his glorious name forever ;
And let the whole earth be filled with his glory.
Amen, and amen."

PART III.

THE CAPTIVITY.

(275)

THE CAPTIVITY.

“Our harps are hung by Babel’s streams,
The tyrant’s jest, the Gentile’s scorn :
No censer round our altar beams,
And mute are timbrel, trump, and horn.”
SCOTT.

CHAPTER I.

GLIMPSES OF BABYLON.

IN a large garden, extending from the rear of an eastern dwelling, a group of children were busy at their play. By the spirited labors of small hands, a mimic tower was fast ascending, of which a boy, of some eight years, was the principal architect. He was assisted by two girls, of whom the older lent her aid in collecting and disposing the materials of which the structure was composed; and the younger came again and again, with her hands laden with roses, lilies, and vine-leaves, to ornament it therewith. In this part of the work, a blooming boy, of two summers, labored with joyful glee. His white feet now gleamed amid the dark green verdure of the garden, and anon ran merrily over its stone-paved walks, as, with glad laughter, he threw down his tribute, whose blossoms, though they

had become but a heap of brilliant spoils beneath the crushing of his tiny fingers, repaid the violence by emitting yet sweeter fragrance.

The tower was near its completion, when, by some flaw in its structure, it began to totter, and suddenly the upper part of it came tumbling to the ground. "The mischief hath all come from these flowers," exclaimed Ariel, in a vexed tone. "Did I not say, at the first, that the bricks would fall, by reason of the stalks of the lilies which ye have laid between them?" And, so saying, he commenced pulling forth the offending flowers, and, in rash impatience, carried on the work of demolition with an unsparing hand.

The older of the sisters looked calmly on, as if accustomed to such outbreaks of passion; but not so the other. Her lip quivered, and large tears filled her eyes, as she beheld the rapid destruction of the work she had taken so much pains to beautify. "Nay, thou shalt not grieve, Esther," said her sister, as she kissed the tears from her cheek; "we ourselves will make a little tent, and it shall be covered with nought but roses. Thy heart is hardened," she continued, turning to Ariel, "that thou regardest not the tears of thy young sister, and thou dost sin in thy foolish anger."

Ere Ariel could reply to his sister's rebuke, he was accosted by a lad, somewhat older than himself, who had entered the open gate of the garden, concerning the work whose ruins lay at his feet. Though addressed in the Chaldean tongue, Ariel replied in Hebrew; whereupon the other exclaimed, in a tone of derision, "Aha! ye are Jews, and children of the captivity; and it is no marvel that your work, like your nation, hath fallen to the ground."

Ariel's spirit was not one that could quietly endure a provocation; and, in its present state, the taunting words

of the Chaldean boy were but as breath to kindling coals. With raised arm and a flashing eye, he advanced to avenge the insult; but Rebecca, suddenly starting up, threw herself in his path, and, gazing steadily upon his face, she said: "Stay thy rash hand. Our mother, Tamar, will know of thy wickedness, and she will give unto thee the rod of correction." Then turning to the other, with a face whose crimson coloring bore witness that her spirit burned at his mockery, she said, in imperfect Chaldean: "We are Hebrews, and it is our glory. We are not born of the heathen, for our fathers are Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob."

The lad replied in yet more insulting words; and, as his voice waxed louder, its tones waked the maid-servant, who had the children in charge, but who for an hour past had been sleeping beneath an arbor, but a little distance from the scene of their sports. At her approach, the intruder immediately departed, but she seemed neither to notice the stranger nor the visible commotion of the children. Casting her eyes about her, with an expression of alarm upon her face, she inquired, hurriedly, looking upon each one in turn, "Where is thy young brother?"

"Indeed, I know not," replied Rebecca, answering for the three. "It is a long time since mine eyes have seen the child. Esther hath mourned because of the tower which Ariel hath thrown down, as thou seest; and, even while I comforted her, there came in that son of a heathen to mock us with bitter words."

"Woe is me if mischief befall the child," exclaimed the affrighted maiden, as, followed by the three children, she searched diligently in every vine-clad arbor, and amid the tall, luxuriant lily-beds, but found him not. At length the joyful voice of the little Esther gave token of her

success, and the others, hastening to the spot where she stood, beheld her peeping through the openings of the foliage of a large willow tree, whose branches swept the ground. Within, with his hands, yet full of crushed lily-blossoms, the little Nathan rested, in the sweet sleep of infancy.

Between fifty and sixty years had now elapsed since the commencement of the captivity of the Jews in Babylon, when Nebuchadnezzar had led the first company of exiles, embracing Daniel and his three companions, along the banks of the Euphrates. In the space of three years they were followed by over three thousand captives. Eight years from the departure of the first band, King Jehoiakim, with his wives, his princes, and many of his people, traversed the same path; and, ten years subsequent to this event, a peeled and persecuted band, accompanied by the blind and brazen-fettered Zedekiah, closed the sad procession. Jerusalem sat desolate, with her tears on her cheeks, because there was none to comfort her; and her sons and daughters mourned in a strange land.

The condition of the Hebrews, while in captivity, was far from being one of abject wretchedness. This is manifest from the circumstance, that a pious Hebrew prophet held the first office at the court of Babylon; that three friends of this prophet occupied important political stations; and that, in the forty-fourth year of the captivity, Jehoiakim was released from an imprisonment which had been continued for thirty-six years, and preferred, in point of rank, as the first of kings then present at Babylon. "He ate at the table of his conqueror, and received an annual allowance, corresponding to his royal dignity." From these circumstances, an honor must have been reflected on the exiles, so that they could not be ill-treated,

nor despised, nor very much oppressed. They were probably viewed as respectable colonists, who enjoyed the peculiar protection of their sovereign.

Nevertheless, they were an exiled and captive people. The home of their hearts lay far away and desolate. Their national customs, and the peculiarities of their religion, exposed them to the derision and scorn of the Chaldeans, and infused the cup of suffering, which they received as a punishment from their offended God, with the bitter drops of insult and indignity. Their solemn feasts and ceremonies, whose observance had been their joy in the land of their fathers, were perpetuated amid sighing and tears, as from the heart of every pious Hebrew came the sad lamentation, "Our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised thee, is burned up with fire, and all our pleasant things are laid waste."

The Hebrew children, to whom allusion has been made, are introduced in the fifth year of Belshazzar, and in the fifty-fifth of the captivity. Their father, Hilkiyah, was the grandson of King Jehoiakim. Their mother, Tamar, was also descended from a collateral branch of the royal line of Judah. In the honor conferred upon the Jewish king, his descendants naturally partook; and Hilkiyah, who was ascertained by Queen Nitocris to be well fitted for the discharge of public duties, was promoted to an important office of state, while a dwelling was appointed him just without the walls of the imperial palace. Hilkiyah, though he still believed himself to be firmly attached to the faith of his fathers, was so engrossed by the duties of his station, and the activities of daily life, that he dwelt contented in Babylon. But not so Tamar. In her heart she forgot not Jerusalem, but preferred it above her chief joy. And as in court or chamber she gathered her little

ones about her, she painted before them, in glowing words, the picture of the delightful land, whose beauties she had seen only by the light of traditionary story. She told them of its fruitful hills and blooming vales; of its lofty trees and softly-flowing waters; and of its thronging inhabitants, whose pleasant dwellings were surrounded by olive-yards and vineyards. She spake of their solemn convocations: of the grateful remembrances and reverent awe of the Feast of the Passover, of the full thanksgivings of the Feast of Harvest, and of the animated joy of the Feast of Tabernacles. With a kindling eye she pictured before them Jerusalem, "beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth;" her palaces, in which God was known for a refuge; her temple, bright without as the sun in his strength, and brighter within by the visible glory of the Shekinah; and the hearts of the young children swelled in sympathy with her triumphant tones. And again she bewailed the fate of the desolate city, in these tremulous words: "The ways of Zion do mourn, because none come to her solemn feasts. All her gates are desolate; her priests sigh; her virgins are afflicted, and she is in bitterness. She weepeth sore in the night; she dwelleth among the heathen, and findeth no rest." And, as she spake, the bright eyes, which were lifted so eagerly to her face, became dim with fast-falling tears, and the rosy lips of childhood quivered in sorrow.

The soul of Tamar was entirely bound up in the religious and domestic affections; and, while she joyfully devoted herself to the happiness of her children, she earnestly sought to train them up in the love and fear of their fathers' God. But, as years rolled on, and their characters unfolded, many were her maternal solitudes and fears. Her first-born, the buoyant, active Ariel

seemed to identify his growing hopes with the pursuits and honors of the land of their captivity, notwithstanding the earnest efforts of his mother to inspire within him the hope of one day dwelling in the land of his fathers. But Canaan, in its quiet and solitude, had no charms for his restless spirit. He would fain dwell amid scenes of stirring excitement; and the camp and battle-field, the sword and scimeter, the brazen chariot and prancing charger, the thunder of the captains and the shouting, were already bright with their false attractions in the ardent imagination of the Hebrew boy. But, while the mother vainly endeavored to awaken national feeling in the mind of her son, she was often astonished to find all her efforts outstripped, and the emotions of her own quiet spirit left far in the distance, by the patriotic ardor of the high-souled and enthusiastic Rebecca. To her the name of her people was a glory, and the study of its records a delight. She listened with pride to the story of the glorious reign of Solomon; wept in sympathy with the tearful lamentations of Jeremiah over the desolations of Zion; and trembled in rapt fervor before the wild, thrilling majesty of the voice of Ezekiel, who, during the first years of the captivity, had unrolled his swift and burning visions upon the banks of the Chebar. But it was Isaiah, predicting, in sublime strains, the downfall of the great city of oppression,—Isaiah, soaring highest in the lofty region of prophetic vision, and catching clearest and brightest upon his exultant wing the rising beams of the coming Sun of Righteousness,—that woke the deepest response in the spirit of Rebecca. Her character was of that cast which is self-guiding and self-sustaining; and seemed, in very childhood, fitted to rule rather than to be ruled. In the family, Esther and the little Nathan were

guided implicitly by her will; and even the impetuous Ariel could not resist her influence. Yet her power was not that of arrogance or assumed authority. It was but the natural effect of the working of an independent and gifted mind, to whose resistless influence other minds, as the needle to the magnet, tremble and turn. A tenderness, resembling a mother's love more than a sister's affection, seemed ever to animate her heart toward her young sister, who was of a character thoughtful and diffident; whose life was bound up in the love and approval of those dear to her; and whose sensitive spirit withered at the voice of unkindness, as flowers beneath blighting frost. Another strong characteristic of Esther was her passionate love of beauty. In her infantile years her tiny hands were often lifted for the stars, that shone with a marvellous brightness over the plains of Chaldea; and in childhood, "the stars of earth, the golden flowers," were her constant companions. And, as often she arranged them with a silent gladness by the rivers of Babylon, the observer might well wonder whether the little beauty-loving maiden might more admire the brilliancy of her gathered treasures, or her own image, mirrored in unbroken clearness in the still waters at her feet.

The spirit of the little Nathan had ever seemed to soar above both flowers and stars, and find its home in thoughts of the God of Abraham. To him the soul of his mother was knit with a passing love; and as, folded in her arms, he listened with such fulness of delighted peace to the story of the Voice which commanded to unbind the young Isaac from the altar of sacrifice, which addressed Moses from the burning bush, and which, in tones of paternal love, called by name the child Samuel, that the heart of Tamar swelled with reverent joy, as she felt that the same

blessed Voice had fallen on the spirit of her son, and trembled in sorrow lest its mandate should withdraw his bright head from the pillow of her bosom, and recall him to the angel-home whither his thoughts were ever ascending.

The city of Babylon, boasting its high antiquity by tracing its founders among the first descendants of Noah, was completely rebuilt by the Assyrian queen Semiramis, about one thousand years after its first foundation, and 1200 B. C. Succeeding sovereigns had greatly added to its strength and beauty; but it was under Nebuchadnezzar, and his renowned daughter-in-law Nitocris, that it rose to its height of majesty and glory, and won its proud name, — a wonder of the world. Its towering, massive walls, which inclosed the perfect square of the city, were eighty-seven feet broad and three hundred and fifty feet high, and ran their immense circuit of sixty miles. These walls were built of brick, and cemented by bitumen, which had the quality of becoming as hard as stone. They were surrounded by an immense ditch, from which the clay had been taken to make the walls of the city; which, being always filled with water, added greatly to its defence. An hundred gates of solid brass formed the entrances of Babylon, twenty-five on every side. From the gates ranged fifty streets, each fifteen miles long and one hundred and fifty feet broad, crossing each other at right angles, and dividing the city into six hundred and seventy-six lesser squares. Towers reared their lofty heights from the four angles of the wall, and likewise along its entire perimeter, there being three towers between every two of the gates.

From within the walls rose the cloud-capt tower of the temple of Belus, supporting upon its glittering summit the golden image of idol-worship. The palaces of the king,

one on either side of the river which flowed through the centre of the city, were connected by a bridge across its waters, and also by a tunnel beneath, forming a subterranean passage from the one to the other. The old palace, which stood on the east bank of the river, was surrounded by three walls, one within the other, with considerable intervening spaces. The new palace, on the opposite bank, which was built by Nebuchadnezzar, was likewise inclosed with three walls, and was four times as large as the other, being with its gardens eight miles in circumference. Within this inclosure were the wonderful hanging gardens, rising in terraces one above another to the height of the city walls, each containing a depth of soil sufficient for the growth of the largest trees. These Nebuchadnezzar had constructed, that his queen might enjoy upon the level plain of Babylon a miniature imitation of the mountainous districts and woody tracts of Media, her fatherland. Around the lesser squares, into which the city was divided, were built the dwellings of its vast population, with considerable distances between, while the intervening spaces, and the interior of each square, were occupied as gardens and pleasure grounds. These were clothed in the luxuriant vegetation of the East, and interlaced by bright streams, conducted through the whole city from the parent waters of the Euphrates, which rolled in pride from the mountains of Armenia, and, as a mighty monarch, cleaved its majestic path through the very heart of "the golden city."

As the great Nebuchadnezzar, in the latter part of his reign, walked in his kingly palace, the scene that lay outspread before him, so far-reaching in extent, so perfect in symmetry, so imposing in magnificence, so impregnable in strength, awoke the pride of his heart, and he said, "Is

not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?" But, while the words of pride were yet in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, "O, King Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken, 'The kingdom is departed from thee.'" In the same hour the monarch realized the fulfilment of the judgment which had been prefigured unto him in visions of the night, and the doom of his dream became unto him a living and terrible reality. Seven years passed over him, while, driven out from among men, "he did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven." But, when his understanding returned unto him, and his honor and brightness were renewed, when his counsellors and lords sought again unto him, and he was established in his kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto him, then did he utter the heartfelt confession, "Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of Heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment, and those that walk in pride he is able to abase."

Thus, after a reign of forty years, whose last remnant was marked by a reverent acknowledgment of the Most High God, Nebuchadnezzar exchanged his gorgeous dwelling-place for the narrow house appointed unto all the living. His son, Evil Merodach, took the kingdom, a weak and vacillating prince, whose reign of two years is chiefly marked by the release of the imprisoned Hebrew king, Jehoiakim, and his promotion to the royal favor. Evil Merodach fell a victim to the conspiracy of his own relations. Neriglissar, his sister's husband, who became his successor, was slain in battle with the Medes and Persians, after a reign of three years; and his son, Laborosoarchod, took the throne. But so great was his tyranny that his Babylonian subjects conspired against his life, and put him

to death in the ninth month of his reign. After the interval of six years, which embraced the short reigns of these three successive kings, Belshazzar, the son of Evil Merodach and Nitocris, and grandson of Nebuchadnezzar, ascended the throne. But the spirit of the great Babylonian monarch was reproduced in neither his son nor grandson. Belshazzar, like his father, was a weak and licentious king, over whom the sparkling goblet and melting voice of harp and dulcimer had more power than the demands of a kingdom. But, while he unremittingly pursued his pleasures during the eighteen years of his reign, there was one who still remained watchful of the interests of his kingdom, whose heart yet beat only for the glory of Babylon, and whose hand supported the tottering foundations of empire. It was the mother of the king, the great Nitocris. She completed many of the public works which Nebuchadnezzar had commenced; and, as the Medes, already possessed of extensive sway, were restlessly extending their power, she employed her utmost activity in constructing new fortifications for the defence of the capital. She also raised both banks of the Euphrates to an amazing height and thickness, and threw across them a bridge, built with wonderful art, of hewn stones of great magnitude, fastened together with iron and lead. In order to accomplish these works, she caused an immense artificial lake to be dug, one hundred and sixty miles in circumference, for the draining of the river, which was also retained as a reservoir, to be used in watering the country. Her days were spent with the ministers of state, in concerting measures for the general good, in dictating embassies to foreign nations, and in the personal supervision of those public works which she was ever carrying forward. At night, when others slept, the waking Nitocris still thought on Babylon.

CHAPTER II.

INTERVIEWS WITH THE QUEEN.

It was an hour past noontide, and a settled calm prevailed over Babylon, as its inhabitants sought relief from the oppressive heat of the climate in retirement and repose. As Rebecca and Esther strayed from the deeply-shaded arbor, where they were accustomed to recline in their noon-day slumber, they perceived that one of the gates of the palace wall, which extended along the opposite side of the broad street which separated it from their father's domain, was partially open. This was so unusual a circumstance as to excite their special attention, and to awaken within them a strong desire to avail themselves of this opportunity to enter the royal gardens. After some demurring on the part of Esther, which was soon silenced by her sister, they passed, hand in hand, through a small portal of Hilkiah's garden, and in a moment stood before the gate of the palace. No porter was near, and unobserved they entered. Soon turning from the broad chariot-path into a long avenue, bordered on either side by a sparkling stream, and shaded by the drooping foliage of the willow, they were led into the gardens extending from the southern wing of the palace. Here they stopped, and gazed in bewildered and silent amazement upon the far-reaching splendor which lay around them. Before them spread a wide plain, laid out with the exact and angular regularity which marked the whole arrangement

of Babylon. Over its numerous sections, the luxuriant plants of the East bloomed in glittering brilliancy, which was reflected by the still waters that in every direction softly flowed at their feet. There the golden lily sought vainly to rival her sister of snow, and she of the imperial crimson reared her stately head above the lily of Persia, "dropping sweet-smelling myrrh." The Egyptian lotus bloomed by the queenly rose, and the cinnamon and citron trees filled the air with the spicy breath of Araby. On the left, — near to gaze upon, yet far, if the intervening space were to be measured by the footsteps of the young children, — rose in massive grandeur the majestic palace of the king. Its broad foundations and far-reaching magnificence, its lofty towers, its long colonnades, its richly-wrought porticos, where glistening gold shed its radiance over pure marble, all formed a stupendous pile, which, in gigantic size and dazzling splendor, seemed like a sculptured mountain of silver. But on the right, and nearer the spot where they stood, another wonder met their eyes. From the smooth plain long extended eminences rose, one above another, to a vast height, bearing lofty trees, and in some parts dense with luxuriant shrubbery. From a large reservoir upon the upper eminence, streams sparkling in sunlight came leaping from terrace to terrace, and long flights of marble steps offered an easy ascent to the summit of the hanging gardens. Here it was that Jerusalem had yielded the beauties of her own delightful land to adorn the city of her oppression. The Judean palm-tree spread far its overshadowing branches; and the towering cedar, though shorn of much of its native majesty by transplantation in a foreign soil, yet spake of the glory of Lebanon.

"Dost thou not see, Esther?" exclaimed Rebecca, pointing upwards, "there are the cedar trees of which our

mother hath told us, the cedars of Lebanon. Thither will we go," she continued, seizing her sister's hand by a sudden impulse; "for fain would I rest beneath their shade, though they grow in a strange land."

As the two children reached the top of the first terrace, a sculptured gate in the side of the second embankment, apparently leading to a retreat within, attracted their notice; and Rebecca essayed to open it, but in vain. After lingering for a while upon each eminence, the wanderers at length reached the summit of the second flight of steps from the top, opposite which another gate presented itself, similar to those they had already witnessed. This gate was unlocked, and readily yielded to their efforts. Opening it, they entered a long, spacious apartment, whose luxurious softness was most welcome to their weary feet, and whose drapery bare witness to the costly elegance of Babylonian fabrics and the rich colorings of Tyre. Deep recesses in the apartment conducted to windows, overlooking the lower terraces of the gardens and palace beyond. But they, faint with heat and weariness, thought only of the grateful rest which the place afforded; and, throwing themselves side by side upon a cushion, they were soon locked in profound slumber.

The apartments, which occupied the interior of the vast arches which supported the hanging gardens, were not only inviting by the richness of their decorations and the beauty of their prospects, but for their breath of refreshing coolness, which was a luxury in that torrid clime. In order to form a proper pavement for supporting the soil and confining the moisture of the gardens, large flat stones were first laid upon the top of the arches. Over these was spread a layer of reeds mixed with bitumen; upon this two rows of bricks closely cemented; and the whole was

covered with sheets of lead, upon which was laid a large depth of soil. By this means the apartments within the arches were entirely excluded from the direct rays of the sun, and afforded a most grateful retreat from the intense heats which at times prevailed at Babylon.

As the sun declined to the west, a low, deep, but steadily increasing murmur announced the renewal of life and motion throughout the mighty city; till at length its tumultuous though majestic swell seemed as the perpetual roll of ocean waves upon a rock-bound shore. Again commenced the traffic of buyer and seller, as in the various market-places were displayed the luxuries of every clime. Busy multitudes traversed the streets, along which, ever and anon, rolled the gorgeous chariots of nobles and princes, and crowds of daily devotees pursued their way to the lofty temple of Belus.

At this time, Queen Nitocris came forth unattended from the palace, and, passing with a slow step and meditative air through the long extended gardens, she mounted the terraces to the upper apartment, which she entered, and closed the door, evidently seeking retirement and solitude. Advancing a little way, she checked her footsteps, and uttered a sudden exclamation of surprise; for half concealed by the falling drapery of a recess lay two children, of eight and twelve years, who, entirely unconscious of their intrusion into the private retreat of the great queen, slept on in their calm slumber.

"Children of the Hebrews!" murmured Nitocris, half audibly; "yet who among the young daughters of Babylon shall surpass them in beauty? Truly," she continued, mentally, as she gazed upon the elder of the two, "one might know thee, even in slumber, to be of the race of the prophet Daniel. By that broad and lofty brow, and by that

mouth so wonderfully like his who spake words no other man might dare to utter in the ears of the king of Babylon, I know thee to be of a kindred spirit. And thou, all eyes shall admire thy beauty, little maiden," thought Nitocris, turning to the sleeping Esther; and a smile lighted her face as she felt her own heart yield to the expression of winning, trusting sweetness, which spake from every feature of the fair child at her feet. Suddenly Esther awoke. Starting to her feet, she looked about her with a bewildered air; and, as she became conscious of the place where she was, and of the dread presence before which she stood, she uttered a cry of affright, and fell upon the neck of her sister. But Rebecca, when fully awake and aware of their situation, rose with an air entirely undismayed, and took her sister's hand to lead her from the apartment.

"What do ye here?" said Nitocris, for the first time addressing them. "Know ye not that no foot save that of Nitocris may enter herein, and that a severe penalty rests on whomsoever shall dare to disobey our commandment?"

"We are the daughters of Hilkiyah, the son of Hannah, the daughter of king Jehoiakim," answered Rebecca. "We strayed from the dwelling of our father, and entered the open gate of the palace, that we might behold the glory of thy gardens; and, as we were weary with mounting the terraces, we came hither, and laid us down and slept."

"Stay!" said Nitocris, as again the children essayed to depart; "would it please thee, damsel," she continued, addressing Rebecca, "to dwell in the palace, where the chief of the eunuchs shall prepare thee for a handmaid to the queen of Babylon?"

"Nay," said Rebecca, as she slightly drew back her head; "it is not meet that I should serve thee, for I also am born of kings."

"Thou art of unthought-of daring," said Nitocris, in a stern tone, "but thou art but a child, and art ignorant," she continued, in mitigation of the offence; and, willing to prolong the conversation, she again inquired, "If thou art a daughter of kings, will it not become thee to dwell in kingly palaces?"

"Not as a bondmaid," replied Rebecca. "If it pleaseth thee, great queen, bid us that we depart hence, for even now our mother, Tamar, weepeth lest evil hath befallen us."

Notwithstanding Nitocris was much interested in this little interview with the Hebrew children, her mind, entirely engrossed in affairs of state, soon lost all recollection of the circumstance. But as years passed on, and the character of Rebecca developed and matured, its memory became more and more vividly impressed upon her mind. Nitocris stood out before her mental vision with a dignity of mien, a greatness of purpose, a loftiness of soul, which awakened her admiration, and instinctively moved her sympathies. Meanwhile, death had twice visited the captive family; first, in the removal of the young child Nathan, and again in that of the heart-stricken Tamar, who survived but a short time the son whose character had ever rendered him the object of her peculiar tenderness.

In the fifth year of his reign, Belshazzar had repaired in person to the court of Cræsus, king of Lydia, carrying with him an immense treasure; and, with the aid of that prince, entered into a formidable conspiracy against Cyrus. But the auxiliaries were routed, and Cræsus taken and dethroned. Some years subsequent to these events, Hilkiah, who enjoyed the full confidence of Nitocris, was sent on a dangerous embassy to the court of Lydia. Suspicion rested upon him, and he fell a victim to his coura-

geous daring in the service of the Chaldean queen. He had, however, fulfilled his mission, and sent dispatches conveying information of the utmost importance to Babylon. As a testimony of her grateful appreciation of his services, Nitocris commanded that his son Ariel should be given in charge to the prince of the eunuchs, and prepared for the service of the king, and that his two daughters should be promoted to the honor of her personal attendants. When, after a suitable time of preparation, they stood before her, she instantly recognized them as the children whom, several years before, she had found sleeping in the apartments of the terraced gardens; and the interest she had then felt for them was renewed and increased by their present circumstances, as orphans and captives, and by their appearance, which none could have beheld unmoved. They came forward through the large and lofty hall, where the queen reclined, after her mid-day repose; and, as they approached her, both bent the knee. But as Rebecca knelt, the crimson glow, which blended so richly with her dark, olive complexion, grew yet deeper upon her cheek; the light of her eye became a more living index to the soul within; and her whole expression clearly revealed that, though she wore the attitude of subjection, her spirit recognized it not; that she was conscious of a loftiness of soul which should receive rather than bestow homage, and triumphed in her proud birthright, as springing from the royal line of Judah. The young Esther, in whom childhood was just merging into womanhood, wore an expression of winning and affectionate trust, which might have unlocked a heart of sterner mould than that of Nitocris. With her lips half parted, and her eyes suffused in unshed tears, it seemed that her impulse was to throw herself into the arms of her, at whose feet she knelt

with the words : "Protect and love me, O mighty queen. Be to me a mother, and I will lavish upon thee all the treasures of a daughter's love."

Nitocris was moved by this mute appeal to her sympathies. With the kindly condescension which always accompanies true greatness, she bade the maidens recline on cushions by her side, and freely talked with them of their father, their grandsire, the aged Jehoiakim, and their people. It was this last theme that kindled fervent words upon Rebecca's lips, and Nitocris looked upon her with admiration, as she expressed her patriotic ardor and undying love of country. It was during this interview that a bond of sympathy was formed between the great queen and the captive maiden, which was purely the result of spiritual affinities. Each felt that the soul of the other was a counterpart of her own. In each, the chief sentiment was patriotism, made strong and ardent by the tribute of every energy of a noble being. But Rebecca beheld in Nitocris the queen of the land that oppressed her beloved Jerusalem, whose very dust was precious in her eyes; and Nitocris saw in Rebecca a representative of that race, whose prophets had unsparingly denounced her own glorious Babylon to perpetual desolation. It was this difference of relative position that prevented the perfect comingling of two spirits, which otherwise would have been united in the strongest bonds of friendship.

The private apartments of Nitocris were in the southern wing of the palace, and rooms had been assigned the Hebrew sisters communicating with these, and opening on the eastern front, overlooking a full view of the royal gardens which extended to the Euphrates. Here the gardens were bounded by the massive wall which bordered either side of the river, and connected with those of the

old palace by a bridge across the Euphrates. At the intersection of those streets which ran at right angles to the walls of the river, there were gates of brass, from which were formed descents or landing-places, by means of steps, so that the inhabitants could easily pass in boats from one side of the city to the other. At a little distance from the old palace rose the temple of Belus. Within this temple was an immense tower, six hundred feet in height; and the same number square at the foundation. It consisted of eight towers, each seventy-five feet high, placed one above another, and gradually decreasing toward the top like a pyramid. This was the ancient tower of Babel; but it was greatly enlarged by Nebuchadnezzar, who built around it other sacred edifices, forming a square of nearly three miles in compass, inclosed by a strong wall, whose entrances were secured by solid gates of brass.

As Rebecca and Esther stood enjoying the quiet calm that lay over the vast gardens of the palace, made more attractive by contrast with the busy hum and ceaseless motion of the city around, the sun sank below the western horizon, and the vast city lay in shadow. But the lofty tower of Belus yet glittered in sunlight; and, ere it had lost the last beams of day, there awoke the sound of cornet, sackbut, flute and dulcimer, and the people fell down and worshipped the idol Bel, whose temple thus retained the last evening radiance of their great divinity, the sun, and gleamed forth the first morning welcome to his return.

"They know not Jehovah," said Rebecca, in a tone in which scorn and compassion strangely mingled, "neither regard the operations of his hands. It is he who 'hath prepared a tabernacle for the sun, which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race.' Would that I had lived in the

glorious past, when my feet should have stood in the sacred palaces of Zion; when thus I might have lifted mine eyes unto the Holy Temple, as the high-sounding praises of the Levites made all hearts in Jerusalem to melt and flow together as the heart of one man, and filled the city with joy like the swelling waves of the sea. How my soul should have leaped at the peal of the silver trumpets that bade the people worship, as the priest ministered for them before the veiled Shekinah; how should I have watched the ascending incense as it mounted high and higher, nor stayed until it entered into the open gates of heaven; yea, my very spirit should have gone up therewith, and breathed forth its praises in the dwelling-place of God."

Esther answered not, for her sister's impassioned fervor had moved her heart too deeply for words, and Rebecca resumed: "Would the time had now come wherein the Lord shall say to Jerusalem, 'Thou shalt be built,' and to the temple, 'Thy foundation shall be laid.' But, alas for the months and years that are yet to be measured out to us ere the time of captivity be fulfilled. Until then, how shall we cease to weep because of Jerusalem. 'How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land.'"

"Now thou shalt mourn no more, my sister," said Esther. "The queen spake very comfortably unto us, and will cherish us for our father's sake; and behold, our dwelling-place, is it not meet for king's daughters?"

"Thou hast said truly, my sister," answered Rebecca. "The God of Abraham hath been very gracious unto the fatherless and motherless."

"Motherless!" The word was spoken unwittingly, for it struck a chord in Esther's heart that never vibrated without tears. "Alas, my mother," she said, "what are kingly palaces without thee? Would I might see thee, hear thy

voice once more, if it were only in visions of the night. Dost thou know, Rebecca, the young child Nathan hath come to me again in dreams, with songs of an exceeding sweetness; and, when I awaked, my heart within me was desolate, that it might not rest with him in our mother's bosom."

"He shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom," said Rebecca, with soothing tenderness. "Forget not the promises of the Holy One of Israel, my sister. 'As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you, and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem.'"

"Shall the Anointed One reign in Jerusalem when the Lord shall bring again the captivity of his people?" asked Esther, after a thoughtful pause.

"The Lord hath not revealed the time of his coming," answered Rebecca; "yet, when he hath prepared his way, he hath promised us that the Son and Lord of David shall reign gloriously in the earth, and of his kingdom there shall be no end. In that blessed time the oppressor shall be laid low in the dust, and the crying of the captive shall be heard no more. Violence and destruction shall hide their heads forever, and war shall be forgotten as a thing out of mind. The poor shall rejoice in judgment, the meek shall be lifted up. Day by day the sun, walking through the heavens, shall look down only on the delights of righteousness and peace, and night by night the stars shall listen to the songs of love and joy which the earth shall utter forth in her blessedness. Hear the words of Isaiah:

"And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse,
And a branch shall grow out of his roots.
With righteousness shall he judge the poor,
And reprove with equity for the meek of the earth.

And he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth,
And with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.

“The wolf shall also dwell with the lamb,
And the leopard shall lie down with the kid,
And the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together,
And a little child shall lead them.
They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain,
For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord,
As the waters cover the sea.”

“Beautiful for joy and peace is the kingdom of the Anointed One,” said Esther, fervently. “And his rest shall be glorious: may his coming be hastened.”

“O that I might behold his coming,” exclaimed Rebecca, “yet, if it be not fulfilled before mine eyes, I will still glory in his kingdom; I will rejoice in his salvation, as if it had already come to pass, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. I will stand with the prophet where I may look on the days to come, and with him will I sing:

“Behold, God is my salvation,
I will trust and not be afraid;
For the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song,
He also is become my salvation.
Sing unto the Lord, for he hath done excellent things:
This is known in all the earth.
Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion,
For great is the Holy One of Israel, in the midst of thee.”

The attendance which Nitocris required of the sisters was slight and infrequent, leaving them almost the entire use of their time. They read together those parts of the Hebrew Scriptures which they possessed, and often repaired to the house of Ephraim, a kinsman renowned in the law, to be instructed therein. Taught by the precepts and example of their mother, they visited the sick and

afflicted among their people, and Rebecca counted it her chief joy to comfort those whose hearts in their captivity turned still to Jerusalem. In these duties, relieved by the lighter employments of the embroidery-frame and the harp, some two or three years quietly rolled away. The sisters were happy in each other, and in the occasional society of Ariel, who was in the retinue of the king, though Rebecca especially mourned his confirmed indifference to his privileges as a son of Israel, and his growing attachment to the customs and people of Babylon.

On a certain evening, a young man was slowly pacing to and fro, with a meditative air, before one of the more humble dwellings of Babylon. Once and again he approached the door to enter, but withdrew, as if fearing his presence might be an intrusion. Venturing at length within, he passed into an upper chamber, where a large number of people were assembled in an attitude of reverent waiting. But, from whatever cause his hesitation might have arisen, it appeared groundless. He was clothed in a like garb with that of the Hebrew captives, and seated himself apparently unobserved. The room was spacious, and its appointments plain, excepting at its upper end, where upon a raised platform stood a reading-desk, covered by a cloth of blue and scarlet, whose cunning embroidery bore the design of the bell and the pomegranate. Upon this stood a box or coffer of cedar-wood, covered with gold, and above hung a seven-branched lamp of richly chased silver, fed with olive oil, which shed a softened radiance over the desk beneath, and dimly lighted the rest of the apartment. An air of touching sadness pervaded the whole assembly, and seemed to cast its spell-like influence over the stranger from the moment of his entrance, till the hidden founts of feeling were moved, and he could have wept in sympathy

with those whose heads were bowed in sorrow around him.

After a period of silence, a single voice of mournful melody commenced a kind of recitative or chant, which was soon joined by others, till its full harmonious cadence moved the soul as a bulrush before the swelling tide.

“ How doth the city sit solitary that was full of people,
How is she become as a widow ;
She that was great among the nations and princess among the
provinces,
How is she become tributary.
She weepeth sore in the night, and her tears are on her cheeks ;
Among all her lovers she hath none to comfort her ;
She dwelleth among the heathen, she findeth no rest.
The ways of Zion do mourn, because none come to her solemn
feasts.
All her gates are desolate.
Her priests sigh, her virgins are afflicted,
And she is in bitterness.
Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by ?
Behold, and see if theré be any sorrow like unto my sorrow,
Wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce
anger.”

A reverent man then approached the golden coffer, and, taking from it a roll of papyrus, read different portions of the law as given by the Lord to his servant Moses. Ever and anon came the response of the fervent “ Amen ” from the people, and the reverent “ blessed be his name,” as often as were called the sacred appellations of the Deity.

After this, might not one have appeared with an air of severe and almost inaccessible sanctity, whom the people silently, though perceptibly, received with that homage which is the soul’s instinctive tribute to superior wisdom and virtue? Might it not have been he who, even when

a child, had refused the luxuries of a royal table, that he might obey the law of his God, and whose limbs were yet to be cast to the violence of lions for the same unflinching obedience? who in earliest manhood had revealed secrets and unfolded mysteries before which the proudest sages of Chaldea had shrunk back in astonishment and dismay; whose words had made the monarch of earth’s mightiest kingdom tremble upon his throne, and who was yet to become second only to the king of the vast empire stretching from India to Ethiopia. In such an assembly, might not the prophet Daniel have stood up, to instruct and comfort the band of mourning captives that had gathered together, sighing and crying for the desolations of Zion? At such an hour might he not have spoken of the marvellous unfoldings of the future, which the Almighty had made to pass before his eyes in night-visions; and rehearsed his wonderful revelations concerning the promised hope of Israel? —

“ I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool; his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire.

“ A fiery stream issued, and came out from before him; thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; the judgment was set, and the books were opened.

“ I saw in the night-visions, and behold one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him.

“ And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.”

Another now arose, even Imlah, of the tribe of Judah,

and repeated the lofty strains of Isaiah concerning the glorious kingdom of the Anointed One, and the fervent words of Ezekiel, swift and impetuous in their burning power as his vision of "the living creatures that ran and returned like the appearance of a flash of lightning." Then upon the thirsty heart of the captives his speech distilled "like showers upon the mown grass," as he spake of the certain downfall of the city of their oppression, and their restoration to their beloved Jerusalem. His words were long and fervent, full of blessing and power; and, when he ceased, the restrained emotions of the people burst forth in a triumphant song of joy, as they saw in vision the future glories of which the prophets had spoken.

"Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion,
Put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem.
Loose thyself from the bands of thy neck,
O captive daughter of Zion.

"For the Lord shall comfort Zion, he shall comfort all her waste places.

And he will make her wilderness like Eden,
And her desert like the garden of the Lord.
Joy and gladness shall be found therein,
Thanksgiving and the voice of melody.

"Therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return,
And come with singing unto Zion;
And everlasting joy shall be upon their head.
They shall obtain joy and gladness,
And sorrow and mourning shall flee away."

CHAPTER III.

PROPHETIC REVELATIONS.

IN the mutual greetings which followed the breaking up of the assembly, it was announced to two veiled females, who were earnestly conversing with a group of friends, that a chariot of the royal palace was in waiting. As they entered the chariot, the horses became so unmanageable as to endanger their safety. Just then the young stranger, whose presence has been noticed, stepped forward, and, taking the bridle of the restless animals, calmed them by a word. He bowed, in acknowledgment of the thanks of the riders, and slowly pursued his homeward way.

Brilliant lights illumined many a gorgeous palace as the chariot rolled through the broad streets of Babylon; and the sound of mirth and revelry, blended with the melting voice of music, broke ever and anon upon the soft evening air. The balmy breath of flowers came up as incense from the extensive gardens on every hand, and the innumerable stars, sown so thickly in the deep blue heavens, looked down with a wondrous brightness.

"Dost thou know him who quieted our horses, and stilled our fears, Rebecca?" inquired Esther.

"Nay, my sister. It was one of our brethren, for he wore the garments of a Hebrew; but I know not his name, nor whose son he may be."

"But I think he is not a Hebrew," pursued Esther.
"He sat near us in the congregation, and I marked that

he uttered no responses. Nay, I think that our language was unknown words to his ear, for didst not thou see him when ——”

“I saw nought but the faces of them who spake unto us, and heard nought but their blessed words, full of the inspiration of the Almighty,” answered Rebecca. “I marvel, my sister, that thou couldest think of aught else, when such voices sounded in thine ear.”

There was a moment's silence, for Esther felt rebuked by her sister's reply; but she calmly said, “I think it was the prince Arbaces.”

“The prince Arbaces!” repeated Rebecca; “thou art dreaming, my sister. What should he do in an assembly of our people?”

“Nevertheless, it was surely he,” replied Esther. “I thought by his manner in the assembly that, though he wore the garb of a Hebrew, he was not one of our people; and when afterwards I heard his voice, I knew it was no other than Arbaces.”

The conjecture of Esther was right, for it was indeed the prince Arbaces, who had that evening, in disguise, mingled in the assembly of the Hebrews. Though young, he was already held in high distinction among the Babylonian nobles. Descended directly from Nebuchadnezzar, he not only gloried in his birth, but felt it to be the work of his life to serve the kingdom whose glory had been so widely promoted by his great ancestor. Though in the immediate service of the king, and already promoted to high honors, in his heart he despised Belshazzar, who could forget in his pleasures the glory, the danger, and even the existence of his kingdom; but he was most devotedly loyal to Nitocris, whose talents and patriotic vir-

tues insured a veneration from all her true-hearted subjects almost amounting to idolatry.

Walking one day in the royal gardens, he had, on turning an angle in the path, surprised the two Hebrew sisters, who sat beneath the shade of a large drooping willow. Rebecca was busied with her embroidery, and Esther had just completed a garland of roses and placed it upon Rebecca's head. Arbaces suddenly stopped and was about to retreat, as he perceived the spot occupied by some of the ladies of the palace; but the vision presented to him defeated his purpose, and he stood in mute admiration. “Thou wert made to be crowned, Rebecca,” said Esther, as she stepped back a pace or two, to observe the effect of her adornment, and now stood with her hands slightly clasped, and her whole face radiant with undisguised admiration of her sister's commanding beauty. Yet, the tribute she was rendering in such beautiful simplicity, the observer was fain to yield first to herself, as the light wind just stirred the waving hair about her brow, and the spirit of gladness danced in time with its movement in her joy-beaming eyes.

Just then the sisters became aware of the presence of Arbaces, who, after a casual remark in apology for his intrusion, passed on. The next day he instinctively sought the same path, but the retreat beneath the willow was unoccupied; and, throwing himself beneath its shade, he busied his mind with various conjectures concerning the Hebrew sisters, who were to him entirely unknown. He had seen many of the hand-maidens of the queen, but these had never mingled with them; and, by their personal appearance and manner, he concluded them to be of the Judean captives. Daily did he visit that portion of the gardens, hoping again to meet them. But he was still

disappointed. Other maidens were dancing to the measure of their own glad songs, beside the tranquil waters, but the objects of his search seemed enveloped in a kind of mystery, which but served to increase the interest they had at first excited.

Thus several weeks passed by, when one evening at early twilight, as Arbaces was leaning against a pillar of one of the lower porticos of the palace, a door opened upon the balcony above, at a little distance from the place where he stood, and two females stepped forth, whom he immediately recognized as those for whose appearance he had so long waited in vain. His own figure was effectually concealed from observation by the deep shadow of the massive pillar against which he leaned, while his position gave him a full view of the sisters, who were entirely unconscious of the interest with which they were regarded. Their conversation at first was earnest and animated, though to the Chaldean prince they spoke in a strange tongue; but gradually the tones of their voices became low and full of sadness. Then, as the last rays of daylight faded, giving place to the faint beams of the crescent in the western sky, the younger of the two brought forth a harp, and, sweeping the strings with a mournful prelude, she sang:

“By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down,
Yea, we wept when we remembered Zion.
We hanged our harps upon the willows
In the midst thereof.
For there they that carried us away captive
Required of us a song;
And they that wasted us
Required of us mirth, saying,
‘Sing us one of the songs of Zion.’”

The voice was sweet as the warblings of the summer song-bird, yet touchingly mournful as the plaint of a lorn dove; but here another voice of rich and expressive melody joined the strain:

“How shall we sing the Lord’s song in a strange land?
If I forget thee, O Jerusalem,
Let my right hand forget her cunning.
If I do not remember thee,
Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth;
If I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.”

The song ceased, but left its sweet, lingering echo in the soul of Arbaces. He had heard the same strain before, and was sufficiently acquainted with the familiar sounds of the Hebrew to understand its general sentiment, for it was a common song among the captives of Judah. But now its mournful cadences took hold on his soul with mysterious power, and his whole being was moved to sympathy with that strange people, whose hearts, even in the gorgeous palaces of Babylon, went out in such devoted love to the desolate city of their fathers. This sympathy was doubtless strengthened by the impressions he already cherished regarding the Hebrew faith. His mother had known of the wonderful interpretations given by the prophet Daniel, of the dreams of the great Nebuchadnezzar, and had seen the miraculous preservation of the three Hebrew youths, who had come forth unharmed from the burning fiery furnace. Moreover, she had in her service a bondmaid of Israel, from whom she had gathered much of the wonderful dealings of the Most High in the history of his chosen people, and she had instinctively felt that he who “could deliver after this sort” must be, as his worshippers claimed, the only living and true God. These impressions she had transferred to the minds of her children,

strangely mingled with a belief in the prognostications of astrologers and magicians, and a practice of the idolatrous worship of the idol Bel, as the representative of the sun.

Often at the evening hour did Arbaces repair to that part of the royal gardens beneath the apartments of the Judean sisters, listening with ever new delight to the deep, rich melodies of the songs of Zion. During this time also he had several times conversed with them as he met them in the gardens and corridors of the palace, and had become deeply interested, not only in them, but in the religion to which they were so devotedly attached. He determined to know more of the faith and worship of the Hebrews, and it was for this purpose that he attended the evening gathering of worshippers, to which allusion has been made. Although the services were all conducted in the Hebrew tongue, with which he was but slightly acquainted, yet the deep feeling of the people, the strange and vital power which their religion possessed over every soul, joined with the truth with which he was perfectly acquainted, that, notwithstanding ridicule and contempt, they still pertinaciously adhered to it, in the midst of the imposing rites and ceremonies of Babylonian worship,—all this impressed him with a strong predilection in its favor, and gradually prepared his mind for an irresistible conviction of its truth.

Although the climate of Babylon was usually temperate and salubrious, yet at certain seasons the heat was extremely intense. At the close of a day of oppressive sultriness, an evening breeze slightly stirred the heavy air, and increased to a refreshing coolness, as the night advanced. Esther, wearied by the languor of the day, slept profoundly; but Rebecca sat by an open window, enjoying the cool breath of the night, and the high and solemn thoughts which its aspect of illimitable grandeur ever

awoke in her soul. It was near midnight, and a slave came to her door with a summons for her attendance upon the queen. She immediately obeyed, and found that Nitocris had dismissed all her attendants, and was alone upon her couch.

“Bring thy harp, Rebecca,” said the queen, “and sing me one of thy sweet songs of Zion, for troublous thoughts fill my heart upon my bed, and my sleep hath departed from me.”

Rebecca easily divined the cause of the queen's solicitude. The valor of the Persian Cyrus had obtained for him a wide renown, and it was now universally acknowledged that the conqueror of Asia designed to subdue his only remaining rival in the empire of the eastern world, and bring under his dominion the proud city of Babylon. Her sympathies were immediately awakened, as she marked the pressure with which the heavy cares of empire weighed upon the noble spirit of Nitocris, unrelieved and unshared by the effeminate and luxurious king; and, remembering the firm faith and trust in her fathers' God which had been her own comfort in hours of anxiety and depression, she sang:

“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble,
Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed,
And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;
Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled;
Though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.

“There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of
God,
The holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High.
God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved:
God shall help her, and that right early.

"The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved ;
He uttered his voice, the earth melted.
The Lord of Hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge."

Another, and yet another, of the lofty strains of David broke upon the quiet of the midnight hour, and the chafed and wearied spirit of the queen seemed borne upward upon the wings of song into a serener and purer atmosphere.

"Thy music bringeth not sleep to my eyes, Rebecca," she said, half reprovingly ; "but it hath stirred within me thoughts of lofty daring. It hath awakened once more the soul of Nitocris."

After a period of abstracted silence, she said, "Thou hast heard of the fame of Cyrus, Rebecca ?"

"True, O queen," she answered.

"And dost thou know of his mother and his father ?"

"Nay, I but know he is sister's son to the mother of the king, thy husband," replied Rebecca.

"Ah! had he been but the own son of the mother of Evil Merodach, Babylon might have had a king worthy of her strength, and I a son that should bring glory to my name," replied Nitocris, bitterly. "But know thou, Rebecca, that Astyages, king of the Medes, had one son, Darius, and two daughters, Mandane and Amyit. Mandane was of a noble spirit, worthy to be the queen of Nebuchadnezzar, yet she married the Persian Cambyses, not of royal blood, but of kingly soul, and she hath given birth to the conqueror Cyrus. But Amyit's soul was wrapped in her costly Babylonian garments, and rose no higher than the gems of her glittering crown; yet she was the wife of Nebuchadnezzar, she the mother of my husband?" And the hands of the queen were tightly clasped, as if she would fain press from her mind a thought that

had long corroded her peace with its rankling poison. "Evil Merodach was but a son of his mother; would he had been one to reverence and adore, like him who often stood by his side among the counsellors of the great king, the lofty one of thy own race, the prophet Daniel. But ere my first-born came to my arms, how did I invoke the stars in their courses, and the spirit of the mighty gods, that I might give to Babylon a king worthy of his glorious inheritance. In vain! Belshazzar is the son of Evil Merodach, and the son's son of the Median Amyit. In whom, when I am gone, shall live the soul of Nebuchadnezzar, and who shall lay me down in glory in my own sepulchre?"

After an interval of silence, she continued, with a more animated manner: "Nevertheless, thou shalt not think, Rebecca, that my soul is yet darkened within me. My own right hand hath done wondrous things for Babylon, and its strength yet remaineth in it. And if the Persian Cyrus besiege my glorious city, let him count the years that she shall laugh him to scorn."

"Nay, O queen," answered Rebecca, "for he is as the arm of the Lord against thy kingdom. Hear the word of the prophet Isaiah: 'Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden to subdue nations before him. I will go before thee and make the crooked places straight. I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron. And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the Lord, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel.'"

"Whoever may be thy prophet," answered Nitocris, "his words are as a dream of the night, and his divinations shall not come to pass. Hast thou seen the broad

wall of Babylon? Hast thou measured its height and its thickness, and the depths of the waters that surround it? Hast thou counted the towers by which she hath mounted up to heaven, and fortified her strength? Hast thou seen the vast armies of the countless troops of her defence, or looked upon the hosts of her cavalry, fearful in the array of battle? Hast thou seen the unfolding of her hundred gates of brass? And how shall she mock at famine! Her granaries shall supply twenty years with plenty, and her vast gardens may become fruitful corn-fields. Her soil, surpassing the whole earth in fatness, shall yield three-hundred fold for the seed cast into its bosom, and the waters of the Euphrates shall forever banish drought from her borders. Thus hath Babylon exalted her throne above the nations; and who is that God that shall deliver her out of my hand?"

The broad, two-leaved doors of the queen's apartment opened upon a portico, or balcony, from which steps descended into the palace gardens. These doors were now unfolded to admit the cool air of the night. The light of the tapers had gone out, but every object was distinctly visible by the light of the full moon which rode high in the heavens. Rebecca stood near the balcony. Nitocris had arisen upon her couch in the earnestness of her words; and, as she looked forth upon the scene outspread before her, so far-reaching in its splendor, she might well feel that her royal dwelling-place was a fit crown for the matchless city, which she exultingly called "The Lady of Kingdoms." On and yet onward extended the almost interminable length of borders of luxuriant shrubbery, and flowers gorgeous with the brilliant coloring of the East. Beyond rose the terraces, their lofty trees towering upwards above the city walls, and over all was cast the mar-

vellous mantle of moonlight, investing every object with a beauty as soft and touching as visions of Paradise.

"Who is that God that shall deliver her out of my hand?" repeated Nitocris, in a tone of calm, proud triumph, as she looked to the Hebrew maiden for an answer to her question.

The figure of Rebecca was clearly revealed in the bright moonlight, as, with a majesty of mien and an air of authority that might have befitted a prophetess gifted with unearthly lore, she answered:

"The Lord of Hosts hath sworn, saying,
Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass,
And as I have purposed, so shall it stand:
That I will break the Assyrian in my hand,
And upon my mountains tread him under foot.'"

After a moment's silence, she continued, in a tone of low and soul-stirring power, as if the sublime words of the prophet were freshly kindled upon her own lips:

"The burden of Babylon, which Isaiah, the son of Amoz, did see.
The noise of a multitude in the mountains, like as of a great
people.
A tumultuous noise of the kingdoms of nations gathered together;
The Lord of Hosts mustereth the host of the battle.

"They come from a far country, from the end of heaven,
Even the Lord, and the weapons of his indignation,
To destroy the whole land.
Howl ye, for the day of the Lord is at hand;
It shall come as a destruction from the Almighty.

"And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms,
The beauty of the Chaldees' excellency,
Shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah.

“It shall not be dwelt in from generation to generation ;
Neither shall the Arabian pitch his tent there ;
Neither shall the shepherds make their fold there.

“But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there,
And their houses shall be full of doleful creatures,
And owls shall dwell there,
And satyrs shall dance there,
And the wild beasts of the islands shall cry in their desolate
houses,
And dragons in their pleasant palaces :
And her time is near to come,
And her days shall not be prolonged.’ ”

There was a pause ; and the queen would have spoken, but her tongue clave to the roof of her mouth, and anon those sublime measures moved on in their strange and mighty power, now calling upon the whole earth to rejoice in the deliverance of the chosen people, and now raising the departed spirits of Hades to meet the king of Babylon at his coming.

“How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning !
How art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations !
Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms ?
That made the world as a wilderness, that destroyed the cities thereof ?
That opened not the house of his prisoners ?
All the kings of the nations, even all of them,
Lie in glory, every one in his own house ;
But thou art cast out of thy grave like an abominable branch,
As a carcass trodden under feet.

“For I will rise up against them, saith the Lord of Hosts,
And cut off from Babylon the name, and remnant,
And son, and nephew, saith the Lord.

I will also make it a possession for the bittern, and pools of water,
And I will sweep it with the besom of destruction, saith the Lord of Hosts.

“This is the purpose that is purposed upon the whole earth,
And this is the hand that is stretched out upon all the nations ;
For the Lord of Hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it ?
And his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back ? ”

As Rebecca uttered this prophecy, her face all lighted with its lofty inspiration, not Miriam singing her exulting song on the shores of the Red Sea, nor Deborah, pouring forth her triumphant notes of victory by the “ancient river” Kishon, could have seemed more a prophetess than herself. Nitocris trembled beneath the mighty spell of her words, even as the spirit of Chaldea’s greatest king had quailed within him as he beheld his destiny unfolded by a prophet of that strange race, the captive Hebrews. The queen seemed the captive, as she pressed her tremulous hand upon her heart to still its tumultuous beatings, and from her pale brow put back the hair dampened by the sweat of a strange and indefinable terror ; and the captive seemed the queen, as she calmly stood with an expression of high and unfaltering trust in her fathers’ God, and a fervent zeal for his glory, which was as a royal crown unto her head.

CHAPTER IV.

A VISIT TO THE MAGIAN.

It was on the same evening that the Prince Arbaces had sought the temple of Belus. He mounted flight after flight of its long staircases, and at each landing-place stopped to gaze upon the broad city that lay farther and farther below him. At length, after reaching a dizzy height, he was admitted to a room where sat a solitary man, in an attitude of abstracted thought. About him lay rolls of skin and of papyrus, instruments of astronomical observation, and the various accompaniments of the arts of magic and astrology. He was still in the prime of his youth; but untiring devotion to the grand object of his life, the study of the stars in their courses, had already given him a vast influence in Babylon, and the king had made him master of the magicians, soothsayers, and astrologers. He rose to meet his guest with a blending of native pride and courtly grace, who, after returning the forms of eastern salutation, apologized for his intrusion to the private retreat of the astrologer.

"Let not the wise Smerdis be disturbed at my coming," said Arbaces. "I sought thee in thy rooms within the temple gates, and found thee not; and, as I would fain speak with thee concerning a certain matter, thy servants directed me hither."

"It is here thou wilt often find me," answered the magian; and he pointed to a balcony, guarded by a high

(318)

and strong railing, into which the room opened on one side, which was so far removed from the ground that its only view seemed the blue and star-lit firmament. "Here I can best trace those orbs in their paths of living light; and here, too, far above the noise of the city and the strife of tongues, I can acquaint myself with their hidden teachings, and learn their marvellous influences on the destinies of men."

"But on this lofty watch-tower thou seemest to hang midway between earth and heaven," said Arbaces; "thine ear heareth not the voice of man, neither doth thine eyes behold thy fellows. Dost thou not grow weary and lonely of spirit?"

"Nay," answered Smerdis, "for I hold communion with the spirits of the mighty gods. Nightly they walk the firmament, in yon far-reaching track of brightness; and again they make their pavilion in the sides of the north, so dazzling in its glory that Arcturus cometh not forth with his sons, and the Pleiades forget their shining."

"Now thou shalt make known to me the revealings of the stars, and the interpretation thereof, concerning my own way," said Arbaces. "Tell me, shall I be blessed with the bride my soul seeketh?"

"And who is the maiden?" inquired Smerdis, "that I may know if the stars have united her fate with thine."

"Thou hast seen the two Hebrew sisters, hand-maidens unto the queen?" answered Arbaces.

"True," replied Smerdis; and his face suddenly changed from an expression of calm and dignified repose to one of deep and passionate emotion, as, without waiting for the further explanation that the prince was about to give, he asked, hastily: "Is it she of the soaring soul and step of pride? or she whose voice melteth on the ear like the

singing of birds from the south? Is it the eagle, or the dove?"

"The eagle, or the dove?" repeated Arbaces, as he felt the fitness of the astrologer's simile; and presently, aware with what intense interest Smerdis was awaiting his reply, he answered: "It is the dove whom I seek. Blessed shall be my spirit, folded in the wings of her love."

"But she is of the Hebrews," replied Smerdis, sensibly relieved by the last remark of the prince, "and thou art a worshipper of the gods of Babylon. The maiden will not ——"

"Nay," interrupted Arbaces, "I am not a worshipper of the gods of Babylon. I believe in the one living and true God of the Hebrews."

"And wilt thou renounce the gods of thy kingdom, which have been worshipped by Ninus and Semiramis, by Nebuchadnezzar and Nitocris?" asked Smerdis.

"Truly I will renounce them, if they be no gods," answered Arbaces. "Who hath brought forth Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, unsinged from the burning fiery furnace? Yea, who hath wrought all wonders, like the God of Israel? Did not Nebuchadnezzar himself acknowledge his power? And thou knowest our great queen thinketh more of the wisdom of the prophet Daniel than that of all the soothsayers and magicians of the realm."

"Thou hast not known how deeply the queen hath, of late, sought my counsel concerning the future fate of Babylon," remarked the astrologer, with a tone of mingled bitterness and pride; and, as he fixed his searching glance upon Arbaces, he asked, "Why camest thou hither, if thou believest not in the spirit of the mighty gods?"

"I came, hoping that thou mightest reveal to me the future; yet it was but a vain hope," replied the prince, "for I know of a truth that the God of Israel alone is a God of gods, and Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets."

The night had far advanced as Arbaces rose to depart. The magian accompanied him down the long winding stairs of the temple, till he reached the ground; then, taking his hand, he said, as a smile of strange sweetness illumined his face, "Mayest thou be blest in the bride of thy choice; and, if troublous days come upon Babylon, Smerdis shall be ready to help both thee and thine."

The cause of the astrologer's emotion, when Arbaces had named the Hebrew sisters, was only known to himself and her who was its object. A short time previous, Smerdis had been summoned into the presence of Nitocris, when only Rebecca was in attendance. During the interview, a messenger came, with important tidings to the queen, who, conceiving that the matter needed her personal supervision, had ordered her chariot and departed. Rebecca was following, but the astrologer begged her to stay for a moment. An hour passed ere they parted, and to Rebecca the interview was one of unmitigated pain. Her spirit was saddened by the knowledge of her unbounded power over the high-souled and enthusiastic Chaldean, and her heart sank within her as her own words put out the light of his long-cherished hopes in darkness. To Smerdis this conversation was as the culminating point of his entire being. He had reached it; but its object was still in unapproachable distance. He had revered the Hebrew maiden for her queenliness, and the spiritual affinity which he recognized in her soul had led to love. But, when the hour arrived to claim that affinity, it had eluded

the grasp of communion, even as a vision of the night; and henceforth the object of his love seemed as the far-off shrine of some bright and burning star.

A large number of the princes and lords of Babylon were assembled at the royal palace. Both the lords and ladies had left the banqueting rooms, and now mingled together in the long and lofty halls, which, in richness of material and splendor of decoration, had laid under contribution the wealth of the nations and the tribute of the isles of the sea. Belshazzar sat upon his throne, a royal diadem upon his brow, and in his hand the glittering sceptre of power; yet the heartfelt loyalty of the princes, governors, and lords, was not his. It was given to the majestic woman who bore the interests of Babylon upon her heart, even as an eagle her young upon her wings. To her decisions they looked as the ruling will of their actions, and held their lives as a tribute to her service and glory.

Apart from all others, a young man was leaning against a column,—now with an air of abstraction, and again deeply engaged in the observation of a group that stood at a little distance. The figure of the observer was tall and commanding; his eye large, deep, and penetrating; and his whole expression one of conscious dignity and power. It was Smerdis, the magian. The group to which his attention was so often directed could not have failed to secure the tribute of involuntary admiration from the most uninterested observer. It was composed of Ariel, Rebecca, and Esther. Rebecca was talking with her brother, her earnestness giving radiance to her countenance and music to her voice. Her robe was of richest crimson, with embroidered work of gems and pearls; and her veil, falling gracefully over her shoulders,

was confined about her head by a coronet of rubies. Esther stood near, intently listening to her words. A garland of myrtle, with snowy blossoms and darkly-polished leaves of green, crowned her head. The softened white of her robe was still further relieved by its delicate embroidery of emeralds and gold; and its flowing folds were engirdled by a zone, in which the topaz of Ethiopia yielded to the flashing radiance of the diamond. Ariel, who in form and feature bore the unmistakable impress of a Hebrew, was dressed after the manner of the Babylonians. His outer garment of blue was without fringe, which was deemed an indispensable item with all who regarded the law of Moses, and on his head rested a Chaldean turban of scarlet and gold.

“Nay, it is a reproach to our people,” answered Rebecca, to a remark of her brother; “and I marvel that thou so soon forgettest the law, which our mother Tamar diligently taught thee; yet thou art seeking to forget,” she continued, sadly. “Thou hast withholden the fringes from the borders of thy garments, which the Lord hath commanded to the children of Israel, throughout their generations, that they may remember his commandments to do them. Thou comest not to the readings of the law; neither did I see thee at the house of Ephraim, at our last solemn passover.”

“The law and ordinances were given for the land of Judah and Jerusalem,” answered Ariel; “but here they avail not, without priest, or temple, or daily oblation.”

“Thy words are iniquity, even an abomination,” replied Rebecca. “What saith the Lord by his servant Moses? ‘This day shall be unto you for a memorial, and ye shall keep it a feast to the Lord throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance forever.’ But the

years of our captivity shall shortly be fulfilled; then indeed shall the law of the Lord be read once more from the temple, and the passover shall be kept in Judah and Jerusalem."

"And what is that to thee?" asked Ariel. "Thou wilt not leave thy dwelling-place in royal palaces to go unto the desolate land of our fathers?"

"Shall I forget Jerusalem?" exclaimed Rebecca. "She is above my chief joy. My soul thirsteth for Zion, as the hart panteth after the water-brooks. 'I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness;' and for thee, my brother," she continued, in a tone of mingled love and sorrow, "my soul mourneth bitterly that thou turnest thy heart from the God of Abraham. Thou dost reproach among the heathen the holy name thou shouldest glorify. Alas, alas, my brother! blessed be the grave which hath hidden our mother's eyes from the light."

"Thou mightest serve for a prophetess, my sister," answered Ariel, lightly, striving to veil the emotion he could not subdue; and, anxious to escape from the subject, he continued, "Behold the queen, how earnestly she discourseth with Smerdis the magian."

Meanwhile Esther had strayed from her sister, and was admiring the different pieces of sculpture wherein were represented a great variety of events in Assyrian and Babylonian history. One was "a curious hunting scene, in which Semiramis was represented on horseback, throwing her javelin at a leopard, while her husband Ninus was piercing a lion. Another pictured the beautiful queen with disarranged robes, and hair dishevelled and unadorned, as she had come forth from her chamber, with half-completed toilet, to quell a sedition in Babylon. A

third portrayed, in almost living reality, the infant Semiramis nourished by doves in the Assyrian desert; and a fourth presented the scene where, a child of a single year, she was discovered by the shepherd Timnas. The representation of the babe in the desert was one of singular beauty. The infant, in its matchless loveliness, was sleeping as sweetly as if cradled in kingly halls, and on the overhanging branch of a tree sat two doves, with food in their mouths, ready for her awakening. Esther stood long gazing thereon, with speechless delight. Suddenly she was roused from her reverie by a voice pronouncing her name; and, turning, she beheld the prince Arbaces. He remained long at her side, now relating the various historical incidents and national traditions, which the exquisite skill of the sculptor had everywhere traced upon those walls, glowing with life and beauty; and now speaking in low and earnest tones, destined for no ear save her own.

It was past the midnight hour, when the sisters accompanied the queen from the festive halls of the palace to the retirement of her own chamber. As they were disrobing her for her couch, Esther playfully placed the royal crown upon her own head; whereupon Nitocris smiled graciously upon her, and, as if the act had called up a new train of thought in her mind, she said: "A favor hath been asked at my hands, but I will not grant it until I know thy mind concerning the matter. Thou hast found grace in the eyes of Arbaces, a prince of the royal house, and he hath this night entreated that thou mightest be given unto him as his wife."

The effect of this announcement upon the sisters seemed electrical. A strange paleness overspread the face of Esther, and her trembling hands ceased their vain attempt to

unclasp the glittering diadem from her brow. Rebecca suddenly stayed her footsteps, and the box of fragrant ointment, with which she was approaching the queen, fell unregarded from her hands, as, in a tone betraying the mingled emotions of surprise, sorrow, and pride, she said, "Knoweth not the prince that we are Hebrews, and that our law forbiddeth us to intermarry with the alien and the stranger?"

"Nay, but I will hear what thy sister will speak," answered Nitocris, as with an air of conscious power she waved her hand towards Rebecca. "What sayest thou, Esther?"

"O queen, live forever!" exclaimed Esther, throwing herself at the feet of Nitocris. "I beseech thee, command me not now to speak touching this thing, for my spirit is moved within me, neither can I order my words aright before thee."

"It shall be as thou desirest," replied the queen. "Be comforted, my daughter; at another day I will talk further with thee concerning this matter."

Rebecca sat in her own apartment, with Esther folded in her arms, and her fervent embrace told more expressively than words the strong love that would fain guard her from the shadow of evil, and the bitter sorrow which the very thought of parting had stirred within her heart. At length, as the depth of her feelings gave way to flowing tears, she murmured, "My love, my undefiled, my soul hath long trembled for thee in the palaces of the heathen, for thou art exceeding fair."

"Now thou shalt tell me the matter of which the queen hath spoken," continued Rebecca, in tones of soothing tenderness; "how long hath Arbaces sought thy hand? Hath thy own heart been beguiled within thee? And why

hast thou withholden these things from the ear of thy sister, who loveth thee even as a mother her first-born?"

"Ah!" replied Esther, "often hath my heart been heavy with its longings to tell thee the tale. I have tried to speak, when the sounds of my harp have died away in silence at eventide; and again, when together we watched the stars, walking one by one into the firmament; but my heart quaked with a strange fear, and my tongue refused to utter my words. Thou knowest when Arbaces first sought our side in the palace halls and gardens; since then hath he loved me, but I cannot tell when my heart began to go astray. This love hath grown within it, even as the rose-tree springeth up, buddeth, and blossometh, I know not how."

Rebecca's heart seemed to stand still within her, from the very intensity of her emotions. The truth which she had at first feared, but refused to believe, was now confirmed by her sister's own words. She regarded Arbaces as a worshipper of false gods, and one of the land of her people's oppressors. She knew, too, that Esther's whole heart was a treasury of deep and strong emotion; and that she, whom she had so jealously and sacredly guarded, should thus have given her affections to an alien and an idolator, seemed an evil of so great magnitude that even her strong spirit was appalled in astonishment and dismay.

"But thou wilt not forget the laws of thy people, and break the covenant of thy God," she said, gazing full into Esther's face, as if to read there a confirmation of her words; "thou wilt not unite thyself to one who boweth down to the gods of the heathen,—idols of gold and silver, which their own hands have made!"

"Nay, nay, my sister," exclaimed Esther, earnestly;

"Arbaces acknowledgeth them not, neither doth he worship the gods of the heathen. He believeth in the God of Abraham, the living and true God; and, at the next assembly of our people, he will publicly become a proselyte of our faith."

A heavy burden fell from Rebecca's heart at these words; but in a moment her feelings turned to another channel, and grief again rolled over her spirit as deep waters. Her full and bitter tears fell fast upon Esther's face, and her voice was full of deepest pleading, as she said, "Ah, my sister! had thy heart been united to one of thine own people, my soul should have been smitten in parting with thee; but now how can I give thee up? My heart is overwhelmed within me, my spirit within me is desolate."

Several months had passed away. Arbaces had become a proselyte of the Hebrew faith, and heartily avowed himself a worshipper of the only living and true God. The covenant of his betrothal with Esther had been made in the house of Ephraim, according to the customs of the Hebrews; and the marriage day was appointed. On the eve of that day the sisters sat long in their favorite balcony, talking both of the past and future. The sun had sank below the western wall of the city, but, at the same moment, its eastern towers became silvered by the light of the full moon, just emerging from the horizon.

"Behold," said Rebecca, "the moon coming forth in brightness from the chambers of the east. How often have we thus gazed thereon, since first we stood, hand in hand, by our mother's knee, with our young hearts filled with wonder at its strange and far-off beauty. Yet not again shall we look upon it as now. To-morrow thou

shalt belong to another, and thy sister shall be alone in a strange land!"

Already Rebecca repented her words, for a deep shade crossed Esther's face, hitherto so serene in its unclouded happiness; and she said, in a tone of half-reproachful tenderness, "Thou hast never known love, my sister, else thou wouldst only speak to me this night in words of gladness."

Rebecca answered not; and Esther, lifting her eyes to her face, read in every feature the conflict of her lofty spirit to subdue some deep and thrilling emotion. But the struggle was vain. The floodgates of memory had been suddenly opened, and its burning tide rushed over her soul, mocking all effort of restraint or concealment. When at length she became calm, she said: "I have betrayed the secret of my heart unto thee, my sister, and now I will not withhold what thou wouldst fain ask of me. Thou rememberest Imlah, the son of Elnathan, of our own tribe, whose father and mother dwelt among the captives, by the river Chebar. From his very childhood he listened to the prophecies of Ezekiel, as he portrayed his wondrous visions of the whirlwind, enfolding brightness coming out of the north, with the four living creatures, having the appearance of burning coals of fire, out of which went forth lightning, and the noise of their wings was like the noise of an host. While yet a youth, Imlah came to Babylon, and often visited the assemblies of our people. He walked among the children of men, yet seemed not of them, for his soul was lifted up on high, and dwelt amid the cherubim. There was a strange light in his eye, as if he gazed on things hidden to mortal men, and saw unveiled the glorious visions of the prophets. When he spake in the congregation, strong men bowed

their heads, as his words dropped as falling tears over the desolations of Zion, and again the stout-hearted quailed before his burning utterances of strange and living power. Now he comforted the captive and the prisoner with speech that distilled as the dew, and anon he stood as Moses upon Pisgah, upon a lofty mount of vision, and, looking down through ages and generations, he spake in triumphant tones of the future glory of our people, when Shiloh, the desire of all nations, shall come; when our sun shall no more go down, neither shall our moon wane; but the Lord shall be our everlasting light, and the days of our mourning shall be ended. Ah! had he lived, should not the spirit of prophecy have been kindled afresh upon his lips, even as with the live coals of the seraphim; and should he not have shown wondrous things unto Israel? Our hearts were united as the heart of one. But the silver chord was loosed, and his spirit returned to God who gave it. From that hour the vow of my heart hath been taken, and Rebecca is henceforth the bride of the departed, a virgin in Israel."

"Alas, alas, my sister!" murmured Esther, with choking tears, "thy sorrow is great, like the sea. Thou art fatherless and motherless, and thy soul hath known widowhood in the dew of thy youth. Wherewith shall I comfort thee?"

"In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul," replied Rebecca, slowly repeating the words of David: "It is the Most High who hath said, 'Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver, I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction,' therefore doth my soul hope in the Lord, 'for I shall yet praise him who is the health of my countenance and my God.'"

CHAPTER V.

THE CAPTURE OF BABYLON.

AT this time Babylon had become a theatre of great and thrilling interest. Already the army of Cyrus besieged her walls and gazed upward upon her lofty towers. "The conqueror left no expedient untried for the reduction of the city. By means of palm-trees, which abounded in that country, he erected a number of towers higher than the walls, and made many desperate attempts to carry the place by assault. He next drew a line of circumvallation around the city, and, dividing his army into twelve parts, appointed each of these to guard the trenches for a month, and resolved to storm his enemy to a surrender." But the Babylonians, furnished with provisions for twenty years, and relying upon the impregnable strength of their city, laughed to scorn the arm of the renowned conqueror raised against her, and continued the traffic of buyer and seller, the voice of the bridegroom and the bride. Belshazzar still revelled over the wine-cup, and, gorgeously apparelled, reclined daily in his luxurious chariot as it rolled over the streets of the doomed city. Nitocris knew that battering-rams, nor mounts, nor forts, could avail to shake the foundations of the broad wall of Babylon, or scale its heights, or force its brazen gates; yet again and again did the words of the Hebrew prophet chill her spirit with a strange unearthly dread, and she examined anew her fortifications, re-numbered the hosts of her cavalry, and ap-

pointed captains over hundreds and over thousands. But the captives of Judah, who had long wept in secret places, now began to lift up their heads and rejoice, knowing that their redemption was nigh; for he whom Isaiah had called by name, more than a hundred years before his birth, now stood before the gates of the city of their oppression, armed with a divine commission for their deliverance.

After spending two years in the blockade, and in fruitless attempts to capture the city, Cyrus was enabled to effect his purpose by stratagem. Among the public works of Nitocris was the construction of two canals, which were cut from the river at a considerable distance above the city, to carry off the superabundant waters into the Tigris; and the raising of immense banks, both above and below the city, to confine the stream more effectually within its channel, and prevent more completely the danger of an inundation. In order to facilitate the construction of these works, an immense lake was dug on the west side of Babylon, about forty miles square and thirty-five feet deep, into which the river was turned by a canal, till its banks were completed, when it was restored to its former course. Cyrus, having learned that a great festival was to be celebrated on a certain night, posted a part of his troops by the spot where the river Euphrates entered the city, and another at the place where it went out, with orders to march along the channel whenever they should find it fordable. He then detached a third party to open the head of the canal, which led to the great lake already described, and at the same time to admit the river into the trenches which he had drawn around the city. By these means, the river was so completely drained by midnight that his troops easily found their way along its bed; and, the gates of the quay having been left open in

the general disorder, they encountered no obstacle what ever in their progress. Having thus penetrated into the heart of the city, and met, according to agreement, at the gates of the palace, they easily overpowered the guards, and destroyed all that opposed them. Thus was fulfilled unto the mighty city, the word of the Lord by his prophet: "Therefore shall evil come upon thee, thou shalt not know from whence it ariseth; and mischief shall fall upon thee, thou shalt not be able to put it off; and desolation shall come upon thee suddenly, which thou shalt not know."

It was past the heat of noontide, on the day before the capture of Babylon, that Rebecca alighted from the chariot of Nitocris, at the palace-gate of Arbaces. She passed slowly up a long avenue, bordered on either side by the cypress, and fragrant with the perfume of the citron and cinnamon tree. As she drew near the dwelling, a slave advanced to conduct her within. Esther had gone forth with her husband, and Rebecca entered one of the rooms appropriated to her sister's use, awaiting her return. In a few moments the chariot of Arbaces was seen slowly approaching by a broad carriage-path, drawn by four Arabian horses, with hair of glossy black, whose arching necks and steps of conscious power seemed ready to mock the restraint of bit and bridle. The expressive face of the Chaldean prince bore witness to his joyful pride, as he lifted his young Jewish bride from the chariot, and assisted her to mount the long flight of steps that led to the palace.

"And thou too art here!" exclaimed Esther, joyfully, as Rebecca came forth to meet her; "surely, this day is to me a day of blessing."

"I must go forth yet again," said Arbaces, after welcoming Rebecca with manly courtesy; "and I will leave

thee, my sister, in my place, to cheer the bride I have taken."

"Nay, but I will impart unto thee of my own gladness," answered Esther, addressing her sister; "for I have many things to say unto thee. But first thou shalt come into my court in the garden, and there will we talk together, as we were wont to do."

So saying, she led Rebecca from the portico of the palace, through a shaded walk, into the court of which she had spoken. The pavement was of divers kinds of marble, inlaid with exquisite skill. Above, a sculptured roof of purest white was supported on all sides by columns thickly interlaced by luxuriant vines, amid which were revealed the freshly-bursting buds of Persian roses, and low frames of richly-carved silver were piled with cushions, embroidered with various devices.

"Thou knowest the queen had thought to send forth Arbaces on an embassy without the walls," said Esther; "but to-day it hath been ordered otherwise, therefore is my heart lightened. For many days it hath been heavy within me, lest he should go forth, and perchance fall in an evil hour before the Persian cimenter."

"My heart rejoiceth with thee in the safety of thy husband," answered Rebecca; "and it is a vain thing that the queen should negotiate with Cyrus, for the Lord hath girded him to do all his pleasure upon Babylon."

"May the day of battle be afar off," replied Esther, as a shiver passed over her frame; "may it never come. The Lord hath spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah, saying, 'Seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the Lord for it, for in the peace thereof ye shall have peace.'"

"But the years of our captivity draw nigh their fulfil-

ment," said Rebecca; "Therefore 'comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably unto Jerusalem and cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned.'"

There was a pause in the conversation; but the gushing happiness of Esther's heart soon gained an ascendancy over the more serious feelings which Rebecca's words had inspired, and she presently said, "Wilt thou be present to-night at the great feast of Belshazzar?"

"Nay," replied Rebecca, "for my feet shall not leave Nitocris, who approveth not this thing, neither will she mingle in the festival. She grieveth greatly that the king giveth his thoughts to music and banqueting, when they should be bestowed upon the watch-care and protection of the city. Often doth she weep in secret places over the folly of Belshazzar, and her heart daily proveth the words of Solomon, 'A foolish son is a bitterness to her that bare him.' But I know that Arbaces is bidden among the first lords of the king; and I know likewise," she continued, with something of playfulness in her tones, "that he goeth not without the rare jewel he hath won, his Hebrew bride."

"Now thou shalt come into my chamber," said Esther, suddenly rising, "and choose my apparel, worthy of the bride of Arbaces. Yea, thou shalt even thyself array me in garments of gladness."

Esther's tone and manner so clearly revealed the same spirit of trusting dependence with which she had always sought the guidance of her sister, that Rebecca's eyes filled with tears, and deep thoughts both of the present and future stirred her heart, as she mechanically yielded to Esther's wishes.

With a heart of affectionate pride, and fingers of taste-

ful skill, Rebecca adorned her sister as for a bridal. She clasped the glittering bracelets and sandals, arranged the folds of the jeweled robe, entwined rows of shining gems with the braided crown of her hair, and adjusted the graceful veil that floated about her as a summer cloud in its airy transparency; then, contemplating for a moment her finished task, she said, "As the lily among the flowers, so shalt thou be this night among the daughters of Chaldea."

Nitocris sat in her chamber. A strange oppression brooded over her spirit, which yielded not as it was wont to the voice of music, till at length she bade Rebecca put by her harp, and both the queen and the maiden sat in thoughtful silence. But ever and anon the sounds of mirth and revelry that reverberated through the vast halls of the palace, where the king held his festival with a thousand lords, echoed upon their ears, and the joyous strains of lyre and timbrel, with the softened melody of flute and dulcimer, came floating up on the still air of the night. But suddenly there was a dead and unbroken silence. The marble pavement gave no more the echoing tread of many feet; the distant murmur of tongues was hushed; and the voices of music ceased in their unfinished harmonies. It was as a sudden pause in the career of the storm-wind, or a hush amid the ceaseless roar of ocean waves. Then the clattering hoofs of horses rang through the avenues of the royal gardens, as messengers pursued their way with flying speed toward the temple of Belus; and a maiden of the queen, whose face of ashy paleness mocked the splendor of her festive robes, rushed into the chamber of Nitocris, saying: "A hand, a man's hand hath come forth from the wall, and written strange words unto

the king. Terror hath seized the strong men, and the women faint for fear."

"And who standeth before the king to show the interpretation thereof?" inquired Nitocris.

"There are many astrologers, O queen, and Smerdis the magian; but they cannot read the writing, and the king hath even now commanded to bring in all the magicians, Chaldeans, and soothsayers, that they may make known the interpretation of the thing."

"The prophet of thy race," said the queen, hastily turning to Rebecca, "the holy Daniel, in whom dwelleth the wisdom of the gods, he shall read the writing, and tell its interpretation, and I will go myself unto the king and command that Daniel be called."

As the queen descended to the entrance of the banquet-house, Rebecca glided from her side, and stepped into a gallery that extended over a pillared doorway, whence she could look down upon the scene beneath. On either hand the long and spacious halls seemed an interminable vista of luxury and light. Columns supporting the lofty roof were overlaid with glistening gold, which, reflecting the brilliancy of a thousand lamps, shed a dazzling radiance over the richly sculptured walls of purest marble, like sunlight on snow. The guests, in variety and brilliancy of costume, might rival the gorgeous flowers of the east, or the radiant dyes of the bird of Paradise. Yet now over that scene of far-reaching splendor reigned a silence unbroken and profound, even as if the tide of life had been suddenly stayed in a multitude, making every heart to stand still. Every tongue was palsied in dread, and every eye gazed, as if spell-bound, on that solitary, unsupported, unearthly hand, with the characters of mystery it had traced. Belshazzar's "countenance was changed,

his knees smote one against another," and the clothing of trembling was cast with a strange mockery over the glorious garments of his royalty.

Nitocris entered the banquet-house, and her majestic presence cast its instantaneous spell of spiritual power over the terror-stricken assembly. All the mother swelled in her heart, as she looked upon her first-born son, whom in his beautiful infancy she had pillowed in joy and pride upon her bosom, now anguished as on the threshold of the death-hour; and all the queen dwelt upon her tongue, as she reproved the weakness which had suffered fear to triumph over the majesty of the monarch, and sought to inspire her irresolute son with the courage of her own strong spirit.

"And the queen spake, and said, O king, live forever, let not thy thoughts trouble thee, nor let thy countenance be changed:

"There is a man in thy kingdom, in whom is the spirit of the holy gods; and, in the days of thy father, light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, was found in him; whom the king Nebuchadnezzar, thy father, the king, *I say*, made master of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers:

"Forasmuch as an excellent spirit, and knowledge, and understanding, interpreting of dreams, and shewing of hard sentences, and dissolving of doubts, were found in the same Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar: now let Daniel be called, and he will shew the interpretation."

While Rebecca was listening to the words of the queen, her eye suddenly fell upon a magnificent array of gold and silver vessels, which were totally unlike any belonging to the Babylonian palace. Could they be the sacred vessels

of the house of the Lord, at Jerusalem? She had never before seen them, for, ever since their captivity by Nebuchadnezzar, they had been bestowed in the temple of Belus; but her earnest gaze now assured her that, in form and size, in exquisite finish of workmanship, in perfection of symmetry and beauty, they fully answered to the minute descriptions she had often heard.

The blood of the daughter of Israel sent its burning tide over her face, as she saw the holy vessels of Solomon's temple, the pride and glory of her nation, desecrated by libations to idol gods, and defiled by the lips of the heathen. So boldly blasphemous seemed the sacrilege in her eyes, so high-handed in its daring impiety, that she felt Babylon had now indeed completed the measure of her sins unto Israel, and the cup of her iniquities was full. But her attention was soon drawn to the coming of Daniel. Her heart swelled with pride, as she watched his approach through the thronged hall till he stood before the king. Many years had silvered his hair and flowing beard, but they had not bowed his tall and commanding figure. Light and wisdom dwelt upon his brow, and in his step a majesty surpassing that of kings. She listened to the words of Belshazzar, as he offered the clothing of scarlet and gold, and a name of power, lower only than that of himself and Nitocris, the third ruler of the kingdom; and she gloried in the answer of the prophet, as he calmly put the glittering honors far beneath his feet, and, with all the dignity of conscious authority, fearlessly rebuked the sins of the trembling monarch. Then, turning to that fearful portent which foreshadowed the speedy coming of the avenging sword of justice, he read to the king and the kingdom those dreadful words of doom, "MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN."

"Destruction cometh!" "The city is taken!" "The Mede!" "The Persian!" burst in cries of terror from without the palace-gates, making all hands faint and every man's heart to melt. A moment more, and the Persian conqueror, followed by his chief men of war, entered the banqueting halls. They came prepared unto battle, with brazen helmets and breast-plates, with spear and javelin, with gleaming sword and cimeter.

In the scene of universal consternation that ensued, Rebecca, from her position in the gallery, looked with agonized earnestness to obtain a glimpse of her sister, but in vain. She was just on the point of descending to seek her, when a hand was laid upon her arm, and, turning, she beheld Smerdis the magian.

"Follow me," he said, in a low, earnest tone, "and I will conduct thee to a place of safety."

"Nay," answered Rebecca, "I will go unto my own chamber; but first I will know of the protection of Esther. Hast thou seen the prince Arbaces?"

"Behold him receiving the commands of the queen," replied Smerdis, pointing to a considerable distance in the hall below, where Nitocris, with an undaunted courage, was giving orders to some of the chief lords of Babylon, who had loyally gathered around her.

"Truly, Nitocris needeth him now," replied Rebecca; "neither can he leave Babylon in the hour of her extremity. Therefore, I myself will bring my sister into ——"

"Thy own chamber," interrupted Smerdis. "Maiden, thou knowest not what thou sayest. The Persian hosts are pouring into the very heart of the city. Even now Cyrus hath possession of the palace, and canst thou tell whom the conqueror will spare? Follow me, and I will lead thee, as with the hand of a brother, where thy heart

shall be safe from affright, and neither Median nor Persian can cause thee a moment's alarm."

A shudder passed over Rebecca's spirit as she thought of her defenceless position, and realized her utter incapacity to extend the protection to her sister which she as greatly needed herself. There was no time for hesitation; and she accepted the only prospect of safety before her, saying to the astrologer, "If thou wilt bring Esther unto me, I will go with thee."

"The thought is folly," exclaimed Smerdis. "Knowest thou not that thou shouldst fly instantly from this place? Death and destruction are on every hand; and, should I tarry to seek thy sister, evil might befall thee ere my return."

"Nevertheless," replied Rebecca, "my feet shall not depart hence until Esther be with me. Here, trusting in Israel's God, will I wait for thee to bring her, and if I perish, I perish!" And the tone and manner of the Hebrew maiden were so expressive of inflexible decision, as, lifting her eyes heavenward, she seemed fervently to commit herself to the Great Being whose protection she had invoked, that the astrologer, silenced and awed, departed to do her bidding.

The tumult and confusion of the palace increased every moment. Flashing swords gleamed with fearful brightness in the dazzling light of those festive halls, and the cries of the wounded and groans of the dying already sounded where of late had echoed the voice of mirth and revelry. Among the first and most active in the body-guard of the king, Rebecca beheld her brother. Instantly the long train of childhood's memories came over her spirit with an irresistible gush of feeling, and her heart yearned with an overflowing tenderness once more to embrace the first-born son of her mother, in whom she

surely felt that her father's name was about to go out in Israel. While yet her tears flowed bitterly, the astrologer appeared with her sister; and, casting one long, parting glance upon Ariel, she took Esther's hand within her own, and silently followed their conductor. As Smerdis descended by a secret door into the vaults of the palace, Rebecca divined that he was about to lead them through the subterranean passage which connected the new palace with the old. As he approached the entrance, undistinguishable to any but a practised eye from the wall in which it was built, he said, "The way is long and dismal, and ye will require strong hearts to walk therein; but it shall lead you to the secret chambers of the old palace, where naught shall molest or approach you. I will not compel thee," he added, turning to Rebecca; "but, if thou wilt trust thyself to my care, thou shalt be safe as in the arms of thy mother."

The spirit of Rebecca shrank from entering that dark and untried path, but to return was to fly into the very face of danger and death; and, relying upon the high honor and integrity which had always marked the demeanor of Smerdis toward herself, she assured him that she would follow him to the retreat of which he had spoken. But, when the sound of the heavy bolts and bars which shut them from the living world fell upon her ear, she felt in all its fulness the loneliness of their position; while Esther, arousing from the stupefaction of terror which had rendered her partially unconscious of all that had transpired, seemed like one suddenly awaking from a dream, as she wildly exclaimed, "How came I hither, and why have ye borne me from my husband? Tell me, my sister, — was he slain in the midst of the tumult?"

The darkness was like that of Egypt, "thick darkness

that might be felt," until Smerdis took from beneath the folds of his robe a torch, which, when lighted, threw a strong glare of light upon their immediate path, and made visible the black volumes of darkness that surrounded them. Rebecca's heart became gradually reassured by the respectful courtesy and encouragements of the astrologer, and she whispered words of hope and cheer, which imparted strength to the faltering footsteps of Esther. After walking a long distance, they came to a descent in the passage, down which the astrologer guided the sisters; and, as they entered the tunnel which was cut beneath the river, they stayed their footsteps, and listened to the sullen, smothered sound, which fell upon their ears like the far-off roll of thunder. It was the reverberating tread of the armies of Persia, as they marched into the proud city of a hundred gates over the drained bed of the Euphrates.

"How wonderfully hath the Lord performed his word unto Israel!" exclaimed Rebecca, as she fully realized the strange and almost miraculous manner in which the capture of the city had been effected. "It is He 'that saith to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers.'"

One sublime strain of prophecy after another fell from her lips, uttered more than a hundred years before, of whose fulfilment she was now the witness. A sense of the over-ruling presence of the living God came in upon her soul like a flood, and she adoringly said:

"Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel,
My way is hid from the Lord,
And my judgment is passed over from my God?
Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard,
That the Lord, the everlasting God,
The Creator of the ends of the earth,
Fainteth not, neither is weary?
There is no searching of his understanding.

It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth,
 And the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers.
 All nations before him are as nothing,
 And they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity."

The glare of the torch-light fell full upon the face of Rebecca, revealing in every feature the deep and strong fervor of her soul; and the astrologer instinctively felt that the Being of her adoration was infinitely above the heights of the stars, whose inspiration he himself had so earnestly sought. He felt awed, as in the spiritual presence of the God whom the Hebrew maiden worshipped, and a strange silence sealed his lips, as they pursued the remainder of their tedious and gloomy way. At length a heavy gate of iron, similar to the one by which they had entered, terminated the passage, and opened into the outer wall of the foundation of the old palace, on the eastern bank of the Euphrates. A considerable space lay between this and the second wall, in which was a similar gate; and in the thickness of the third wall, a secret staircase was constructed, which led to the chambers of which Smerdis had spoken. These had no communication with the palace, except through its vaults by means of the hidden staircase, and were so disposed in the general arrangements of the building that their existence could not be suspected. Within, they lacked neither the appointments of comfort nor of luxury. Smerdis applied his torch to the lamps, which were the only source of light within those massive walls, by day as well as by night; and immediately withdrew, after assuring Rebecca and Esther again and again of their perfect safety, and promising to bring both Arbaces and Ariel to visit them in their retreat.

After the departure of the astrologer, the weary sisters cast themselves upon a couch, and wept long in sympathy.

"We shall no more look upon the face of Ariel," said Rebecca, with a fresh flood of tears; "he will die by the hand of the uncircumcised and stranger. I feel it, even as it were the spirit of prophecy. Very pleasant hast thou been unto me, my brother, when as little ones we played beneath our mother's vine and fig tree, and she taught us diligently the law of our God; but thy heart hath strangely gone astray from her commandments. I am distressed for thee, my brother!"

"In the same night was Belshazzar, the king of the Chaldeans slain;" and, as to his body was denied the burial of kings, so hath his name been cast out "as a tree abominated." Had the Babylonians suspected the designs of Cyrus, or discovered his project before its full accomplishment, they might have effected the total destruction of his troops. They had only to secure the gates which led to the river, and to have manned the embankments on either side, and the Persians would have been inclosed in a net from which escape would have been impossible, while by restoring the waters of the Euphrates to their proper channel, they could have involved their enemies in a destruction as total and irremediable as that of the Egyptian hosts in the waters of the Red Sea. But so sudden and unexpected was the capture of the city, that they who lived in the extremities were made prisoners before the alarm was communicated to the palace; and so full and complete, that the conqueror soon received its entire submission.

On the following day, Smerdis, true to his promise, brought Arbaces to the retreat of the sisters; but Ariel was no more. The forebodings of Rebecca were realized, and he had fallen by the sword of the Persian, defending to his last moment the person of the Chaldean king.

"What thanks shall I render thee," exclaimed Arbaces, gratefully addressing the astrologer, "that thou hast protected her whom my soul loveth from dangers more terrible than death?"

"Nay, the thing deserveth not thanks at thy hands," replied Smerdis; "for it was not according to mine own will that I tarried to seek thy wife; moreover, I am but fulfilling mine own word unto thee. Dost thou not remember the night in which thou didst seek my high and lonely watch-tower, in the temple of Bel, to ask if the young Israelite should be thy bride? Even then did I tell thee, if troublous days should come upon Babylon, that Smerdis should be ready to serve both thee and thine. But this my covenant had been well nigh broken, in thoughts of her safety, compared with which Babylon itself is as nought."

"Nevertheless," answered Arbaces, "if there be aught of grace or favor in my hand to bestow —"

"It needeth not, my lord," interrupted Smerdis, with a tone of pride and a sudden haughtiness of mien; and his commanding figure seemed to dilate to a fuller height, as, stretching forth his arm, he dropped the gathered folds of his flowing robe, saying, "The stars on high have revealed my destiny, and the day cometh that this right hand shall hold the golden sceptre of Babylon."

General quiet was soon restored, and Rebecca and Esther returned to the palace of Arbaces. The proud city of many ages, which had long reigned as a queen in the earth, saying, "I am, and none else besides me," had seen the crown seized suddenly from her conquered head, and found, in strange dismay, that her fettered hands could not avail in her defence. She who had mounted up to heaven, saying, "Above the stars of God I will exalt my

throne," now sat upon the ground, and bowed her captive neck unto the yoke of the Medes and Persians. The remains of the renowned Nitocris were deposited in the proud sepulchre she had built for herself over one of the gates of Babylon. The broad wall of the mighty city of her tomb hath been utterly broken, and the gates thereof burned with fire. Its "cloud-capped towers and gorgeous palaces" have mingled in undistinguishable ruins with the ground on which they stood, and Babylon hath been, of old, a perpetual desolation. But the memory of Nitocris still liveth on, through ages and generations, her imperishable monument.

CHAPTER VI.

THE RETURN TO JERUSALEM.

THE conquest of Babylon marked the end of the Babylonian empire, which was thereafter merged in that of the Medes and Persians. Darius, king of Media, became ruler of the conquered kingdom. This prince, who is also called Cyaxares, was the son of Astyages, and uncle of Cyrus. Cyrus, who was the son of Cambyses, king of Persia, and Mandane, the daughter of Astyages, was but one year younger than his uncle, being at this time sixty-one years old. He had first engaged in war at the age of sixteen years, on a visit to his grandfather in Media. At that time Evil Merodach, king of Babylon, who was also the grandson of Astyages, and cousin of Cyrus, made an inroad upon the territory of the Medes, upon which occasion Cyrus conducted himself with so much courage and discretion that the victory which was obtained by the Medes over the Babylonians was owing chiefly to his valor.

After the death of Astyages, Darius was scarcely seated upon his throne when he found himself threatened by invasions from surrounding nations. He therefore sent for Cyrus, and made him commander-in-chief of the combined forces of Media and Persia. In this position he had subdued provinces and kingdoms, till he had brought the whole eastern world under the sway of the Medes and Persians.

(348)

After his capture of Babylon, the Great Conqueror, who at this time held the empire in partnership with Darius, yielded to his uncle the first rank, and departed into Persia to visit his father and mother. They returned with him to Babylon, where Cambyses, Darius, and Cyrus together settled the affairs of the empire, dividing it into an hundred and twenty provinces, whose several governments they intrusted to those who had distinguished themselves in war.

Cyrus then reviewed his vast army, and, having distributed garrisons for the protection of the several provinces, he marched with the remainder to subdue the nations upon the Red Sea and confines of Ethiopia. In this interval of time, the high position of the prophet Daniel so moved the envy of the subordinates of the court of Darius, that they induced the king to sign a decree which consigned the object of their hatred to a den of lions; and furnished thereby the occasion of the farther exaltation of the prophet, the destruction of his enemies, and the acknowledgment of the God of Israel by Darius.

About two years after the reduction of Babylon, in consequence of the deaths both of Darius and Cambyses, king of Persia, Cyrus returned to Babylon, and took upon him the whole government of the empire, which he held for the space of seven years. The first of these closed the seventy years' captivity of the Jews, which had extended through the forty-four years of Nebuchadnezzar, the six years embraced in the reigns of Evil Merodach, Neriglissar, and Laborosoarchad, the eighteen years of Belshazzar, and the two years of Darius.

On his accession to the throne, Cyrus found some of the Jewish captives in possession of the highest offices of trust in the empire. They were recommended to their new

lord by the same spirit and natural endowments which had led to their exaltation under the monarch of the former dynasty, while they regarded him as the commissioned instrument of heaven for their deliverance, which they knew must be near at hand. The prophecy of Isaiah, in which Cyrus had been proclaimed by name as the restorer of the chosen people nearly two centuries before, was doubtless communicated to him by the prophet Daniel, the first minister of state in the vast empire.

Accordingly, in the first year of his reign, "the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia, that he made a proclamation through all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying:

"Thus saith Cyrus, king of Persia. The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he hath charged me to build him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah.

"Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel. He is the God which is in Jerusalem.

"And whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him, with silver and with gold, and with goods and with beasts, besides the free will offering for the house of God, which is in Jerusalem."

This decree met not with the same response from the whole body of the Judean captives. Some had so identified their hopes and interests with the land of their captivity, while enjoying the favor and distinctions of the capital, or of the provinces, that they had forgotten Jerusalem as the home of their fathers, and preferred in their hearts the honors of a strange land. Others were glad to

know that the decayed cities of Judah were again to be rebuilt, and were willing to contribute of their substance to this object; but in the land of their sojourn they had built houses, and dwelt in them; planted gardens, and ate of the fruit of them; while a selfish love of ease made them prefer the quiet of a settled country to the confusion and privations of an incipient civilization in a land just emerging from ruin. But there was a third and large class of the Hebrews, in whom neither the love of honor nor the love of ease could overpower the strong love of country, associated in their minds with all that was grand and sacred in the records of the past. With these, the return to the land of ancient promise was regarded not only as an imperative duty to their country, their race, and their God, but a high privilege, a sacred delight, which all the wealth and honors of Persia could not tempt them to forego. This devoted band, that gathered about the leaders of the first national expedition, numbered fifty thousand persons, carrying large contributions from their brethren who remained behind, with the sacred vessels restored by Cyrus, and armed with full powers to proceed immediately with the rebuilding of the temple. At their head was Zerubbabel, a representative of the royal house of David, and Jeshua, the lineal descendant and legal successor of their last high priest, whose very name would be to the returning captives as a remembrancer of their forefathers' entrance into the land of promise, under the guidance of the son of Nun.

The time, elapsing between the promulgation of the emperor's decree and the actual departure of the exiled people, was one of deep and exciting interest. Some of those who were to go forth were filled only with joyful anticipations of the future prosperity and peace of their

beloved land, while in others these anticipations were mingled with painful thoughts of its present ruin. Those who were to remain felt their warmest sympathies enlisted in the going forth of their brethren, and delighted to render their utmost assistance in preparations for their long and weary journey through the trackless desert. The social intercourse between friend and friend, parent and children, brother and sister, became more subdued and tender and almost painful, in its soul-stirring influence, for soon were to come the final partings, second only to the bitterness of death.

On a day during this interval, Rebecca left for a short time the house of her sister, and bent her steps toward the dwelling of her kinsman Ephraim, with whose household she was to go up to Jerusalem. Entering the chamber of Abigail, the wife of Ephraim, she found her sitting upon a low cushion, with her little ones gathered about her. But the laugh and shout of childhood were hushed in silence, as the young children gazed upon the face of their mother, which bore the traces of long and grievous tears.

"What hath befallen thee?" inquired Rebecca, as she took the hand of Abigail. "Hath disease come upon thy household, or evil happened unto thy husband?"

"Nay," replied Abigail; "health and prosperity are within my borders. Would I might remain in my house, then should they continue unto me."

"But this is only the place of thy sojourn: thy home is in Judah," replied Rebecca, "and there shall thy peace and gladness be multiplied."

"Alas!" answered Abigail, "within these walls I came as a joyful bride, and here have I nourished and brought up my children. Here, too, fain would I tarry

the remainder of my days; but my husband consenteth not to the thing. For the sake of our sons and daughters, his heart is fixed to go up to Jerusalem, that they may dwell in the land of Abraham."

"And art thou a mother in Israel, and canst thou refuse to thy children this their glorious inheritance?" asked Rebecca. "Should thy heart know aught but gratitude, that thus hath thy husband determined; and should it not be thine to strengthen his purpose, even as Aaron and Hur upheld the hands of Moses?"

"If Judah were but as in the days of old," said Abigail, "my heart should say amen to thy words. But where are her walled cities and pleasant houses, her vineyards and fruitful cornfields? And the long, toilsome pilgrimage that layeth between us and Canaan, how shall the heat of the sun smite us at noontide, upon the burning sands of the desert, while our eyes wait in vain for the cooling waters of springs. Truly, the young children shall faint with weariness, and their tongues shall be parched with thirst. Their souls shall be poured out upon their mother's bosom."

"But dost thou not forget the covenant of thy God?" replied Rebecca. "Hath not the Almighty said:

"When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none,
And their tongue fainteth for thirst,
I the Lord will hear them;
I the God of Israel will not forsake them.
I will open rivers in high places,
And fountains in the midst of the valleys:
I will make the wilderness a pool of water,
And the dry land springs of water.
I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah-tree,
And the myrtle, and the oil-tree;
I will set in the desert the fir-tree and the pine,
And the box-tree together."

"If thou wilt but stay thy heart upon the promises of the Holy One of Israel," continued Rebecca, "thy burdens shall depart from off thee. Thou shalt delight to give thy sons and thy daughters as a free-will offering to the building up of Jerusalem, and thy journeying thereto shall be a way of light and gladness.

"They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength;
They shall mount up with wings as eagles,
They shall run, and not be weary,
And they shall walk, and not faint.'"

"Ah!" replied Abigail, "if my spirit could but mount up as thine; but my faith faileth when I look upon the young children. How can I forget the pleasant things they leave behind? How can I forget the desolation to which they go?"

"Art thou not leading thy children to the land of Abraham, which the Lord hath given to them for an everlasting possession?" answered Rebecca. "Art thou not making their home in the city of David, in whose palaces God hath been known for a refuge? Shall they not dwell where the Son of David shall yet appear, and spread abroad the blessings of his kingdom, abundant as the showers of the latter rain? Yea, how knowest thou but, in the counsels of the Lord, thy children and children's children may be appointed to prepare the way for the glorious coming of the Holy One? How canst thou turn away from the desolations of Zion, when she is spanned by the promises of the Most High God, bright as the bow of heaven, in the day when Noah came forth out of the ark? How canst thou look back on the pleasant things of Babylon, when before thee dawns the glory of Bethlehem Ephratah?"

"For unto Bethlehem the Lord hath said, 'Though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto me, that is to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been of old, from everlasting.' How glorious the place out of which the 'Star of Jacob' shall arise and shine. Blessed be thou above all the earth, Bethlehem Ephratah!"

It was on the eve of the departure from Babylon. The household of Esther reclined at the evening meal; but the hour was not given, as was wont, to pleasantries and mirth, for an oppressive sadness brooded over all present.

"Nay, my soul refuseth food," replied Esther, as the attendants offered various delicacies to tempt her appetite; "my tears have been my meat, day and night."

Just then a slave appeared, saying, "Smerdis, the magian, standeth even now in the court, and craveth audience of the lady Rebecca."

Rebecca hesitated but a moment, and followed the slave to the court of the palace. Smerdis alone was within, and, advancing to meet her, he said: "Forgive me if I have trespassed upon thee, and receive my thanks that thou hast granted my request. I would fain behold thy face and hear thy voice once more; for I know that on the morrow thou wilt depart forever from Babylon. I have not forgotten the high confidence thou didst repose in me, on the night when I led thee through hidden places of darkness; and this shall be a token unto thee of my remembrance thereof." With these words, he extended to her a box, richly inlaid with jewels, which contained a collection of large and brilliant diamonds. "These belonged to our great queen, Nitocris," continued Smerdis, "and were committed unto my keeping. But who shall now inherit them? The royal house of Babylon is no more, and

the abundance of her treasures hath passed into the hands of her spoilers, the Medes and the Persians. Therefore have I brought these unto thee; for whose brow save thine own shall the jewels of Nitocris fitly adorn?"

"I acknowledge the favor I have found in thine eyes," answered Rebecca; "but thou knowest it beseemeth me not to receive these things at thy hand."

An expression of wounded feeling passed over the astrologer's face; and Rebecca, seeking to remove the pain she had inflicted, said, "Thou shalt keep them for the ornaments of thine own queen, if, as thou sayest, thou shalt one day hold the sceptre of Babylon."

"Nay, I shall never more know the love of woman," replied Smerdis, bitterly. "But, if thou wilt not accept these treasures for thyself, wilt thou receive them as a tribute to the temple, which thy people shall build at Jerusalem, which is in Judah?"

"If thou wilt renounce the gods of the heathen," answered Rebecca, clasping her hands in earnestness, "and acknowledge the only true and living God, 'in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways,' most gladly will I present thy gift, as a free-will offering from thy hands unto our holy temple. But, if thou wilt still worship the stars, and forget Him who hath created them, and bringeth out their hosts by numbers, he shall regard thy offering as iniquity, and thy sacrifice as an abomination."

The dignity and firm principle of Rebecca, in refusing the tribute of the astrologer, was so beautifully tempered by an expression of the fullest appreciation of his honorable motives in thus tendering her a memento of the great queen she had served, that Smerdis forgot his mortified pride in the renewed admiration which always moved him in her presence. And, after a few words, the last he should

ever address to the Hebrew maiden, they parted,—the one to pursue her way to the Holy City of her people, the other to develop schemes of ambition which were yet to raise him to a lofty height upon the theatre of empire, whence his fall was sudden and his destruction sure.

Cheerful lamps burned in the chamber of Rebecca, where the sisters sat, feeling that their hours of social converse were numbered. Now words of strong love and blessing fell from their lips; and again there were intervals of silence, when the intensity of their emotions lacked all utterance, and the long fervent embrace revealed the passing love which had knit together their souls.

"Couldst thou but remain with me, my sister, my cup should run over with gladness," said Esther. "Be entreated, even now, that thou go not up to Jerusalem. Thou hast neither father nor mother nor brother to accompany thee thither. Am I not left alone unto thee?—yet thou departest from me."

"O, that thou couldst go up with me unto Jerusalem," replied Rebecca; "then, indeed, there should be naught but joy and thanksgiving upon my lips, now that the Lord hath redeemed his people. But my heart foresaw all this in the hour when I knew thy love for Arbaces. Even then, anguish took hold on my spirit, as I felt that, when the days of our captivity should be ended, I should go alone to the city of our fathers, and thou wouldst become a dweller in the land of our oppression."

"Yet, I beseech thee, tarry with me," pursued Esther, "for I cannot give thee up."

"Nay, my beloved," returned Rebecca, "I must see Jerusalem. It were a joy for me to dwell with thee, to weep with thy tears, and rejoice in thy gladness, and behold in future years the faces of thy young children; but my soul

knoweth a higher joy in keeping the commandments of our God, and he hath said, 'Go ye forth from Babylon; flee ye from the land of the Chaldeans.'

The converse was prolonged to the midnight hour. As Esther was about to retire to her chamber, her sister said: "Thou shalt this night give me thy parting blessing, and even now will I bless thee. I shall go forth at the breaking of the day, and thou shalt not arise from thy couch, neither vex thy soul to behold my departure." Then, lifting her eyes to heaven, she laid her folded hands on Esther's head, and tears fell fast with her words: "The Lord bless thee, and keep thee. The Lord make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee. The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace."

Ere the first tints of morning brightened the eastern sky, Rebecca awoke from her short slumber, and beheld Esther watching by her bed. "Now thou hast not harkened unto my words," said Rebecca, while her countenance plainly showed that the presence of her sister was a cordial to her soul in the trying hour when the strong ties of nature were to be sundered.

"Nay, I have not given sleep to mine eyes nor slumber to mine eyelids," answered Esther, "but I have besought the God of Israel for thee, that the Lord may preserve thy going out and thy coming in, from this time forth, and even for evermore."

The caravan of the Hebrews was to assemble for departure at early dawn, that the cool of the day might be improved in travel. The chariot already waited at the steps of the palace to convey Rebecca to her people, and both Arbaces and Esther entered with her therein, and accompanied her on her way. The place of assembling was near one of the western gates of the city; and, as they

entered the broad street that led thereto, a scene of life and beauty suddenly opened upon their view. From every direction were gathering together the exiles of Judah. There were young men and maidens, old men and children. The poor man walked by the side of a single mule, with his wife seated thereon, and the rich came with horses and camels, well laden for the exigencies of the way. Already the front line of march was formed in regular order beyond the city gate, and the ranks of the body were fast filling up, as each new-comer sought his place among his own brethren. Onward and yet onward stretched the long procession; for the whole congregation together numbered nearly fifty thousand persons. Their horses were seven hundred thirty and six; their mules two hundred forty and five; their camels four hundred thirty and five; their asses six thousand seven hundred and twenty. The chariot of Arbaces advanced toward the van, where was the appointed place of Ephraim, the kinsman and protector of Rebecca. There was yet some delay before the final preparations were completed, and the sisters sat together till the moment of parting came. Then, as Rebecca arose to alight from the chariot, Esther fell upon her neck with a passionate grief, and there wept bitterly.

With one last fervent kiss, Rebecca untwined her sister's arms from her neck; drew her veil over her face; and, assisted by Ephraim, mounted the kneeling camel that was waiting to receive her. A few moments more, and the word of march was given. The sun had now risen in brightness, and all nature, illumined with living light, was rejoicing in the glorious freshness of morning. As the long lines of the caravan began slowly to move, the full

choir of two hundred singing men and singing women commenced the triumphant song :

“For ye shall go out with joy,
And be led forth with peace ;
The mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into
singing,
And all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.

“For ye shall not go out with haste, nor by flight,
For the Lord will go before you,
And the God of Israel shall be your re-re-ward.
Depart, depart ye, go ye out from thence,
Touch no unclean thing, go ye out of the midst of her,
Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord.”

The first notes of the music, in such beautiful unison with the rejoicing light of morning, came like oil upon the troubled waters of Esther's disturbed spirit. As the strain waxed more confident and exulting, all the Hebrew was roused within her. Her whole soul was moved in gratitude and triumphant praise unto the Lord who had redeemed his servant Jacob, and her heart went out in fervent longings that she, with the husband of her youth, might be numbered with the devoted band of her people who had set their faces toward Mount Zion.

CHAPTER VII.

THE REBUILDING OF THE TEMPLE.

ACCORDING to the custom of eastern monarchs, who, in their expeditions, sent a herald before them to announce their coming and remove all obstacles from their path, so had the prophet represented a messenger going before the Lord, the King and Deliverer of his people. “The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain.”

With such guidance and such promises, the returning captives forgot the fatigues and dangers of the way which stretched from Babylon to Jerusalem. Their course lay parallel with the banks of the Euphrates, till they reached Tadmor in the wilderness, a six days' journey from Babylon. Here the halt afforded not only rest and refreshment, but a renewed supply of water, and all things necessary for the remainder of the journey. From this place they proceeded by slow marches and frequent encampments, and at length drew near to Jerusalem. The body of the caravan swept about the foot of Mount Olivet and approached the city on the south. But there was a large company of the young and devoted who preferred directly to ascend the mount, and gain the first view of their beloved city from the spot whence its picture had oft been

drawn to them, in the light of traditionary story. Of this number was Rebecca. Her enthusiastic spirit mounted up as on wings of eagles, while her camel slowly ascended the eastern side of the mountain, for soon she was to behold the Holy City, which, since her earliest remembrance, had been the desire of her eyes and the joy of her heart. At length the summit was reached, and Jerusalem, in the sombre light of a clouded western sky, lay outspread before her. Her walls were thrown down and her gates broken. The palaces of Zion were a desolation; Mount Moriah was clothed in ruin. Mournfully sat the desolate city, with "her tears on her cheeks," saying unto her returning children, "Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow."

After an interval of deep and impressive silence, a single voice sang one of the strains of Isaiah, addressed to the ransomed city. But the hearts of the people gushed forth in sorrow rather than song, till the joyful words kindled a kindred fire within their souls, and wakened high praises upon their lips:

"Break forth into joy, sing together,
Ye waste places of Jerusalem,
For the Lord hath comforted his people,
He hath redeemed Jerusalem.

"For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed,
But my kindness shall not depart from thee,
Neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed,
Saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee."

As the sounds ceased from Olivet, an answering strain burst forth from below, as the caravan wound about the southern base of the mountain, through the valley of Jehoshaphat:

"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him
That bringeth glad tidings, that publisheth peace,
That bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation,
That saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!"

The songs of the people had fallen almost unheeded on the ear of Rebecca, in the thronging thoughts of the past, the present, and the future, that crowded thick and fast upon her soul as she gazed upon Jerusalem. The company began to descend the mountain, but Rebecca still remained fixed to the spot where she first knelt, in silent and intense emotion. Suddenly the descending sun came forth from the clouds that had veiled his beams, and threw a flood of dazzling glory over the fallen city. With the outward brightness came an instantaneous burst of joyful light in the soul of the daughter of Judah. The desolation before her rolled away as a scroll, and Jerusalem arose fair and bright before her mental vision, all glowing in the marvellous light of prophecy. And she uttered her voice and said:

"For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace,
And for Jerusalem's sake will I not rest,
Until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness,
And the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.

"Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord,
And a royal diadem in the hand of thy God.

"Violence shall no more be heard in thy land,
Wasting nor destruction within thy borders;
But thou shalt call thy walls, Salvation,
And thy gates, Praise."

After the restored exiles had become settled in the cities of Israel, they waited not for the rebuilding of the temple to provide the essentials of Divine worship. When the

seventh month was come, the people gathered themselves together as one man to Jerusalem. The altar was built, and the daily burnt-offerings duly established. They kept also the Feast of Tabernacles, and of the New Moons, and all the set feasts of the Lord. They also immediately commenced to collect materials for the reconstruction of the temple, conformably to the decree of Cyrus. Again the forests of Lebanon rang with the woodman's axe, and the ports of Tyre and Joppa were filled with busy workmen, conveying the floats of timber to their destination, as in the days of Solomon. The work advanced so rapidly, that in the second month of the second year of their return the foundations of the temple were laid, amid the shouts of the rejoicing multitude, strangely mingled with the sobs of the ancient men who had seen the house of Solomon in all its glory, in whose eyes the second temple appeared as a very little thing.

The time that Rebecca had spent in the beloved land of her fathers had been one of almost unmingled enjoyment. At times, sadness and sorrow had filled her spirit with thoughts of the desolations of her city and country; but these were quickly dissipated by her strong faith in the promises of Israel's God, that Jerusalem should "arise and shine." She had wandered over the hills and dales of Canaan, and gloried in the majesty and beauty of her country. She had mingled in the sacred festivals, to whose tales of rejoicing gladness she had often listened from the lips of her mother; had gazed on many an "Ebenezer" rich in sacred associations of the past, and had lifted up her hands beneath the holy oracle of Moriah, whose blessed influences had distilled like dew upon her young heart, when a captive in a far-off land. Amid these scenes the devotion of her patriotic heart gained new

fervor, and her soul swelled with more exulting aspirations for her people, as in Judah and Jerusalem she saw in clearer light the glowing visions of prophecy, and felt a fuller earnest of the coming salvation of the Anointed One.

But the tabernacle of flesh became weary with the flights of the spirit. The hand of disease came to her as a warning messenger that her sun would go down before its noon; and, with a chastened trust in the God of the faithful, she girded her spirit for its departure.

The seventh month had come, and the Feast of Tabernacles, the second since the return of the Hebrews, was at hand. This feast was not kept by the people dwelling universally in booths, till the days of Ezra and Nehemiah. But, even now, many a pious Israelite made his tent of thick branches of the pine, the olive, and the palm, and dwelt therein seven days with his household, according to the word of the law by Moses. The tent of Ephraim was without the limits of the city, on the border of the brook Kedron. On the day preceding the commencement of the feast, as Abigail and her maidens were going forth to dress the fresh green boughs of the tent with tasteful garlands, Rebecca begged to accompany them. "Nay, my daughter," said Abigail, with a mother's tenderness, "thou shalt lie on thy bed till my return; then shall thy strength remain in thee for the morrow. I have prepared thy couch within the tent, where thou shalt recline without weariness, and at the beginning of the feast thou shalt be carried forth."

"But grant even this one request at my hand," pleaded Rebecca, "for thou knowest that, when another year shall come, I may not twine garlands for the thanksgivings of Israel, because my days are numbered."

"Say not thus," answered Abigail; "thy disease hath abated, and the Lord may yet send thee health and prosperity. Nevertheless," she continued, "if I permit thee to go forth on the morrow, thou must ask no more at my hands."

The morrow dawned in brightness; and, according to the promise of Abigail, Rebecca was early placed upon her couch in the tent. The inspiring influences of the scene and the occasion seemed to renew her strength, and with a full heart she joined in the sacred observances of the festival. But on the last day of the feast she had lain still upon her bed, apparently withdrawn from what was passing around her, and communing with her own heart. The sun was near his setting, and rays of yellow light fell here and there with quivering brightness, as the soft breeze of evening lightly stirred the green leaves of the tent.

With a sudden energy Rebecca revived; but the indescribable seal was already on her face, which told that the hour of her departure was at hand. Her eyes were lifted up with a strange brightness, that seemed to penetrate far beyond the regions of mortal vision, and with a smile of rapture she exclaimed, "The chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof!"

She spake words of parting love to all about her couch, and sent her dying blessing to the well-beloved Esther. Then, looking forth upon the chosen city, she poured forth the fulness of her heart as upon the friend of her chief joy:

"Whereas thou hast been forsaken and hated,
So that no man went through thee,
I will make thee an eternal excellency,
A joy of many generations.

"The sun shall no more be thy light by day,
Neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee;
But the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light,
And thy God, thy glory."

After an interval of silence, she again spoke, repeating isolated passages of Scripture, revealing the communings of her own spirit. "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord?" "He shall save the souls of the needy." "Bethlehem Ephratah! out of thee shall he come forth unto me, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting:"

"Who is this that cometh from Edom,
With dyed garments from Bozrah?
This that is glorious in his apparel,
Travelling in the greatness of his strength?
I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save.

"Behold, God is my salvation;
I will trust and not be afraid.
For the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song;
He also is become my salvation."

Thus, with the reflected beams of the coming Sun of righteousness lighting the path of her soul "through the valley of the shadow of death," the daughter of Israel entered upon her immortal race, and was numbered with the angelic company of the glorified.

It was well for the devoted Hebrew maiden that she was permitted to mingle in the rejoicing of laying the foundation of the temple, and spared the pain of beholding the work frustrated and hindered through subsequent years. The Samaritan dwellers of the land, incensed that their proffered assistance in the rebuilding of the temple should be rejected by Zerubbabel and Jeshua, immediately arrayed themselves in determined opposition to the work, and, by misrepresentation and bribery, accomplished its suspension. In the reign of Cambyses, son of Cyrus, who in scripture is called Ahasuerus,* the adversa-

* Ezra 4: 6

ries of the Jews sent a petition to that monarch to put a stop to the building. But Cambyses appears to have been too busily engaged in his Egyptian expedition to pay any heed to this malicious request. They next sent a similar petition, representing the Jews as a factious and dangerous people, to the successor of Cambyses, Smerdis the magian, who in scripture is called Artaxerxes.* Fearful of losing the support of the governors of a distant province, Smerdis listened to the petition, and issued a decree,† putting a stop to the further building of the temple, which in consequence remained in an unfinished state till the reign of Darius Hystaspes. To him also a representation hostile to the Jews was made, by their inveterate enemies, the Samaritans; but this prince refused to listen to it; and, having searched the rolls of the kingdom, and found the original decree of Cyrus, he issued a similar one, granting to the Jews every facility for the completion of their work. Thus, after a suspension of fourteen years, the second temple was finished and dedicated, in the sixth year of Darius Hystaspes, and the twentieth year after the return from Babylon. This year completed seventy years from the time that the temple was burned by Nebuchadnezzar; for, as there was a period of eighteen years between the carrying away of the first and last bands of Jewish captives, there was likewise about the same period between their return under Cyrus, and the full completion of the temple.

But the removal by death of the leaders who first returned, and of the prophets Zechariah and Haggai, led to great confusion and disorder in the infant colony. When Ezra arrived, fifty-eight years after the dedication of the

* Ezra 4 : 7.

† Ezra 4 : 17-22.

temple, he found a state of things which loudly called for contrition and amendment. His powers from the throne of Persia were ample, but civil enactments could not remove the moral evil. Fasting, weeping, and prayer, accomplished what his commission could not effect, and the reformation of many abuses was speedily effected. But he had no authority to build the walls of the city, and to have attempted it without permission would have been represented as an overt act of rebellion against the Persian king. At length an unsolicited and unexpected succor arrived from the capital. In the twentieth year of Artaxerxes Longimanus, the Ahasuerus of scripture, thirteen years after the departure of Ezra, Nehemiah, who held an office of high dignity and trust, as the cup-bearer of the king, having learned the desolate condition of his brethren in Judea, was too deeply afflicted to conceal his grief before his royal master. Invited by the condescension of the king, and encouraged by the presence of queen Esther, he presented the bold request that he might be sent to build the waste city of his fathers. The petition was instantly granted; and, with written orders for the supply of all necessary materials, and a strong escort furnished by the king, Nehemiah set out on his joyful errand.

During the interval of ninety-two years that elapsed between the return of the first company of Jewish captives under Zerubbabel and that of the last band under Nehemiah, five successive kings had filled the throne of Eastern empire. Cyrus, being equally beloved by his natural subjects and those of the conquered nations brought under his sway, peaceably enjoyed the fruit of his labors and victories. He made his royal residence at Shushan during the three months of spring, at Ecbatan

during the heat of summer, and the remainder of the time at Babylon. He "established his empire with such wisdom that upon the strength of this foundation alone, it lasted two hundred years, notwithstanding the rash and impolitic proceedings of his successors. He died in the seventieth year of his age, equally regretted by all the nations of his vast-spreading dominions," having reigned thirty years from his taking the command of the Persian and Median armies, and seven years as sole monarch of the East. He left two sons, Cambyses and Smerdis; the first of whom he appointed to succeed him in his vast empire, while to the second he left several subordinate governments. The unwise and tyrannical reign of Cambyses continued seven years and five months.

Upon the death of Cambyses a new king was publicly proclaimed, as Smerdis, the son of Cyrus. But this prince had been privately assassinated, by order of Cambyses, a short time previous, and the person who ascended the throne was Smerdis the magian: Assisted by the Magi, he accomplished this usurpation by taking advantage of a very strong resemblance to the son of Cyrus, and was quietly received by the people, who supposed him to be the true Smerdis, the rightful heir to the kingdom. "As soon as he had taken upon him the sovereignty, he granted to all his subjects an exemption from taxes and all military service for three years, and treated them with such beneficence that all the nations of Asia, the Persians only excepted, expressed great sorrow on the revolution that happened a few months after. And, further to secure himself on the throne, he married Atossa, the daughter of Cyrus, thinking that in case of a discovery he might hold the empire by her title." In this thing he ostensibly followed the example of his pretended brother, Cambyses,

who had married Atossa, his own sister. But this very circumstance awakened suspicions that he was not the true Smerdis. A conspiracy was formed against him by seven Persian noblemen; by one of whom, Darius Hystaspes, he was slain in his own apartment. The imposture of which he had been guilty was publicly exposed from one of the towers of Babylon, upon which the Persians were so enraged, "that they fell upon the whole sect of the Magians, and killed every one they met; and, if night had not put an end to the slaughter, not one of that order had been left alive." With this scene of terror closed the eight months' reign of Smerdis the magian.

Darius Hystaspes succeeded to the empire, being chosen by a kind of lot from among the seven conspirators. This prince was endowed with many excellent qualities, and enjoyed a prosperous reign of thirty-six years, during which he entirely restored and settled the empire of Cyrus, which had been greatly shaken by the impolitic government of Cambyses and the usurpation of Smerdis, and likewise added many great and rich provinces thereto.

Xerxes, son of Darius Hystaspes, reigned twenty-one years.

Artaxerxes Longimanus, or Ahasuerus, the son of Xerxes, succeeded his father upon the throne. In the third year of his reign, being settled in the peaceable possession of the whole Persian empire, he appointed feasts and rejoicings in the royal city of Shushan, for the space of one hundred and eighty days. At this time he deposed Vashti, his queen, and subsequently conferred her royal honors upon Esther the Jewess.

It was the third month of the twelfth year of Ahasuerus. In one of the palaces of the city of Shushan, a woman of many years knelt alone in her chamber. Her

clothing was sackcloth, her cheeks were pale and thin with long fasting, and ashes had been poured upon the hoary hair of her head. This aged woman, in her bitter sorrow, was but the representative of a doomed people, over whose heads hung the sword of utter extermination. For the decree had been written in the name of Ahasuerus, and sealed with the king's ring, and letters were sent by posts into all the king's provinces, to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, even upon the thirteenth day of the month Adar.

At this dread crisis, but one hope remained for the devoted Jews. The queen of Ahasuerus was herself a Jewess, and those who still trusted in the promises of God believed that she had been "brought to the kingdom for such a time as this." Contrary to the unchanging laws of the Medes and Persians, the gentle and retiring Esther determined to enter uncalled into the dread presence of the king, and plead herself for the salvation of her people, even though she might perish in the daring attempt. With fervent prayer and strong crying and tears, the Jews of Shushan kept the fast which she had requested of them, for upon the success of her mission hung their nation's deliverance.

On the three and twentieth day of the third month, as the aged Jewess still fasted in her chamber, two children rushed with breathless haste into the apartment, exclaiming: "There is joyful tidings. The petition of Queen Esther is heard. The mischief of Haman the Agagite is overthrown. Mordecai the Jew hath come out from the presence of the king with a great crown of gold, and garments of fine linen and purple. The decree is written and sealed for the salvation of our people, and even now the

posts have gone forth, on camels and on mules, to bear to every province the glad tidings of our deliverance."

A full and fervent thanksgiving ascended to the God of Israel, from her who had listened with eager delight to the words of the young children. Then she arose, and put off her garments of sackcloth, and anointed her head, and put on joyful apparel; for that day "the city of Shushan rejoiced and was glad, and the Jews had light, and gladness, and joy, and honor."

The aged Jewess, who thus rejoiced in the salvation of her nation, was Esther, the sister of Rebecca. She had witnessed many changes, since, as the young bride of Arbaces, she saw her people go forth from captivity through the gates of Babylon; and now, as a lone relict of a past generation, beheld them rescued from a yet more dreadful doom. Since the reign of Cambyses, she, with her husband Arbaces, had dwelt in Shushan, whither the imperial residence had been removed. The dreadful massacre of the Magians after the death of Smerdis, and the unparalleled horrors of the siege of Babylon during its revolt from Darius Hystaspes, were among the great events of the stormy and eventful period of her life. But domestic peace and love had dwelt within the home of Arbaces and Esther. Of their children, the first had died in childhood, and the others, consisting of two sons and two daughters, had been strictly educated in the faith of the Hebrews, and had all intermarried with the Jewish people. Arbaces, being full of days, had died in the first year of the reign of Ahasuerus; and Esther thenceforth had dwelt with her grand-daughter, Tamar, the youngest of whose family consisted of twins,—a son and daughter. These children, whose birth occurred but a short time after the death of Arbaces, were named by Esther, Imlah and

Rebecca, and were the objects of her peculiar love and tenderness. Many a weary and lonely hour of age had they beguiled with their innocent gladness, while naught delighted them more than to listen to the tales which Esther told them of her own childhood, mingled ever with pictures of Rebecca, whom the children early learned to love and venerate. Their attachment to their people, and the land of their fathers, became deeper with each succeeding year, and Esther often marvelled to observe how strongly they resembled in character the gifted being she had presented for their admiration.

But the long race of Esther was well nigh run, and, calling her children and children's children, even to the fourth generation, she said: "The Almighty hath given me long life, beyond the allotment of man, and my days have been an hundred years. When I die, ye shall carry my bones from hence and bury me in the sepulchre of my fathers at Babylon. There lie my mother Tamar, and the young child Nathan. There in bitterness I lay down my first born, my fair Rebecca, and there I buried Arbaees." After blessing each one in turn of her numerous posterity, she laid her hands upon the heads of Imlah and Rebecca, saying: "The angel, which hath redeemed me from all evil, bless my son and my daughter. May the name of my father, Hilkiyah, be named upon them, and the mantle of my sister Rebecca descend upon them. They shall dwell within the walls of Jerusalem, and worship the God of all the earth in his holy temple."

When Nehemiah went up to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, eight years after the death of Esther, he was accompanied by a body of Hebrews, among whom were Imlah and Rebecca. Forsaking the allurements of wealth, the endearments of home and friends, and the attractions

of the Persian court, where many of their kindred shared largely in the kindly favor of Queen Esther, they counted it their chief joy to build again the city of their fathers' sepulchres.

The devoted band of the Jews, with the intrepid Nehemiah as their leader, speedily accomplished their work, laboring constantly with an implement of building in one hand and a weapon of defence in the other. The dedication of the wall of Jerusalem, the public reading and expounding of the law by Ezra, and the devout observance of the Feast of Tabernacles, according to the Mosaic ordinance, gave witness to the restoration of the civil and religious polity of the Jewish people.

The last day of the Feast had been one of "very great gladness." At eventide Imlah and Rebecca strayed, as was often their wont, along the valley of Jehoshaphat, and seated themselves beneath a large cypress tree, whose branches waved above the door of a sepulchre excavated from a massive rock. It was the tomb of Rebecca, the daughter of Hilkiyah, of the tribe of Judah. At a little distance rose the murmuring song of the softly flowing Kedron. On the one hand was Olivet, with aspect of solemn grandeur; on the other rose the newly-built walls of Jerusalem, filled with rejoicing people. As the faces of the brother and sister were fashioned marvellously alike, varying only in the stronger lines of manly power and the softer touches of woman's beauty, so did their hearts flow together as the heart of one. Their tears fell as a tribute to her whose memory they so reverently cherished, and their fervent desire, that her zeal for her people and her God might be kindled afresh in their own souls, awoke with a new and living power.

In that solemn eventide the dying blessing of Esther

was fulfilled, and her children received afresh the mantle of her sister's spirit. And at the tomb of Rebecca the hearts of the young Israelites were sealed in more earnest consecration to their fathers' God, as they looked back with thanksgiving on the marvellous past, and looked forward with glowing hope unto the promised future, lighted up with the glorious prophecy of Isaiah, as with the dawning rays of an unsetting sun: "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace."

APPENDIX.

APPENDIX.

NOTE A.—(Page 35.)

THE description of Mount Sinai, and the several accounts of scenery in the surrounding region, have been gathered from the following recollections of travel, kindly submitted to the author by Rev. G. W. Samson, of Washington, D. C., whose maps and plans of the most important localities through which the children of Israel passed, and whose graphic descriptions of the scenery in the wilderness, which came under his personal observation, rendered an essential service to the author of this volume; and unto whom she would here express her grateful obligations, both for the following communication, and for his other valuable suggestions.

The Desert of Sinai is on the *edge* of that great desert, forming the Sahara of Africa, and the deserts of Arabia in Asia. The flooring of that immense belt of the earth, girdling one entire continent and half another, is a limestone bed, whose layers are so compact and unbroken that not a water-spring can break through from below, except where, at wide intervals, a rupture, caused by some convulsion of nature, has upheaved the earth's crust, and allowed the pent and pressed fountains below to gush forth. These spots are *oases*, occurring generally some days' journey distant from each other; and are covered with green and foliage, seeming to be islands thrown up in the ocean of sand around.

Sinai, as remarked, is on the edge, or *an edge*, of this limestone desert. The central part of the triangular region, between the forking gulfs at the head of the Red Sea, is formed of

gigantic peaks of *granite*, pushing up their heads far above all the surrounding country. It is part of a great rib of the primitive rock, which, like the Andes of our country, runs along thousands of miles in one range; of which the Syene ridge, south of Egypt, Sinai, the mountains of Seir or Petra, Hermon and Lebanon, and finally the Caucassian mountains east of the Black Sea, are a part. Any one, glancing at this line on the map, may see how great is its extent, and will be prepared to comprehend the characteristic features of the scenery about the Sacred Mount itself.

Around the granite thus protruded in the centre of this region, the *secondary* formation of *sandstone* juts out in concentric rings, or semi-circles, sweeping round both north and south of Sinai itself, forming precipitous rocky walls with its even splits and cracks along the sides of deep chasms and gorges. Still, without these circling lines of the secondary rocks appear the *limestone* beds of the *tertiary* strata; which are passed over along the shores of the gulf on either side, and on the broken desert between Mount Sinai and the southern border of Palestine.

As the traveller doubles the head of the gulf of Suez, and over an insensible line crosses from Africa into Asia, and turns southward along the seashore in the Desert of Sinai, he is passing over this limestone; the edge of the African Desert passing under the arm of the sea. On the east a rocky wall runs along a few miles distant, which is the breaking up of the level of the desert, and forms its edge. Three days Israel went in this desert; and Moses called it, in Hebrew, "Etham" and "Shur," the wilderness of "the border of the sea," and of "the rocky wall." Here water is nightly found, the springs gushing out where the limestone bed is ruptured; but the fountains are all bitter, from the strong tincture of sulphurous limestone; while one, answering in the traditions of the people to the ancient Marah, is excessively bitter, and, as the Arabs believe, poisonous. Over this region, which is generally a dead level, or slightly undulating like the sea in a calm or storm, a few stunted shrubs show their shrivelled, scrawny limbs, for the camels to browse at;

and numerous little pulpy bulbs hide themselves in the sand, only pushing up a needle-like point, often tipped with one of those "flowers, born to blush unseen," of which Gray sings; which the camels, as if by instinct, catch sight of as they trudge along their path, and seize upon as a handle to whip up the sweet water-bulb below into their parched mouths.

Traversing this region along the sea for four or five days, after an encampment, like Israel, close by the sea where the rocky wall pushes itself down till the tide bathes its feet, the pilgrim to Sinai turns into the gorges of the mountain bending eastward; and for three or four days he is passing through deep ravines, with walls almost perpendicular on either side, which soon he finds to be of the secondary or sandstone formation. Here sweet springs of clear water break out, both high among the cliffs and low in the gorges; the wash and wear of the rocks form little ribbons of rich soil in the deep bottoms through which the camel winds his way; and on this soil some smaller forest and fruit trees gain a dwarfed growth, while grass, and even wheat, may be seen in occasional patches. The natives call this soil *Tin*, as in the Hebrew Moses called it (apparently, at least) *Sin*; and this region is the "Desert of Sin," or *Soil*, in which Israel formed two or three encampments.

Having passed through this second region, on the last night before reaching Mount Sinai, the traveller's camp is pitched before a towering wall of porphyritic rock, belonging to the primary formation. In the morning he passes through a long, deep defile, perhaps forty feet wide, one-third of a mile in length, and between perpendicular walls eight hundred or one thousand feet high. This is the spot which Burchardt first, and Biblical scholars generally since his day, have regarded the "Rephidim" of Moses; where the Amalekites found a "Marathon" giving promise that they could arrest the progress of the approaching hosts of Israel; but where Sarah's seed were again preferred to Hagar's.

Beyond this wall, going southward, a majestic view breaks on the traveller's vision. The vista opens as into a magnificent hall of Nature's statuary. Far as the eye can reach, immediately

south, a broad, level avenue, at least half a mile in width, stretches before the eye; along whose sides, and towering far on either hand, round up majestic conical heads of granite and porphyry, like the busts of giants ranged by the hand of art. For half a day the camel moves on his way, till about mid-day he reaches the point in the Wady Sheikh, seen at the top (or north) of Dr. Robinson's diagram of Sinai and its environs.

At this point travellers, for the last half-century at least, have been accustomed to take the shortest path to the convent, which is the home of the Christian visitor to the Sacred Mount. Later travellers, however, since Dr. Robinson's visit, have tracked another pathway; and, as your correspondent stumbled upon and traced this with one of the most intelligent of the "Jebilyeh" (the Arab tribe resident here), we may turn our dromedaries' heads up the *new*, or rather the *old*, path to Sinai. Proceeding straight on southward from the point indicated, we rise over some intervening sand-hills, which have led former passing travellers to suppose the magnificent avenue, "Wady Sheikh," down which for half a day they had rode in such rapture, is here interrupted and terminated. A ten minutes' rise to the top of these sand-hills shows this to be an error, for the broad mountain pass still extends onward, with the same majestic granite peaks towering along its sides. Here, indeed, on the south side of these hills, are the stone foundations of numerous houses, which once evidently formed a village, or walled town, at this point. The Wady Sebaiyeh Dr. Robinson has marked is seen bending to the left, or eastward. An hour and a half the camels plod onward; when, on the right, a gentle eminence, of some fifteen minutes' climb to its top, called Jebel Menajeh, or the "Mount of the Call," surmounted by a cross, planted there in early Christian times, comes into view. A few moments more, to the astonished gazer's surprise and almost awe, "Jebel Mousa," *The Mount of Moses*, raises its lofty head, crowned with its Christian and Mohammedan chapels. Passing on a little farther, the whole mighty form, requiring two or three hours to climb, from base to summit, towers into full view. Here an extended plain opens directly in front, or east of the Mount, which the natives call

Wady Horeb. It is a mile and a quarter in length, and two-thirds of a mile in breadth, by measurement; ample camping-ground for all Israel, immediately before the awful Mount. Between it and the foot of the Mount, a rocky wall, about sixty feet in almost perpendicular height, runs along, forming an impassable barrier; which of old God pointed out as the "bound," beyond which no animal, nor the people except when commanded, should pass. At its northern extremity, where it reaches and would otherwise join itself to Menajeh, there is a narrow passage by which the people could pass in and approach the Sacred Mount. Beyond this passage, between the rocky wall mentioned and the mountain's foot, is a plain, or platform, including about one half a square mile, on which, gathered together, the whole host of Israel might stand, when called on, at the very foot of the smoking, quaking Mount. Above them, as now, stretching upward at an angle of less than forty-five degrees, the whole clear mountain side is in view; while the winding pathway by which the Arabs now ascend, occupying between two and three hours in the gradual climb, is from base to summit full in view, and is practicable for an aged man like Moses.

In this region of Sinai, the valleys are often found to have a rich though scattered vegetation; for the debris of granite, as is seen in Scotland, Switzerland, New England, and the Valley of Virginia, gives the elements of a most fertilizing soil. Springs of water gush out at frequent points in the valleys and cliff-sides, and little gardens, rich with vegetables and fruit trees, as the fig and almond, regale the visitor. These are especially frequent around the base of the Sacred Mount; as the visitor learns by taking a long day's walk to make the entire circuit. Nooks in the valleys and the mountain-sides generally are covered with coarse pasturage of shrubs and wiry grass, on which numerous flocks of goats, caravans of camels, and a few sheep are constantly met feeding. Among the shrubs are the jâdeh, the mûrr, and other aromatics, which entered into the composition of the incense which Moses was here directed to prepare. Pilgrim's staves, or canes, are cut from the almond tree, which the natives still call "Aaron's rods."

The mountain cliffs, those of the Sacred Mount itself being a specimen, are dark, and often scarred, stained, and blackened; as, among the Alps and other mountains of the primitive rock, cliffs of originally volcanic formation are seen to be. These may be the results of those special scenes of comparatively later times, when there were "thunders, and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount," and when "Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire, and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly." They may with equal propriety be regarded as the original features of similar mountains elsewhere found. The marks of that special and of this general impress of the Almighty's hand, must, from the nature of the case, be the same; and, on the one hand, the fact that other mountains have the same marks does not at all disprove that some at least of these are memorials of a special visitation, while on the other hand they in themselves do not prove any such special interposition, from the Creator's hand. The evidence for this interposition of course is history, or the traditionary testimony of the people that have ever dwelt there; just as the mounds of earth on our battle-fields, though precisely like those elsewhere seen as the action of water when our continent was the ocean's bed, are known to be the special work of men's hands, by the tradition that has handed down our history.

NOTE B. — (Page 142.)

As has already been remarked in the preface, the author has used Scripture characters only in accordance with what is revealed concerning them. The use of Ahimaaz and Azariah, in "The Reign of Solomon," forms a slight deviation from this principle. Their names will be found recorded in the genealogy of the sons of Aaron, I. Chron. 6: 7, 8. In II. Sam. 18: 19-30, Ahimaaz is mentioned as the swift messenger, who by his importunity gained the favor of Joab, to carry tidings unto king David of the victory of the royal troops over the forces of the

rebellious Absalom. The only claim of Azariah to the consideration of a Scripture character rests in the record of his name in the genealogy above named, unless he be the individual to whom allusion is made as one of the princes of Solomon, in I. Kings, 4: 2. The reader will observe that nothing is added to the inspired narrative concerning Ahimaaz as an individual. It is only his family who are used as imaginary characters. Ahimaaz succeeded Zadok in the high priesthood, 990 B. C., in the twenty-fifth year of the reign of Solomon. Azariah succeeded Zadok, 959 B. C., in the sixteenth year of the reign of Rehoboam.

In this connection, reference may likewise be made to the introduction of Aholiab into an imaginary scene in "The Pilgrimage." One or two similar examples may be observed in the course of the work, but it is hoped that they will not bring upon the writer the charge of presumption in speaking of the characters of the inspired word.

NOTE C. — (Page 147.)

The kingdom of Sofala, on the southeastern coast of Africa, is here assumed as the site of the ancient Ophir. "This country is celebrated for its rich mines of gold and silver, from which it has been denominated the golden Sofala by oriental writers; and abounds in all the other articles which composed the cargoes of the Jewish ships." "Not fewer than sixteen countries have been regarded as the site of Ophir."

NOTE D. — (Page 151.)

The reference here is not to the "Tower of Ophel," which did not receive its full completion till the time of Manassah, II. Chron. 33: 14. At the eastern extremity of Mount Zion, near Mount Moriah and a little to the south of it, was a considerably elevated point called Ophel. Its natural position being one of

great strength, the extent and increase of its fortifications was an object of special attention to the several kings of Judah, II. Chron. 27: 3. It is therefore assumed that these fortifications were commenced in the reign of David, or the early part of the reign of Solomon.

NOTE E.—(Page 152.)

It is proper here to apprise the reader that "Hagar" is but a fictitious personage, although closely connected with Hadad, Nicaule, Genubah, and Tahpanes, true historical characters. I. Kings 11: 19, 20.

NOTE F.—(Page 161.)

The following account of Solomon's Temple is derived from that furnished by Sir Isaac Newton, as "taken principally from Ezekiel's vision thereof." It is found in his "Chronology of Ancient Kingdoms amended," page 332, to which the reader is referred for a more full and minute description of the several parts of the Temple, illustrated by plates; and also for a detailed narration of the ministrations of the priests in the various parts of the temple service.

NOTE G.—(Page 239.)

As the writer has herself failed to acquire a clear conception of the "House of the Forest of Lebanon," she cannot hope to give a distinct picture of it to her readers. The result of considerable investigation of the subject may be expressed in the words of the translator of "Josephus' Antiquities." "However," says he, "upon some trial, I confess I have not hitherto been able fully to understand the structure of this palace of Solomon, either as described in our Bible, or even with the additional help of the description by Josephus; only, the reader

may easily observe, with me, that the measures in the first building in Josephus, one hundred cubits long and fifty cubits broad, are the very same with the area of the court of the tabernacle of Moses, and just half an Egyptian acre." Book VIII., chap. 5, sec. 2d.

NOTE H.—(Page 257.)

The outlines of the picture here presented of Petra are drawn from Stevens' "Travels in Arabia Petrea and the Holy Land." If it be objected that, in the filling up of the sketch, the writer has assumed of Petra a higher degree of advancement than is warranted by the period in which it is represented, she would here mention several considerations by which she has been guided. First, the great antiquity of Edom as a nation, with the inference that may be fairly deduced, from the very early allusions to Mount Seir as the residence of the children of Esau, that Petra was, from the days of the patriarchs, the site of their chief city; secondly, the general historical notice given of the Edomites by Sir Isaac Newton; and thirdly, the more particular instance adduced by the same author, wherein he ascribes the exquisite beauty and finish, displayed in the varied workmanship of Solomon's temple, to the knowledge and skill of the Edomites, who, after their dispersion by King David, are represented as carrying their advancement in the arts of building, carving, and graving, into the various countries whither they fled. If the artists of Tyre, employed by Solomon, were either themselves exiles of Idumea, or instructed by those exiles, according to the authority above cited, we may surely presume that monuments of architectural grandeur abounded in the chief city of their own land, which at that time had been the growth of many ages.

NOTE I.—(Page 265.)

The composition of the book of Job is placed chronologically before the Exode, as both its internal and external evidences

indicate that it was not written after that event. Indeed, as the period in which Job lived is with great probability supposed by many authorities to be not far from the age of Abraham, the writing of the book might be assumed as taking place before Israel went down into Egypt, dating that event from the period in which Jacob and his posterity departed from Canaan, at the bidding of Joseph, two hundred and fifteen years before the Exode. But, as the sojourn in Egypt is popularly reckoned four hundred and thirty years, commencing from the time when Abraham first went down into that country because of famine, the composition of the book of Job is placed before the Exode, thus affording a latitude in which its date may be assigned later than that which might with a high degree of probability be claimed for it. These remarks, of course, proceed upon the supposition that Job was a real character, and the author of the book which bears his name. For a full and interesting discussion of this subject, the reader is referred to the introduction to "Barnes' Notes on Job."

NOTE J. — (Page 266.)

Although admitting the truth, that "it is from the best authorities that we learn that Assyria and Egypt were the first seats of civilization," and bearing likewise in mind the very early date of the first record of astronomical observations at Babylon, the writer has nevertheless, in this connection, availed herself of the authority of Sir Isaac Newton, who traces the origin of Letters, Astronomy, and Navigation, to the Edomites. He says: "When the Edomites fled from David with their young King Hadad into Egypt, it is probable that they carried thither also the use of letters; for letters were then in use among the posterity of Abraham in Arabia Petrea, and upon the borders of the Red Sea, the law being written there by Moses in a book, and in tables of stone long before: for Moses, marrying the daughter of the prince of Midian, and dwelling with him forty years, learnt them among the Midianites; and Job, who

lived among their neighbors, the Edomites, mentions the writing down of words as then in use in his days, Job 19: 23, 24; and there is no instance of letters for writing down sounds being in use before the days of David, in any other nation besides the posterity of Abraham. The Egyptians ascribed this invention to Thoth, the secretary of Osiris; and therefore letters began to be in use in Egypt, in the days of Thoth, that is, a little after the flight of the Edomites from David, or about the time that Cadmus brought them into Europe.

"The Edomites navigated the Red Sea from the days of Esau, and there is no need that the oldest Oannes should be older. It seems, therefore, that letters and astronomy were invented by the merchants of the Red Sea; and that they were propagated from Arabia Petrea into Egypt, Chaldea, Syria, Asia Minor, and Europe, much about one and the same time; the time in which David conquered and dispersed those merchants; for we hear nothing of letters before the days of David, except among the posterity of Abraham; and nothing of astronomy before the Egyptians, under Ammon and Lesac, applied themselves to that study, except the constellations mentioned by Job, who lived in Arabia Petrea."