































C. Staal.

J. Bannister.

RUTH.



THE  
DAUGHTERS OF ZION.



*J. Barnister, sc.*

JOHN S. TAYLOR,

NEW YORK.







THE

DAUGHTERS OF ZION.

*amuel*  
✓  
BY

REV. S. D. BURCHARD, D.D.

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Illustrated with Numerous Steel Engravings.  
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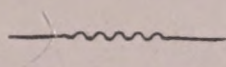
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## P R E F A C E .

It would seem that the writer of the "Ecclesiastes" had his eye on the far-distant future—on all the facilities of the nineteenth century—when he penned the saying, "Of making many books there is no end." But amid the multiplicity of publications flooding the world, is there not danger that the Book of God—the great Thesaurus of wisdom and truth—may be neglected? Is it revered or read as much or as earnestly as it was in the days of our fathers, when it was regarded as *the* Book "for doctrine, for correction and instruction in righteousness?" We are constrained to think *not*. But where is the book so full of fascinating interest as the Bible? Where is history so venerable in its antiquity, and yet so truthful and graphic in its delineations of character and life? Who has ever produced a system of jurisprudence comparable to that of Moses? Where are maxims of wisdom equal to those of Solomon? Where is poetry sublimer than that of Isaiah and Habakkuk, or songs sweeter



than those which the bard of Israel swept from his harp-strings? Where are scenes of such tragical interest—of such wonderful scope and variety, as those recorded in the Word of God? Yet all this history, law, philosophy, and poetry, have a date anterior to the age of Greece, when Homer sung, or the schools of Athens established laws, by which the poem must be constructed, the narrative compiled, or the fabric of society built. And yet, wherein are they deficient in sound wisdom, in splendid delineation, or in the rules which regulate a refined and cultivated taste? Wherein could they be enlarged, or abridged, or modified, for the better? What point, especially in the narratives of Scripture, could be brought farther into the light, or thrown deeper into the shade, or where could the coloring be more true to the life, so as to bring the scenes and the actors more vividly before us? We put in a proud claim for the Bible, and court the attention, especially of the young, to its pages of unsurpassed beauty and truth.

The DAUGHTERS OF ZION are Scripture narratives, drawn from the Old Testament and the New, placed in chronological order, designed to furnish an outline of Biblical history, especially as relating, remotely or directly, to the family, advent, and mission of Christ. The writer of these biographies is aware that the field over which he has traveled is not new. Others have gone before him; and



“The Women of Israel,” and “The Women of the Bible,” sketched by different and skillful hands, are already before the world. But the field is not exhausted—all its flowers have not been culled, or its gems collected; neither have all the portraits in this divine gallery been exhibited.

Entire originality both of thought and expression, where so much has been written and read, could scarcely be expected. While we have freely consulted others, touching Oriental life and habits, we have aimed, in style and description, to be ourself, and in the delineation of facts to adhere, most strictly, to the Scriptural record. If, at any time, we have trespassed, it has been unintentional.

In the description of persons, there may seem to some an unwarranted license, or a lack of variety, especially to those who, in romance or reality, admire a *blonde* beauty, the soft, liquid, blue eye, flaxen hair, light complexion, tinged with a roseate hue. But it will be remembered, that the Daughters of Zion belong to a peculiar race, whose features are *characteristic*, and do not, therefore, admit of any great scope for the play of the imagination, in the delineation of their personal appearance.

We have hoped that these sketches might be especially attractive and useful to the daughters of the church, as well as to the mothers in Israel, exhibiting, as they do,



woman in her sublime and appropriate sphere—woman as she was in the primitive ages of the world—woman emerging from under the shadows of an older dispensation—woman sitting at the feet of Jesus—woman suffering—woman bleeding in martyrdom among the bravest.

One attractive characteristic of all the portraits of Scripture is, that they are true to nature. There is no exaggeration—no fictitious painting—men are exhibited as *men*, not as gods in the likeness of men. Women are seen as women, with all the frailties and excellences of their sex. It speaks of good women and heroic, but it makes no attempt to show them better or more heroic than they were. It does not conceal their faults; it freely states their infirmities. This gives not only great *value*, but great *individuality*, to the portraits of the Bible. They take a firm hold both of the imagination and the memory; and to this we doubtless owe that very familiar feeling which we always have in connection with them. They have long since ceased to live upon the earth, and yet, the Scripture history is so life-like, that their image lingers with us still, and their very looks and tones seem like old familiar faces and voices. Like the processes of the daguerreian art, by which the image of a passing body leaves an imperishable impression on the plate or tablet on which it falls, so the Bible has fairly daguerreotyped and handed down to us the images of those who moved in



the scenes of a far-off antiquity. In this book we offer the reader a collection of such portraits.

Variety is another beautiful characteristic of these Bible portraits.

There is often much sameness in the histories and romances written by uninspired pens. We turn page after page, and meet precisely the same pictures—the same characters—heroes and heroines—love's ventures and perils—tragical episodes and romantic issues. All this is no true representation of life. It is as if an artist should leave out, in his painted landscape, the quiet valleys, the fertile and well-watered plain, and exhibit only the peaks of some lofty mountain, or some tall old oak, around which the lightnings have played. We want, in our readings, a richer variety; we sigh for pictures of simpler and truer life. We open the Bible, and every part of the landscape—the whole of life is brought into view—the green valley as well as the snowy peak—the lily of the field as well as the cedar, whose branches the storm loves to visit. Here man and woman are seen, not under the dominion of one overmastering passion, which mars all that is beautiful, and tramples down all that is lovely—due space is here given to all the qualities which exalt and dignify the moral nature, and which find their proper sphere amid the duties and charities of domestic and private life.



Who will doubt that scenes of surpassing beauty and deepest interest are connected with the vale of Mamre, where the tent of Sarah was pitched—the river Nile, along whose banks Miriam wandered, watching her floating ark of bulrushes—the City of Palm Trees, where Rahab won an imperishable fame—the fields of Boaz, where Ruth gleaned—the stable of Bethlehem, where the Virgin first felt the raptures of a mother—the well of Jacob, where the woman of Samaria listened to the wondrous tidings of the great salvation—the little town of Bethany, where Martha ministered to the temporal wants of the Son of God—the Garden of Gethsemane, and the Hill of Calvary, where Mary Magdalene moved, a mournful spectator, amid the trying scenes of the crucifixion? These Scriptural portraits, with all their clustering and beautiful associations, illumined with light reflected from the Cross, we now commit to the public. And if the reader shall be as much profited and interested in their perusal as the writer has been in their preparation, then *his* labor will not have been in vain.

S. D. B.

NEW YORK, *October 18th, 1852.*









Staal

Bannister

SARAH.



# Daughters of Zion.

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S A R A H .

IT is instructive to look at the different aspects of character in different ages of the world's history. In studying the character, incidents, and exploits of prominent individuals, we become familiar with the great outlines of human history.

The life of Washington is identified with the history of this country, and in studying the one we become familiar with the other. Napoleon left his impress upon modern Europe, and his life is an important chapter in the record of this world's affairs. Thus the life of Luther is a correct and consecutive history of the Reformation, of its causes, its incidents, its glooms, its glories, its



trials, and its triumphs. The student of biography then is the student of history, and becomes familiar with the workings of that Providence which selects human instrumentality to carry forward His great and wonderful designs. We are not about to open the great volume which heralds the achievements of the men of this world. We have no desire, in this connection, to turn the pages of Homer, a poet truly sublime, who describes, with thrilling and fascinating interest, the wondrous achievements of the gods, or the valorous exploits of men. The scenes which he delineates with all the attractions of romance, are, for the most part, scenes of slaughter, over which humanity weeps, and the hero whose praises he would sing in harmonious numbers, returning from the field of battle, is still covered with blood. The martial music that announces his approach is drowned in the cries and shrieks of the widow and orphan. The laurel of which he proudly boasts was nourished in the impurpled plains of carnage, and snatched from the field of death. We have a different mission to execute, and a different history to record. Let the maddening world seek "the battle of the warrior, with confused noise;" we prefer to retire to the



tranquil tents that stretched their quiet shadows over the primitive and pastoral life of patriarchs, prophets, and the friends of God. To the hero, who delights "in garments rolled in blood," we consign the pages that describe, in colors too fascinating, the horrors of war. Be it ours to listen to the music of the grove, to trace the windings of the rivulet, to read the name of God in the starry heavens, and to follow the path of the just, through a checkered life, to a "city of habitation." While others glow with the inspiration of the poet or the ardor of the warrior, let our hearts burn with desire to imitate the example of those who borrowed their luster from communion with Heaven.

While the chroniclers of this world's passing events are filling your ears and thrilling your hearts with the passing things of the *present*, we would lift the veil from the dark and dream-like past, and show you the wonders of a far-off antiquity. We shall go back to a region where darkness wraps the cradle of our race, save as light glimmers from the word of God. We propose to give you some portraits of female character, drawn from the Bible, that you may see the lights and shadows as they



blend in beautiful coloring under the Old and New Testament dispensations.

We begin with Sarai—not that her life is as distinguished as some of the heroines of antiquity for romantic and startling incident, but she seems to be the first, in the order of time, to engage our attention.

She was a dark-eyed maiden of unusual beauty, dwelling in the tents of Haran, her father, in the mountains of Armenia. Her grandfather's name was Terah, a descendant of Shem; and her ancestors, therefore, must have been familiar with that signal and merited catastrophe which cleansed the world of its wide-spread pollutions, and left its vestiges everywhere on the face of the deeply-marred earth. When the waters of the Deluge had vanished from the earth, Noah, as an expression of his gratitude and a memorial of the divine goodness, built an altar unto the Lord; but his descendants soon obliterated from their minds the knowledge of God, degenerated into idolatry, and the firmament and the orbs of light became objects of worship.

Sarai, then, was born in an age of idolatry, in the city of *Ur*, of the Chaldees, a name signifying



fire or light, whose altars of religious worship were consecrated to the sun. She, too, in her young life, was an idolatress, and, doubtless, often wandered in the still morning twilight, or at eventide amid the groves and fields, to listen to the music of birds, and to offer the deep fervors of her heart to the rising and setting sun. An orb so glorious, dispelling darkness, sending his radiance into the deep and shadowy recesses of earth, filling the world with light and beauty, causing all nature to send up one full song of ecstasy, she conceived to be worthy of the profound and earnest adorations of her heart. Though darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people, the God of Noah seems not to have been altogether unknown, and the last rays of departing truth lingered still upon the tents of Terah. Abram, his youngest son, seems to have been blessed with clearer visions of the Almighty, and was selected as the honored medium of conveying His knowledge and will to succeeding generations. He was not unmindful of the attractions of the Chaldean maiden, and, though a near kinsman, he sought her hand in marriage. She had just felt the deep and sad emotions of filial grief, and had wept bit-



ter tears over the grave of her father, and her warm heart both responded to his love and embraced his faith. Now they bend not beneath the nightly sky to worship the stars of heaven, nor the moon bathing with glory nature in her calm repose. Nor as morning breaks over their native hills, painting the landscape with gold, purple, and crimson, do they go forth to join in the adorations of their idolatrous kindred. They repair to a holier altar, and Sarai feels a new and strange rapture, as her mind rises above nature to nature's God. Her soul's deep recesses are illumined by light more soft and radiant than that of the sun, and all the poetry and deep devotion of her active and sensitive nature find ample expression in her worship of the All-bountiful Father. Her great beauty, her finely-developed person, her noble and generous qualities of mind and heart, made her, what her name imports, a *princess*, and worthy to be the wife of one who was to be the father of the faithful. In happy and harmonious fellowship they lived in their native land, sharing each other's joys and sorrows, until a voice divine came to them, saying, "Arise, this is not your rest, and go to a land of which I will tell you."



Though the plans of God were as yet wrapped in mystery, there was a prompt and trustful response—a readiness to break up old and cherished associations—to leave kindred, friends, and home, for a life of pilgrimage and faith. The country of their nativity seemed not to have been the chosen theatre for the display of the divine mercy, or for the fulfillment of the prophetic saying, “The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent’s head.” The withering influence of idolatry had been too widely felt, the moral soil had become too degenerate, and the spiritual seed-grain, even if sown, would not take root; hence the family appointed to be the depositaries of the word of God, and through whose instrumentality the nations of the earth were to be blessed, were directed to leave the graves of their fathers, and become exiles for the sake of their religion and their God. There was something affecting in this movement, something that commands our admiration—the venerable Terah was now nearly two hundred years old, all his early associations were in Mesopotamia, his friends were there—all that was dear to him in life was there; still he shared in the faith of his children, and their lot, and travel, and destiny



should be his. Thus he felt, and thus his children said, "Come thou with us, and we will do thee good, for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel." Come, and when old age lingers from the fatigues of that long journey, the arm of filial affection shall support the feeble step; and should sickness smite thee, as at length it must, the care of children shall be thy solace—their ear shall catch the dying sigh, their hand shall wipe the dewy forehead, and close at length the eyes when set in death. Thus they moved together to the land of promise.

But the infirmities of Terah increased, and they were obliged to tarry east of the Euphrates, where they built a city, which they called Haran, and where they were called to weep over the grave of their aged and venerable sire. Abram was now seventy-five years old, when God renewed His call, and said to him, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee, and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee and make thy name great, and thou shalt be a blessing." This was no uncertain call, no dream of the imagination, but a voice audible as a peal of thun-



der, and as authoritative as the fiat of God. And the hitherto dark and shadowy future began to be illumined by the light of a distinct and positive promise. "I will make of thee a great nation." Here were the rudiments of an empire—the germ of all that was auspicious to the race—the well-defined draft of that visible church, which was one day to fill the world. But how is the conception to be realized? How is the promise to be fulfilled? Sarai is by no means young, and Abram is beginning to pass into "the sere and yellow leaf;" yet, they questioned not, they doubted not; their obedience was prompt and cheerful; and, gathering those that constituted their household, their attendants, and their ample wealth, and shedding upon the lonely grave of Terah a fresh baptism of tears, they turned their faces toward the deep shadows of an untraveled wilderness. As they crossed the Euphrates, they took a long and lingering look of the land of their nativity, and a thousand tender reminiscences of happy childhood, of early friendships, of mingled joys and sorrows, came up vividly to their remembrance, producing a deep and chastened sadness of heart. Still, there were no regrets, no painful misgivings; their feelings were



both natural and beautiful, such as linger around any sensitive heart on leaving the endearments of home. If your lot has ever been cast among strangers, and especially among a rude and barbarous people, whose eyes glanced suspiciously upon you, whose bosoms heaved with no emotions of kindness, whose hands were ready for plunder rather than protection, then you may form some conception of the feelings of that heroic band, when, for the first time, they pitched their tent among the piratical hordes of Palestine. After many days of weary travel over rugged mountains, along dangerous ravines, they reach, at length, Shechem, a place hallowed in Scripture history, where the Saviour, by the well of Jacob, talked with the woman of Samaria, and preached to the erratic Gentiles the gospel of the great salvation. Here, on the plains of Moreh, between Mount Ebal and Gerizim, they encamped, and consecrated the soil by the erection of an altar of worship. At this early age there were no temples, save the broad heavens, and no pomp of external service, and no incense from golden censers, but the earnest impulses of the heart found expression in the silent grove, and mingled with the song of birds, and the



rude altar witnessed scenes of devotion as pure, as acceptable to Heaven, as the most gorgeous cathedral service.

Here again the faith of our Patriarch was strengthened by another revelation from the Almighty, confirming all that had been said, and assuring him that this was the land secured as a heritage and a blessing both to him and his seed after him. How these revelations were made so palpable to faith, it is difficult for us, in these far ages, to determine. With all the lights of a clearer dispensation, and all the facilities of a written revelation, we know but little of God; we can not tell how He appeared to our first parents in the garden of the fall, or to the patriarchs of the older church, or how His awful presence will be rendered perceptible to the innumerable hosts of the redeemed, when they shall stand glorified in body and in spirit, as the trophies of His ineffable and eternal love. But the revelation, as we have seen, *was* made to Abram in language which he understood, at first, indeed, dimly, then more clearly, until his keen eye glanced through the distant future, peopled with a generation that should spring from his own loins. At present, there was



nothing very encouraging in this increase of light. Remote, indeed, was the prospect of the inheritance which he had traveled so far to secure, and both the prospect and the promise may have sent a momentary chill over the warm impulses of his heart. But his faith stood like a pillar of light amid the gloom of surrounding darkness. He felt that his own hand would yet grasp the ample resources of Palestine, and through successive generations they would be conveyed to after ages. During all this period of pilgrimage, it appears that Lot had been the companion and friend of his uncle Abram and of his sister Sarai; and now, from circumstances not definitely stated in the sacred record, they find it convenient to remove from the plains of Moreh, twenty miles northward, to a mountainous region east of Bethel, where the wandering Jacob slept and saw a vision of angels, when flying from the fury of his brother Esau. The soil proved unpropitious for the numerous flocks of Abram and Lot, and having raised their accustomed altar, they journeyed farther south. Though their lives were thus migratory, the benedictions of Heaven were upon them, and their possessions constantly increased. Their flocks



dotted the surrounding plains, and their cattle sent down their lowing from encircling hills. The fields began to send in their increase, and they reaped the rewards of their earnest toil. Their eyes feasted upon the most enchanting scenery, and their hearts trembled with new sensations of gratitude as they trod the green earth, or reposed at noontide beneath the light and feathery palm, or gathered at nightfall around the altar of their devotions. But not the least of Abram's comforts was the love of his dutiful wife. He had numerous relatives and attendants, but no eye greeted him with the affection, and no voice sounded so sweet to him as his beloved Sarai's.

She was a *true* wife, making home a paradise, a green spot, redeemed from the curse of sin, where the weary pilgrim forgot his exile and his cares, enjoyed the present, and hoped, in the divine promise, for the future. He possessed all the elements essential to happiness—a contented heart, a loving wife, and an unshaken trust in a *covenant* God. But there were trials yet to be endured. Often, when the sky is brightest, unseen storms may be gathering; the day may be clear and cloudless, but the darkness of night will succeed,



rendering the contrast more striking. Thus it was with the happy dwellers in the vales of Canaan. For a season they must be deprived of every comfort which had enriched their existence. What profit are extensive flocks and herds, if the pastures be dry? Of what avail are the olive, and the fig, and the thickly-matted vines that spread over surrounding hills, if the early and the latter rain are withheld, and the fig-tree does not blossom, and there be no fruit in the vine? What are all the luxuries of the most charming and beautiful home, if they are soon to exist only in painful contrast with the most sudden and utter desolations? What are the flowers of to-day, if we must see them all scattered and withered to-morrow? Such was the lot of the pilgrims of Palestine. They must experience the sad reverses of fortune, and suffer the pinching effects of a desolating famine. The country which they expected was to sustain their numerous descendants, proved inadequate to provide for the comparatively few who now inhabited it. The fruits faded away from the fields, and the rich soil was as powder beneath their feet. Egypt, however, whose fertility depended upon the overflowings of the Nile, was not affected by this fearful



drought, and continued to furnish its usual abundance.

Abram, therefore, determined to apply for relief to the court of Pharaoh. As yet his faith had not, for a moment, doubted the divine promise or protection, and so commendable had been the traits which adorned his character, and so steadfast his trust, through every scene of previous trial, that he was distinguished above the rest of his race by being called, "*The friend of God.*" But he possessed human infirmities, and the Scripture history, ever faithful to the truth, throws no veil over his weakness and timidity. He loved his wife, and had felt the power of her charms. Egypt was far removed from the influence and restraints of a spiritual religion, and as he pictured to his imagination the lawless depravity that rioted within its palace halls, his faith began to waver, and, trembling for his own safety, he condescended to a crooked and deceitful policy, which has left a shade upon the luster of his name. Apprehensive that the great beauty of his wife would attract the notice and affection of the reigning king and his courtiers, and that his life would consequently be endangered, and the promise of God defeated, he



thus advised her: "Say, I pray thee, that thou art my sister, that it may be well with me, for thy sake, and my soul shall live because of thee." If this device evinced conjugal affection, it betrayed a cowardly spirit and a lack of confidence in that power which had hitherto so signally preserved him. But Abram, it seems, took this journey without consulting the divine will, and he was suffered both to fall from his integrity and experience the evil of leaning to his own understanding. Sarai, if she felt the wrong, does not appear to have resented it. She agreed to the arrangement proposed by Abram, and under the protection of this poor and miserable deceit, which imbecility had borrowed to supply the place of confidence in God, down they came together to the land of Egypt. Mark, now, the natural consequence of their crooked course.

Abram was, indeed, safe from fraud and violence. He was even caressed and loaded with presents on account of his avowed sister. But what was all this to him, if she must cease to be *his* forever; if the heart, which had beat in sympathy with his, must hereafter beat to the joy of another. The fame of her beauty had already



reached the court of Pharoah. As the sister of Abram, any man might address her; and as polygamy was not unlawful in the East, there was no reason why the monarch, if he chose, should not add her to the number of stars that now glittered in his palace. He saw her, he was struck with her beauty; she was therefore taken to his house, and began to submit to that preparatory training, so indispensable to the exaltation of an Eastern Sultana. It was a dark day to Abram—the light of his life seemed extinguished, and his heart trembled between hope and fear. Could it be possible that the promise of God would now fail, that the hopes he had cherished would never be realized?

To Sarai it was a period of awful suspense, and how her womanly heart must have fluttered with fear in view of her peril and approaching degradation. Will not God interpose to deliver His sinking handmaid, and shield her from the wrong contemplated? But how? Abram dare not, *could* not, interpose; and she is at the mercy of a profligate court. Deep and earnest were her heart-cries for help. How earnestly did she long once more to see the face of her beloved, and tell him all—all



that her heart felt—all that her heart feared. She thought of Canaan, and all the sweet memories of other days. But her very brain reeled, as the dark and hideous future came up to view. But, hark! there is the low moaning of sorrow in the palace of the king. God has breathed pestilence upon the air, and one of the royal household is borne away to the place of graves; and still another is smitten with loathsome disease, and the heart of the monarch is troubled. What means this strange and unexpected visitation. Why has this calamity come like an avenging angel, warning the monarch to beware! He seeks to solve this mystery of affliction; and called Abram, and said, “What is this that thou hast done unto me? Why didst thou not tell me that she was thy wife? Why saidst thou, she is my sister?” At this searching reproof, the patriarch felt the guilt of his duplicity, and conscious shame and self-mortification made him silent.

Pharoah had intended to make Sarai his wife, but when he perceived that she was the lawful companion of another, and of a stranger, who had sought relief from famine within his dominion, he spurned the idea of invading so hallowed a rela-



tion, and remonstrated with the patriarch for his miserable device, which had well-nigh involved all parties in trouble, in language keen, touching, and dignified, and, finally, dismissed him from his presence and country, saying, "Now, therefore, behold thy wife, take her, and go thy way." He had paid dearly for his duplicity and unbelief, but now that he was relieved from the awful agony of suspense, he pressed once more his beloved Sarai to his throbbing heart, and rejoiced that she was again *his own*.

The morning light is just breaking over the hills, and bathing the city of the Pharaohs with its golden beams, when a cavalcade is seen moving along the shores of the Nile, toward the land of Canaan. The air is redolent with the perfume of flowers and vocal with the song of birds. The laborer is going to his daily toil, while the princes and nobles of the realm are still resting from their last night's debauch. The judgments of God have been taken from the palace of the king, and the wail of sorrow is heard no more. The fields of Palestine have been refreshed by fertilizing showers; her valleys and hills are covered with a fresh carpet of green, and all nature is clothed with new



life and beauty. The patriarch and his wife have just escaped from the furnace of affliction, the perils of their recent adventure, and are anxious once more to tread the soil of Canaan. Day after day they travel on, until Bethel, endeared by many pious and precious reminiscences, heaves in sight. They press forward to the altar erected by their own hands previous to their departure, and here, surrounded by their numerous attendants and relatives, they offer a sacrifice of gratitude, and renew their covenant with Heaven. Pleasant, indeed, are the memories of past mercies, and sacred is the spot associated with the tokens of the divine favor and consecrated by prayer. How refreshing again for these wanderers to return to the scene of their former devotions, and worship at the altar on which the earnest heart-offerings of other years had been laid. The place, however, with all its clustering and beautiful associations, became too strait for the rapidly-increasing possessions of Abram and Lot. They were rich in flocks and herds, sheep and oxen, camels and asses, men servants and maid servants; and besides, Abram had silver and gold and costly presents, which he had received in Egypt. And when it became evi-



dent that they could dwell no longer in amity together, because of the strife of their herdmen, Abram's magnanimity was manifested by his generous proposal to Lot. "Let there be no strife," said he, "I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen, for we be brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go the right, or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left." This conduct of Abram was truly noble, unlike that of many professedly good men, whose mercenary spirit will scarcely allow them to be *just*, much less *generous*, to others. Though Lot had acquired all his property under the auspices and protection of his uncle, and owed all to him—though he was inferior in age, authority, and power, the venerable man yielded the preference he may have cherished for any particular spot, for the sake of peace. No sooner was this generous offer made, than Lot lifted up his eyes with inquisitive eagerness to choose that part of the country embracing the fertile and well-watered valley of the Jordan. To his eye it was all beautiful as the garden of the Lord, and therefore he took his



departure eastward, "and pitched his tent toward Sodom."

While Abram grieved at the separation of his kinsman, the Lord said to him, "Lift up now thine eyes and look from the place where thou art, northward and southward, and eastward and westward. For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed forever. Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee. Then Abram removed his tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the Lord." Thus, at every new settlement, Abram reared his accustomed altar of worship; and while he and his beloved Sarai dwelt in peace, enjoying the divine favor in the plain of Mamre, Lot, by his situation, was exposed not only to the revilings of the wicked, but also to the horrors of war. Certain kings, with their allies, confederated against Sodom and Gomorrah, and defeated them, after a hard and desperate battle in the vale of Siddim. The ruthless victors then plundered the cities where Lot dwelt, and took him captive, with all his household. He must yet suffer a just retribution for his mercenary choice.



At length one of the captives, having escaped from the field of carnage, came breathless to the tent of Abram, with the sad rumor of defeat, and that his nephew, Lot, was among the captured. Up to this time he had been a man of peace. A shepherd watching, with pious fidelity, over his flocks and herds, and knew nothing of the noise and tumult of war. But now his bosom heaved with a new and mighty impulse—not to gain renown as a warrior—not to reap the spoils of victory—not to gratify a selfish ambition—not for popular applause or the love of display, but to avenge the wrongs done to his kinsman, and his noble soul was full of energy to deliver him from the cruel hand of the conqueror. Sarai shared this patriotic and fraternal feeling, and with her own fair hands did she anoint the shield, balance the nodding helm upon his head, brace the corselet and the mailed coat, and buckle above the shining armor, the sword that, when drawn from its scabbard, was not to return until the proud conqueror of Sodom and its cities had been humbled, a suppliant at his feet. His servants, to the number of three hundred and eighteen, were also armed, and, inviting the aid of his patriot neighbors, Aner,



Eschol, and Mamre, with their allied forces, the venerable patriarch, with all the ardor of a veteran chieftain, proceeded to the field of contest. A long way was before him. He passed the northern limits of the plain of Sodom; he passed the shores of the Genneseret; he passed the tributary streams of Jordan; he traced that river to its very head, and still the victorious armies were before him. In this long pursuit, he had leisure to think of home—of his beloved Sarai left behind—of the perils that would await her, should he be unsuccessful—of the dangers of that unequal combat just before him.

But Abram, once aroused, had the spirit of a hero. His courage was *cool, collected*, and unbending. The noblest feelings animated him, and his trust was in the God of battles, and he was determined not to give over till all hope was extinguished. More than one hundred and fifty miles had he traveled, when he descried the objects of his pursuit among the hills of Lebanon, near the Syrian borders, reveling in the spoils of their recent victory, and quite unconscious of danger. He skillfully arranged his forces, and taking advantage of the darkness of night, on a sudden, the battle cry



was heard on the still air, "Jehovah, and the sword of Abram." And now, with swords drawn, and shields and lances gleaming in the pale moonlight, they rush with heaven-inspired enthusiasm to the onset. The attack was sudden, and the victory complete. The conquering army became the conquered, and, leaving the wealth of their spoils and the multitude of their captives to the victors, they fled in terror and confusion into the very heart of Syria. Having achieved his object, Abram returned, with triumphant satisfaction, to the plains of Sodom.

On his way thither, we are introduced to a very extraordinary personage. Melchisedec met him, blessed him, and received tithes at his hand. Little is known, and much has been conjectured, respecting this august stranger. After bursting upon our view, like the sun from behind a cloud, he as suddenly retires, and we read no more of him, except in an allusion to his character, as a type of the Messiah, both by David and Paul. Abram refused, with a lofty magnanimity, the spoils that were offered him as the reward of his heroism and victory, lest it should be supposed that he had been influenced in his



patriotic expedition by a love of gain. With characteristic generosity, he replied to the king of Sodom, "I will not take, even to the value of a shoe-latchet, any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldst say, I have made Abram rich." He had not fought for riches or fame, but from a sense of duty, and in the fear of God.

His work being done, he sought the abodes of peace in the plain of Mamre. Many had been the fears, and dark the forebodings of the devoted Sarai, and many and earnest had been her prayers for his safety; and when she saw, floating in the distance, the victorious banners, her heart leaped for joy. She hailed him and his valorous comrades with shouts of welcome, while the numerous household were called to celebrate, in a more formal and pious manner, at the domestic altar, the return of the victorious chief with sacrifices and songs of deliverance.

Abram had now waited long for the fulfillment of the promise made to him on leaving his home in Chaldea. He had been for many a long year a wanderer on the soil of strangers, and both he and Sarai were beginning to feel the fast-coming infirmities of age, and yet the promise was delayed, and



the prospect seemed cloudy ; and while hope and fear were darkly struggling together, the patriarch gave utterance to his conflicting emotions by saying, "Lord God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus. Behold thou hast given me no seed, and lo ! one born in my house is my heir." Is it any wonder that his fears should now well-nigh get the mastery of his faith, and that he should desire some sensible sign ? God, in kindness, condescended to the weakness of His servant, and said unto him, "Take me a heifer of three years old, and a she goat of three years old, and a turtle dove, and a young pigeon. And he took unto him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another"—strikingly significant of the fact, that it is only through the medium of that Saviour whose sufferings and death these sacrifices typified, that the presence of the Eternal can pass in mercy before sinful men. Having thus prepared the victims, according to divine appointment, the patriarch waited from early morn to the going down of the sun, guarding with pious care these offerings of faith, expecting some visible manifesta-



tion from the throne of Deity. At length, oppressed with the weight of the divine glory now visible from the parted clouds, the eyelids of Abram grew heavy, and he sank into a profound slumber. In this mysterious trance, when his senses were closed to the sights and sounds of this material world, the Almighty revealed to him the future history of his family for the space of four hundred years—their oppressed condition in Egypt, their deliverance, and their final settlement in Canaan. Then came the symbol of Jehovah's presence—a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp passed between the parted victims. Though the bodily organs of Abram were locked, the *scene was real*. He saw as no material eye can see, and heard as no material ear can hear. He saw, heard, and felt, as spirits see, hear, and feel, when redeemed from the bondage of the flesh.

When the divine promise had thus been amplified and confirmed, the patriarch awoke as from a common slumber. The burning lamp, the smoking furnace had disappeared; all was dark and cold around him, but all was light, and peace, and joy within. Now he repairs to his tent, and breathes into the listening ear of his beloved Sarai the



burning thoughts of his heart, and tells her to hope on; she shall yet fold in her maternal arms the hope of the world.

Years pass by, and Sarai weeps, doubts, and prays, until, hope deferred, the heart fainted, and, in her troubled anxiety, she suggested a device, which, though not positively unlawful in the days of patriarchs, was still dishonorable, as distrusting the promise of God. She had a favorite handmaid, an Egyptian, presented to her, doubtless, at the court of Pharaoh. Hagar should ever have stood as a memorial of that unhappy journey, so fraught with peril to her virtue—of the folly and sin of attempting, by any means, to forestall the designs of Providence. Still despairing of ever realizing the hope of being a mother, and yet earnestly desiring that Abram should be the father of a numerous and honored posterity, she ventured to suggest that he should take Hagar as a second and subordinate wife, and the child of this union should be hers by adoption, by maternal care and training, and thus would be realized, to the joy of all, what otherwise seemed to be an exceedingly dark and doubtful promise. Such were the thoughts and reasonings of Sarai; but little did she dream that she was mingling for



herself a cup of sorrow, and sowing thorns which would one day rankle in her own bosom. She was doubtless deeply censurable; still, she is not to receive all the obloquy which modern light and civilization would fix upon her. Polygamy was permitted in that dark age of the world. She had long and earnestly desired to see her husband realize the great wish of his heart, and she doubtless wept bitter tears and suffered severe conflicts, before she made up her mind to relinquish the honor the dearest to her heart, and yield to another, and to an inferior, the right of becoming the progenitor to that great and honored line, which, for many long years, she had fondly hoped would have hailed her as their mother. While, therefore, the sacrifice on her part was great, and evincive of true magnanimity and an earnest desire to see the plans of God consummated, still it was suggested by unbelief and fraught with peril. Thus she herself afterward learned to her own deep regret and mortification, that it *was* and ever *must be* the extreme of folly to do evil in the hope that good may come. No sooner did Hagar, who, from the condition of a slave, had been elevated to something like an equality with her mistress, begin



to cherish the hope that she was to be the favored mother of Abram's honored posterity, than the very woman whose magnanimity had raised her, became contemptible in her eyes, and she began to assume airs which aroused the lofty spirit of Sarai. True, her own mistaken policy had procured the insults which her patience could no longer endure, and she secretly breathed her complaints into the ear of Abram. The consequence was, Hagar was expelled from the tent, whose shelter she had forfeited, and became an exile in the wilderness. But no sooner had man forsaken her, than God took her up, and comforted her sorrowing heart by the voice of an angel. For a moment she stood bewildered before her celestial visitant, and the tears came flashing up to her dark eyes; but, as he revealed the singular character and future fortunes of her unborn child, they brightened into the full radiance of joy. She was bidden to return with meekness and docility to the tent of her mistress.

It was not long after this that the patriarch's heart was gladdened by the birth of Ishmael, but *he* was not the child of promise. Thirteen long years rolled sluggishly away, and no more visions of God threw their light upon the path of our pilgrims;



no messenger from on high repeated the loved assurance, and the sun of their earthly being seemed fast sinking behind a dark and clouded sky. Far be it from us to portray the melancholy of those leaden years, about which history is silent. But though chastened, they were not forsaken; the promise, though delayed, was not abrogated; and, as Abram verged his hundredth year, and Sarai her ninetieth, the covenant was again renewed, and the seal of circumcision given. On this memorable occasion the names of the patriarch and his wife were changed to *Abraham* and *Sarah*, as more appropriate to the blessings that awaited them.

The next incident in the life of Sarah presents a beautiful picture of Oriental manners and genuine hospitality.

It is the hour of noon, and every thing droops and languishes in the vale of Mamre. The wind creeps lazily from tree to tree, gently stirring the leaves. The flocks on the hill-side have left the open pastures, and are gathered beneath the shade of some overhanging rock, or, descending into the vale, lie down beside the still waters. The traveler forsakes the dusty highway, and seeks the shelter of the broad-leaved sycamore,



or finds repose in some neighboring dell or shady grove. The patriarch may be seen sitting in the door of his tent, resting from his weary toil, calmly viewing the surrounding landscape, which presents a perfect picture of mingled beauty and tranquillity. At length three strangers are seen to approach, covered with dust, and apparently weary from travel. The patriarch arose to meet them, and bowing himself respectfully to the earth, invited them to tarry and share his hospitality, which was readily accepted, and he, leading the way, conducted them to a tree hard by, where they were likely to find a cooler retreat than they could have done, at this hour of the day, under the roof of his tent. While Sarah made ready and baked quickly cakes upon the hearth, Abraham repaired to the flock for a kid, which was hastily killed, dressed, and cooked; and the meal being prepared, he “set it before them, and stood by them under the tree, and they did eat.”

Observe with what true patriarchal dignity and courtesy he *stood*, ready to wait upon his stranger-guests, while they partook of their generous repast. What a lovely and instructive picture is this, and with what appropriateness does an inspired apostle



refer to it, as an example worthy of imitation, when he says, "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." As yet, neither their mission nor character had been made known to Abraham, but now one, whose air and mein seemed to point him out as the most distinguished of the party, said, "I will certainly return unto thee, according to the time of life; and lo! Sarah, thy wife, shall have a son." To Abraham, it was as the voice of God, and he believed, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. But Sarah, who had been concealed behind the curtains of the tent, and listening with all a woman's deep curiosity, when she heard the announcement, gave way to incredulous laughter. When she perceived that she had been overheard, and saw that the very thoughts of her heart were understood by the reproofing angel, she trembled with fear.

We will leave Sodom to burn despite the pleadings of the pious patriarch, while we pass to the great event in the life of Sarah, an event in which promise and covenant converge, and around which cluster the hopes of unborn generations.

The birth of a child is always an event which



awakens the deep pathos of a mother's love; but who can describe the sensations which thrill every nerve as she looks on her *first* born? A chord is struck before untouched. Whether in moments of playfulness, when the springs of young life are gushing with exuberant joy; or in the more sanguine days of riper youth, when life opens like a gorgeous panorama to view, never before has she experienced such deep and thrilling sensations of rapture. She has loved before, aye, and she has felt the pleasure of being loved. But now her emotions are of a new class—a different order—strange, undefinable, so tender, that her eye fills with tears while she gazes—so rapturous, that her blood dances in wild, yet soft, delight through her veins. In its strength it may be felt again—in its strange novelty it never returns. What, then, must have been the feelings of Sarah at the birth of Isaac? They were, indeed, the feelings of a mother, but they were no ordinary feelings—the event was no ordinary event. It was the realization of a long-deferred hope—the fulfillment of a promise that was to affect, in its ample scope, the destiny of the world's population. And as she pressed the lovely babe, for the first time, to her



trembling heart, all the old memories of the past, all the fondly cherished hopes of the future, came crowding upon her bewildered imagination, producing one strange, unutterable emotion of transport. She determines to educate him as becomes his relations and his high destiny. He receives the seal of the covenant, and many aspirations go up to heaven for a blessing on the child.

The day of his weaning was a high day in the patriarch's tent—a day of mutual congratulations and friendly greetings. But there was one, even in the family of Abraham, whose jealous spirit was aroused by the pomp and ceremony of the occasion, and he would turn the whole scene into ridicule. It was Ishmael, the son of the Egyptian handmaid, who even, at this early age, began to exhibit that wild and impetuous temper, which would raise his hand against every man, and every man's hand against him. Sarah witnessed with indignation and grief this exhibition of contempt, and her language to Abraham was decided, and evincive of the pious concern she felt for the influence that was likely to be exerted over the infant and inquiring mind of Isaac. "Cast out," said she, "this bondwoman and



her son; for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son. The thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight, because of his son." The birth of Ishmael had first awakened the parental feeling, and to exile him was a trial to his faith. But when he learned the will of God, the tumult of his feelings ceased, and he made ready for the departure of the lad and his mother. The scene that followed has been portrayed with touching pathos by the artist and the poet. The adventurous spirit of the boy—the chastened and subdued sadness of Hagar, as she turned her tearful eye upon the tent she would see no more—the trembling benediction of the patriarch—the last pressure of his child to his parental and agonized bosom, are elements of the pathetic which no poetry can describe. The bondwoman and her son are now friendless exiles in the wilderness of Beersheba. Nightfall found them many a long mile from every familiar object, and weary with travel, they reposed side by side on the dewy earth, beneath the quiet stars looking down like spirit-guardians upon these exile sleepers. Day after day they penetrated still deeper into the solitudes of the wilderness, and, as the anxious



mother saw her scanty provisions fast wasting away, a dark prospect seemed to lower upon her; still she hoped in God, and wondered within herself at the strength that came to her, and every flutter of fear appeared to increase the supernatural power that bore her on, while from her pale lips burst forth, in frequent ejaculations, the prayer to a Friend above, "Lord, help! Lord, save!" But still the dreaded crisis came—the child complained of hunger and thirst, and when the last morsel had been exhausted, his spirit drooped, and she laid his weary head upon her shoulder, and he was soon asleep. The touch of those arms now almost cold in death—his heavy breathings—sent the blood backward to her heart, and, reeling in despair, she laid him down beneath a shrub to die, and then turned away, a broken-hearted exile, saying, within herself, "Let me not see the death of the child; and she lifted up her voice and wept." Heaven witnessed that scene of sorrow, and pitied the fugitive, and the voice of an angel came trembling on the still air, saying, "Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thine hand, for I will make him a great nation." And God opened her eyes, and she saw a fountain



springing in the desert, and she went and filled a bottle with water, and gave the lad drink, and he revived, and the Lord was with him, and he became a skillful archer in the wilderness of Paran. At length his mother took him a wife from among the dark-eyed daughters of Egypt, and the exile from Mamre became the wild man of prophecy—the father of a wandering people, as yet unconquered, and unconquerable.

Sarah, being left alone, devoted herself to the moral culture of her son; she bent prayerfully over his midnight slumbers, and taught him the precious name of God, with the first prattle of his infant lips. “How proudly she watched the unfolding of this bud of promise. When in the pastimes of childhood, he played before the tent door, or, with a shout of gladness, ran to meet Abraham returning from the folds, her calm and glowing eye marked his footsteps, and her grateful aspirations for a blessing on the lad went up to the heaven of heavens.”

One more trial awaited her; and then having received back her son from the altar of sacrifice, having listened with painful and thrilling interest to the trying and tragic scene on Mount Moriah—



could die in peace. If her day had, at times, been dark, at evening-time there was light. Her virgin beauty may have faded from her cheek, and the luster from her eye, but she was, in the patriarch's view, a princess still; her spirit chastened by discipline, and her faith strengthened by trial, she appeared lovelier than ever, but the loveliest objects of earth fade.

At length we observe an unusual stillness pervading the vale of Mamre. The vine still covers the hill-sides—verdure clothes the fields, and the rich light from above mantles every object with a calm and quiet beauty. The birds are singing in the groves, and all nature is serenely joyful. But the patriarchal encampment seems solitary and deserted. At times, the attendants are seen to move noiselessly to their necessary duties, without the usual interchange of mirthful greetings. They appear stricken and sad. No sound of joy comes from the neighboring fields, for the pipe of the shepherd is still. The keeper sits pensively beside his flocks, and allows them to wander at will. But lo! there comes the patriarch himself—he has heard melancholy tidings, and his noble face is darkened with sorrow. He directs



noble face is darkened with sorrow. He directs his steps to the tent of his wife, she who came with the sojourner from beyond the Euphrates, and having reached it, he sits down at its door in the attitude of a deeply-stricken mourner. Alas! the sad crisis has come. No more shall the vale of Mamre be trodden by the fair daughter of the land of Mesopotamia. The mistress of the tent, pale as the snow, yet beautiful as morning, is laid out in her long and last sleep. The journeyings of Sarah have found an end. The afflicted patriarch was bowed to the earth, and refused to be comforted because of the departed idol of his youth.

She had grown up under his eye, in his native land. She had clung to him in all the changes of his fortune. Her beauty had been the ornament of his tent, and her piety the comfort of his life. She had been the companion of his wanderings, and the partner of his faith, and the best tribute to her worth were the tears he now shed. But the dead must find sepulture; and he rises from beside the corpse of his once beautiful wife, where he had been for three days and nights, and still, trembling with the excitement of grief, he stood before the princes of Canaan, and said, "I am a stranger and



a sojourner with you, give me a possession of a burying-place with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight." He purchased the cave in the field of Machpelah, shaded with forest trees, and with princely funeral pomp was it consecrated for a family burying-place, and here he laid, amid the lamentations of a thousand voices, the form he loved when a beauteous maiden, and had cherished as the noblest of wives, and the best of mothers. With Isaac weeping at his side, he turned away to tread, for a time, as a pilgrim, this green earth, and to wait patiently until his change should come, and his spirit united with the loved and the lost.



## REBEKAH.

**T**HE first burial recorded in Scripture is over, the voices of lamentation have ceased, and the beloved Sarah calmly sleeps in the cave of Machpelah. Isaac, whose young life had been devoted to offices of filial love, felt deeply this sad bereavement, and turned away to weep over the silent memories of other days. For three years the tent of Mamre was desolate, and no voice of wife or mother welcomed the shepherds, as they returned weary from their flocks. The patriarch was beginning to feel the palsy of age creeping over his frame, and his son was nearing his fortieth year, when he called his eldest servant, and made him swear that he would not take a wife for Isaac from among the daughters of the Canaanites, but he should go to his kindred beyond the Euphrates.



So far as worldly prospects were concerned, he might have been honorably connected in Canaan; but Abraham felt, that no attractions of beauty, and no distinctions of wealth or family, must be permitted to seduce his son into an unholy alliance with the world. He cultivated a courteous, political intercourse with his neighbors, but with their idolatrous affinities he had no sympathy. Hence he said to the faithful Eliezer, Go, and from Nahor's daughters seek thee out a loving, gentle one, true to our God, and fit to share the blessing with my son. "And the servant took ten camels of his master and departed, and went to Mesopotamia, unto the city of Nahor."

The sun was fast sinking below the horizon as he approached the city. His gorgeous beams painted with a golden magnificence the western sky, and tinged with a soft, retreating light the low valleys and the encircling mountains. Nature appeared calmly beautiful—the crops of grain, still in their early verdure, were waving to the gentle air—the meadows, richly laden with deep, luxuriant grass and decked with hundreds of bright wild-flowers, were scattering abundant perfume on every breath that fanned them. The shadows of evening were



beginning slowly to creep down the hill-sides, and to envelop the city of Nahor in a haze of twilight beauty. The hum of busy industry was dying away, and the maidens were seen issuing from the massive gates, with pitchers upon their shoulders, to draw water from the neighboring wells. From the southwest may have been seen a train of camels wearily wending their way through a gorge of the mountain. They were led by a noble-browed, mild-eyed, venerable man, with locks of snow, and a face whose expression combined benevolence with native dignity. It was the faithful Eliezer, now nearing the end of his long journey, and as he came near, "he made his camels kneel down without the city by a well of water;" and bowing himself to the earth, the dewy air trifled with his hoary locks and bathed his uplifted forehead, while he besought the Lord "to give him good speed," and grant him some visible sign, by which he could recognize her, who was appointed to be the wife of the illustrious Isaac, on whom the mantle of the aged patriarch was soon to fall. He felt that a matrimonial alliance was a matter too sacred, and involving interests too precious, to be lightly contracted. He



rose, calm and happy, with a face beaming with the conscious satisfaction that Heaven had answered his prayer.

Among the lovely band of maidens who gathered at the well to perform their twilight task, there was one that especially attracted his attention. Sprung from a line of illustrious ancestors, reared with the kind indulgences of parental love, every movement of her sylph-like form gave evidence of native grace and Eastern polish. Her high and expanded forehead, the index of thought and talent—her glossy hair, more deeply dark than the wing of night—a complexion tinged by an Oriental sun, yet clear and transparent, with the blush of innocent excitement just mantling on her cheek—her dark eye, full of light and joy, beaming with intelligence, and reflecting in its crystal depths the pure and varied feelings of the heart, and a voice full of melody; *all these* seemed to point her out as a second princess, and worthy to share the fortunes of one who was the chosen medium of conveying untold blessings to an unborn and numerous posterity. You will observe, that the beautiful Rebekah was seen “bearing a pitcher upon her shoulder.” She lived in a simple and primitive



age, before false notions of delicacy or propriety had become inwoven into the texture of society; when females of wealth and distinction felt as if they had something to do in the affairs of the household, some mission to execute in the sphere of domestic economy. Having filled her pitcher, she was about returning to the city gate, apparently unconscious of the kneeling camels or the admiring stranger. As she ascended, with a light step, from the well, Abraham's servant, as if awaking from a deep revery, said, "Let me, I pray thee, drink a little water of thy pitcher." Her cheek crimsoned in the deep twilight, as she suddenly dropped her pitcher upon her hand, and said, "Drink, my lord." Not content with this simple act of kindness, but perceiving, at this moment, the heavily-laden camels, wearied and panting with thirst, she said, with touching simplicity and benevolence, "I will draw water for thy camels also, until they have done drinking."

Eliezer had before viewed her as the very perfection of beauty, but as the moral element developed itself, every line, and hue, and feature assumed a more attractive form, and possessed more transcendent power. He stood transfixed



with wondering admiration, "and held his peace, to wit, whether the Lord had made his journey prosperous or not." Her winning courtesy, her amiable conduct, had anticipated his wishes, and, unconsciously to herself, developed the signs of his own choosing, and the tumult of his fears subsided into a holy consciousness that his pilgrimage had been successful, and "he bowed down his head and worshiped the Lord." He gave her an earring of pure gold, of half a shekel weight, and two costly bracelets for her hands, and, inquiring after her family, asked if he could be entertained for the night. She modestly told her lineage, and assured the stranger of a cordial welcome, and that they had plenty of room, and corn and provender in abundance for the camels. This quite overcame the good old man, and he gave audible expression to his swelling emotions, in a prayer of thanksgiving. "Blessed be the Lord God of my master Abraham, who hath not left destitute my master, of His mercy and truth; I being in the way, the Lord led me to the house of my master's brethren." What a beautiful and pious recognition of the hand of the Lord! Rebekah now bounded over her star-lit path to



her mother's house, and told all that had happened at the well. Laban, her elder brother, when he had heard her story and seen the valuable ornaments which had been given to his sister, went forth to welcome the stranger to their hospitable abode. His invitation was beautifully and generously expressed, and as cordially accepted. "Come in, thou blessed of the Lord, wherefore standest thou without? for I have prepared the house, and room for the camels." These are comparatively little incidents, but they blend with great interests, and are connected with great results. The journey of Eliezer, his meeting with Rebekah, his introduction to the family of Laban, his reception and entertainment, were parts of that stupendous plan, which should go on unfolding in its recovering influences, until earth redeemed should unite its rejoicings with the anthems of heaven.

Eliezer, now the guest of Laban, refused to partake of the generous repast, until he had fully explained the object of his mission. He minutely detailed the character and circumstances of his master Abraham; how the Lord had blessed him, and made him rich in flocks and herds, silver and gold, men servants and maid servants, camels



and asses, and had cheered his old age by the child of promise, who was to be the honored successor in the patriarchal line, and the sole heir to his father's wealth and renown. He stated that he had taken this long journey under the solemnities of an oath, that Providence had favored him, had granted the token of recognition which he had desired, and had realized his *beau-ideal* in the person and character of the beautiful Rebekah.

“And now,” said he, “if ye will deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me, and if not tell me; that I may turn to the right hand or to the left.”

At this recital Rebekah's heart fluttered with every tender emotion and her eyes filled with tears, which lay like crushed pearls between her dark eyelashes.

It was an interesting and solemn scene, one of those scenes in the history of the redemptive scheme, in which faith triumphed over natural affection, and met the requisition of Providence with a cheerful submission. The family listened to the narrative with pious and interested feelings—the sacrifice demanded was great. Rebekah was the idol of their household, and the thought of parting was a sore trial to their faith, but they



would not stand between the purpose of God and its consummation, and they therefore said, "The thing proceedeth from the Lord; we can not speak unto thee bad or good. Behold, Rebekah is before thee, take her, and go, and let her be thy master's son's wife, as the Lord hath spoken." The servant then "brought forth jewels of silver and jewels of gold, and raiment, and gave them to Rebekah," as the expected and Heaven-approved bride of his master. "He gave also to her brother and to her mother precious things."

It is the opinion of Josephus that her father at this time was not living, and hence her elder brother, Laban, seems to have been the more prominent actor in this scene of domestic hospitality. The crisis of his mission had now passed, and Eliezer could eat and drink and enjoy a night of sweet repose, while pleasant dreams visited his slumbers. Laban and his young brother Bethuel felt elated at the honor conferred upon their household, in the selection of their sister to be the wife of the rich nomad chief of Canaan. The heart of the mother was sad, though submissive, and the night was spent in prayer for a blessing upon her child. New, strange, and sometimes



conflicting were the emotions that thrilled the heart of the young maiden, and her spirit was restless, and her sleep fitful.

The morning that was to separate that family group, and introduce Rebekah upon a new scene of wonders, dawned, and Eliezer expressed his desire immediately to depart. The family begged him to remain, for at least ten days, that they might furnish a suitable outfit for so long a journey. But he knowing the anxieties that must be experienced by those who were the more deeply interested in the results of his mission, said, "Hinder me not, seeing the Lord hath prospered my way."

Rebekah was called, and the question submitted directly to her: "Wilt thou go with this man?" In the free and artless simplicity of her heart, and in a manner comporting with the usage of that primitive age, yet in striking contrast with this, our age of masquerade and paint, when the heart's deep feelings must be concealed by an artificial guise, she replied, "*I will go!*" This was not a girlish impulse, not the mere romance of novelty, but the sublime promptings of faith. She felt that she was called of God, and she



possessed the enthusiasm and the joy and the sweet trust of a young missionary.

Now her friends and kindred gather to utter their last adieus; the camels and the men, her nurse, and her waiting maids are at the door, and amid lamentations and many blessings she took her departure. Her life began now to assume a new and important aspect; she was no longer the beautiful maiden, tripping to the well with her pitcher upon her shoulder. Her companions missed her in the twilight walk and gathering, and if from time to time they heard of the absent one, it was in connection with events which were shaping the world's history and enwrapping the world's hope.

As the sacred record makes no special mention of the journey, we will leave the reader to conjecture the many memories and the numerous unexpressed aspirations that came welling up from the depths of her young heart.

Isaac was a deeply devout man, and it is said that "he went out to meditate in the field, at eventide." It was doubtless his custom to withdraw from the crowded tents into some sequestered spot, to indulge in religious meditation and prayer.



There seems to be something in the calm, still evening, when the glare of day is softened down into a mellow light, when a hushed stillness is beginning to pervade the haunts of men, adapted to quicken the pulses of devotion and awaken a new and diviner life. It is when meditation has resolved past mercies, combined difficulties with deliverances, and fearful perils with providential escapes, that the soul catches the inspiration of prayer and praise. Who that loves God, does not love, like Isaac, to walk out into the open fields to meditate at eventide.

“The time how lovely and how still;  
Peace shines and smiles on all below,  
The plain, the stream, the wood, the hill,  
All fair with evening’s setting glow.”

’Tis so different from the bright and glaring day, so beautiful in its sweet and silent repose, so enchanting in its dreamy, half-hidden loveliness. It converts this “working-day world” of ours into a more delightful Eden, calms down every perturbed idea, and brings into subjection the wild vagaries of the soul. It was when Isaac was enjoying this scene of twilight beauty, and reading



lessons from the "Elder Scripture," that "he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and behold, the camels were coming."

When Rebekah was informed that the man walking in the field, deeply absorbed in meditation, was her anticipated spouse, she alighted from the camel, "and took a vail and covered herself." We have before beheld, with admiration, the readiness of this youthful maiden to sever the ties of domestic tenderness at the call of Providence, and now she distinguishes herself for her attractive delicacy and reserve.

They met for the first time; and what a meeting—what emotions, what memories, what hopes, what destinies centered in that still, twilight hour! They met, and the meeting was for life. She laid her delicate and trembling hand in his, and Heaven ratified the union. The two were made one under the sanctions of a covenant that was to unfold in its ample embrace the hopes of a world.

As Isaac led her to his mother Sarah's tent, the venerable patriarch arose and welcomed her as the gift of God, and his silent aspirations went up to Heaven for a blessing on the union. Thus auspiciously did Rebekah's wedded life commence. No



other wife shared the affections of Isaac—no bond-woman marred her comfort—no dark clouds threw their shadows upon her path. Thus twenty years passed, and the aged patriarch had ended his pilgrimage, and been buried by the side of his beloved Sarah, in the field of the cave of Machpelah, and Isaac was blessed in conjugal affection and in the abundance of his riches. Still one thought troubled him: Rebekah, though beautiful, was barren, and he “entreated the Lord for his wife.” His prayer was answered, and the great wish of his heart was doubly realized. Doubtless, for a time, there was an excess of joy in the tent of Mamre—the hearts of Isaac and Rebekah reveled in a new world of beauty and hope, and it would seem that no evil could ever enter to mar that scene of domestic felicity. They loved—aye, they too deeply and fondly loved—with a sort of idolatrous worship. They loved as parents ought never to love, with a *partial, selfish* affection. The children, indeed, were different in appearance, in disposition, and God had appointed to each a different destiny. But they were children, and as such, should have shared equally the parental affection.

Esau was an earnest, impulsive boy, fond of field



sports and the chase, and could not endure confinement and restraint. Jacob was more timid and retiring, fond of nestling by his mother's side. He was satisfied to be a shepherd boy in the vale of Hebron, and share with his mother the duties of domestic toil, while his brother, more wild and erratic, preferred a hunter's life—a life not peculiarly adapted to foster and improve the gentler affections.

The parental partiality grew out of these differently-developed characters and pursuits, and was *unwarranted* as it was *selfish*. “And Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison; but Rebekah loved Jacob.” How humiliating the reason assigned for Isaac's preference of his elder son! By what groveling and unworthy motives are wise and good men sometimes actuated! How mortifying a view of human nature, to see prudence, justice, and piety controlled by one of the lowest and grossest of our appetites! The reasons of Rebekah's preference are not so definitely stated, though we are left to infer that they grew out of the milder and more amiable qualities of Jacob, and, perhaps, from the intimations which she had received, that he was to be the more favored of



Heaven. But, whatever may be said of the respective grounds of these parental preferences, it is clear from the sequel, that nothing could be more unhappy than the consequences to which they led. The distresses which embittered the remainder of Isaac's life, and the change that came over the character of Rebekah, are to be traced directly to this source; teaching us, by an impressive example, the lesson which all parents may expect to learn from the exhibition of a similar weakness.

The intrigue and management of Isaac's wife, to secure the birthright and blessing for her favorite son, painfully contrasts with the artless simplicity of the young maiden at the well. She soon succeeded in inspiring Jacob with her own ambitious schemes and hopes. Hence, when his brother returned, one day, weary from the chase, and ready to die of hunger, instead of manifesting a fraternal and generous sympathy, he was willing to take advantage of his prostrate condition, and obtain his birthright for a mess of pottage. In its disposal, Esau, doubtless, was influenced by a half-formed and secretly-cherished skepticism in relation to its nature and moral worth. He did not fully apprehend its spiritual import, or its full and



freighted blessings to himself and his posterity. Still this did not justify the illiberal and heartless policy of Jacob to obtain it, a policy which soured and alienated the feelings of Esau, and brought a series of misfortunes upon the family.

A heavy famine came, about this time, upon Canaan, and made it necessary for Isaac to leave his family residence in Hebron, and he determined to go to Egypt. But, on his journey, God met him and bid him tarry in Gerar, the capital of Philistia. Here He renewed his covenant, and said, "I will be with thee and bless thee, and make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries, and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed."

Such assurance should have fortified the patriarch against temptation, and made him firm in his integrity. But he falls into the same infirmity which had dishonored his father in Egypt. When asked concerning his wife, "he said, She is my sister; for he feared to say, She is my wife; lest, said he, the men of the place should kill me for Rebekah; because she was fair to look upon." We have no apology to offer for such unmanly equivocation, the criminality of which



was enhanced in view of the extraordinary manifestations of the divine goodness so recently vouchsafed to him. Still, God delivered him from the peril consequent upon his folly, and blessed him, and he became very great. "For he had possession of flocks, and possession of herds, and great store of servants; and the Philistines envied him." In their persecutions of the patriarch, they filled up the wells which the servants of his father had digged, and to avoid contention, he retreated to the more quiet valley of Gerar, and dwelt there. But here he found no peace, and calling the well which he digged "Esek," which signifies contention, he left it, and digged another; and when the herdmen of Gerar strove for this also, he left it, calling it "Sitnah" (hatred). Determining not to have his peace longer disturbed, he relinquished his claim, and removed from hence, and digged another well, which he named "Rehoboth," which means *space*, and here, unmolested, he found ample room for his rapidly-increasing flocks and herds. One more removal to Beersheba, for reasons which are not stated in the sacred record, and we are called to view Isaac as an infirm old man, holding fast his integrity and confidence in God, but still



not finding in the bosom of his family that light and comfort which we had hoped the beautiful Rebekah would have shed over the evening of his days. “And it came to pass when he was old and his eyes were dim, so that he could not see, that he called Esau, his eldest son, and said unto him, Behold now, I am old, I know not the day of my death. Now, therefore, take, I pray thee, thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go out to the field, and take me some venison; and make me savory meat such as I love, and bring it to me, that I may eat, that my soul may bless thee before I die.” The character of Rebekah now appears in a most unenviable light. She conceived and set herself at work to execute a stratagem by which the blessing might be diverted from Esau, and conferred upon Jacob—a stratagem to deceive a holy and venerable man, a devoted husband, and a most indulgent parent, in the very hour of his expected decease, and in a transaction of the most sacred importance. Having heard the dying request of Isaac, she called her favorite son and said, “Go now to the flock, and fetch me from thence two good kids of the goats; and I will make them savory meat for thy father, such as he loveth; and thou shalt



bring it to thy father, that he may eat, and that he may bless *thee* before his death." Jacob demurred a little at this, not, as it would seem, from a conviction of its wrongfulness, but under the apprehension that his smooth and delicate skin might reveal the plot, and secure to him a curse instead of a blessing. Observe, now, his craven conduct, when his mother said, "Upon me be thy curse, my son, only obey my voice."

While Esau, in obedience to his father's wish, bounded over the hills, panting like the hunted deer he pursued in the fatigues of the chase, Jacob creeps away to the sheep-fold, and brings his easily-gotten prey to his mother. She, in her idolatrous love for her son, assuming at once all the responsibility and all the peril of the plot, proceeded to prepare the meat as Isaac loved. The artifice succeeded. To the acted lie, in which his mother had involved him, Jacob added many more. Thus sins, like afflictions, come in companies. One step being taken in deceit, another almost necessarily succeeds. When he came, in his dissembled garb, to Isaac, and was asked, "Who art thou, my son?" he replied, "I am Esau, thy first-born; I have done according as thou



badest me." Isaac, as it would seem, with some secret suspicion of wrong, inquired, "How is it that thou hast found it so quickly, my son?" To which he replied, "Because the Lord thy God brought it to me." Still, with a slight tremor of doubt, the aged patriarch said, "Come near, I pray thee, that I may feel thee, my son, whether thou be my very son Esau or not." The feminine voice of Jacob had well-nigh betrayed him; but as the patriarch relied upon the sense of feeling, and as his hands seemed to be the hands of Esau, he received the blessing. That the last lingering doubt might be removed, he put the question in the most direct and solemn manner to Jacob, "Art thou my *very son* Esau? And he said, *I am.*" Then he drew him to his bosom, and, with the inspiration of the Almighty upon him, he delineated, in a style truly poetic and beautiful, the blessings which would descend upon himself and his posterity. The scene which followed was deeply affecting. Scarcely had the deceiver retired from the presence of the patriarch, to rejoice with his mother in the success of the stratagem, before Esau, fresh from the field, came in, with the savory meat, such as his father loved. When Isaac perceived the decep-



tion which had been practiced upon him, his hoary locks shook with the excitement of grief, but he could not recall the blessing. And Esau, as though his heart would break, “cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry, and said, “Bless me, even me also, O my father! And he lifted up his voice and wept!”

Soon, however, his grief subsided into a deep and settled purpose of revenge, and he said in his heart, “The days of mourning for my father are at hand, then will I slay my brother.” At these words Rebekah trembled with fear, and to avoid the dreadful issue, which she had reason to apprehend, sent the “supplanter” to the house of her brother Laban, in the land of Haran, where he remained, with varied fortunes, for more than forty years. She never saw her son afterward.

We will not pursue her gloomy history further; the sacred record preserves an ominous silence in reference to her end. She, who rose upon us fair and beautiful as the morning, vanishes, like a dark spirit of evil, from sight.

Her great beauty when first seen in the evening twilight—her amiable conduct at the well—her free and artless response, when asked, “Wilt thou



go with this man?"—her maiden modesty on meeting Isaac—her evident trust in God in times of distress—her deep and womanly love; *all* seemed to fit her to be the comforter of the patriarch, and to render her among the most distinguished of all the "Daughters of Zion." But a weak and misguided parental partiality spoiled her, and brought over the evening of her days the shadows of a dark eclipse.

Her character and history, thus briefly sketched, are highly instructive to parents.

Rebekah erred not as a maiden, not as a wife, but as *a mother*, in the love and culture of her children—in the partiality with which she viewed the one, and the coldness with which she looked upon the other.

This was the fruitful source of all the evils that beset her. This is an error not peculiar to the mother of Jacob. Other mothers have erred in a similar way, and immense have been the evils flowing therefrom.

A distinction among children, while it sows the seeds of discord between the heads of the household themselves, produces effects upon its objects equally disastrous. It kindles the flames of jeal-



ousy and resentment between brothers and sisters, and renders the heart, which should be the seat of every gentle and kindly emotion, the habitation of anger, malice, and revenge; and if such baleful passions do not break out into deeds of violence and blood, it will be simply because a kind Providence in some way interposes, and spares those that have sown the wind from reaping the whirlwind. Let these considerations have their due weight with those who stand in this delicate and responsible relation. Let the principles of equity combine with the dictates of nature to forbid an unequal distribution of parental favors or affections. It may not, perhaps, be always possible to suppress the *feeling* of preference, but the *expression* of it, at least, is in our power; and as we value the peace and happiness of the domestic circle, as well as the real good of the object of our partiality, we shall studiously avoid betraying it either by word or deed.

Are you, gentle reader, a mother? Then a new world of love and joy has opened before you. New and strange have been your sensations, as you have been awakened from pleasant dreams by the touch of that little hand or the murmur of that



infant voice. As your eyes have rested upon that innocent one, how has your heart exulted with the thought, that God has intrusted to you, a gem from His treasure-house of glory—a bud ready to expand for eternity! In your day-dreams of the future, your imagination may often have been busy weaving the golden web of hope, and, perhaps, forming vague anticipations, which, if realized, would be calling down ruin upon the child you would bless. If you have schooled your feelings aright, and justly appreciated your relations as a mother, you must be aware, that on you, in a great measure, depends the happiness or misery of your offspring. A blessing or a curse hangs upon your lips, as you caress the tender object of your love.

The very feelings pervading your heart, blissful as they now are, if not controlled by judgment and sanctified by prayer, may yet become an injury by their undisciplined warmth. You are to guard the opening of the tender flower, leaf by leaf—to strengthen it by the dew of tenderness, to watch that no worm enters to wither its bloom—to see that the moral atmosphere surrounding it is kept pure and uncontaminated. You may suppose that



the father ought to bear the heavier weight of responsibility. Not so. The child is, indeed, to him a precious casket, to garner up the tenderness of his heart. But what time has he to search and understand its nature, during the period when first and lasting principles are forming?

The cares and conflicts of business will prevent him from marking the early developments of the heart, which the discerning and anxious mother is gathering up continually, and checking or encouraging, as she lays the foundation of the moral structure. The mother's duty is first, and most important—the first elements of character are moulded and shaped by her delicate touch; and fearful will be her responsibility, if she neglect or mar the work given her to do. If you are a mother, see that, with the beautiful web your fancy is weaving, no threads of ambition are entangled, no hopes of aggrandizement arising from purely selfish feelings, from a vain desire to see yourself perpetuated, your beauty renewed, or your name exalted in your offspring. I would not, indeed, check the noble aspirations of your heart to see your child good, honored, useful—the most distinguished among the benefactors of earth. But if you desire



personal endowments, or brilliant intellectual qualities, without the higher accomplishments of grace, your desire, if realized, may prove a curse instead of a blessing. Genius, which, perhaps, you most covet for your child, though a great and glorious endowment, is a dangerous gift. True, it may elicit the plaudits of fame, or weave for itself a chaplet of honor ; but what is all this, if the soul is sacrificed on the altar of ambition? Covet, then, for your offspring the best gifts—*piety, intelligence*, a love for the true, the beautiful, the good, a desire to imitate the example of those who have been distinguished for their moral excellence, who have shone with a clear and steady radiance, whose names will ever live in the memory of the just.

Check the first beginnings of evil. Let no unhallowed passion gain the mastery over the better impulses of the heart. She who detects evil in her children, and neglects to eradicate it in its bud, will want the resolution to crush it in its blossom. She will procrastinate till the poisonous seeds are scattered in a whirlwind over her path. It will not do to say that the evil will correct itself, or that age will obviate it, or experience will render it



odious to the child. Many mothers have thus reasoned, and permitted habits of negligence and procrastination to creep upon them, till they have periled the very souls of their offspring by their wicked supineness. Many, indeed, there are who put off deserved correction from day to day, who resolve for to-morrow, and again for to-morrow, while the evil spreads, until it is beyond the control of the parent, even if she ever awake from her criminal inactivity.

The history of Rebekah utters no unmeaning voice. She might have been happy. She might have made the domestic circle a green spot—a beautiful oasis—a Paradise regained—a type of heaven; but she erred, and her home became the scene of jarring passions, of hatred, jealousy, and revenge. Let her error admonish you to be faithful to your high trust, to train up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; then shall they be olive plants around your table, the joy of your hearts, and the crown of your old age. Aye, and more than this; they shall have a future inheritance in the kingdom of our God.










Staat.

Bannister.

MIRIAM.



## MIRIAM.

S long as Joseph and his immediate successors bore rule in Egypt, the Hebrews enjoyed the fruits of their honest toil. The blessing of Israel's God was upon them, and they increased in numbers, wealth, and power. But, at length, the policy of the state changed, the scepter passed into other hands, "a new king arose, who knew not Joseph." It is not to be inferred, that the illustrious name of Joseph had been obliterated from the public records, or that it had faded away from the remembrance of the people. Monuments of his splendid administration, of his wisdom and foresight in mitigating the effects of a wide-spread and desolating famine, were still standing. But these only tended to excite the monarch's envy, and he determined to wreak his vengeance upon



the peaceful and prosperous shepherds of Goshen. He therefore called together his counselors and chief men, and said, "Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we. Come, let us deal wisely with them, lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that when there falleth out a war, they join also our enemies and fight against *us*." The "wise measure," prompted by envy; and suggested under the guise of state policy, was readily adopted, and the unoffending Israelites were called away from their flocks and their fields, to toil under Egyptian taskmasters, and to bear the most oppressive burdens. To gratify Pharaoh's pride and avarice, they were compelled to labor in the public works, to build, at least, two treasure-cities, Pithom and Raamses, to rear temples, pyramids, and useless fortifications.

The sacred history says, "The Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigor, and they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field."

Josephus confirms this Scriptural view, and enlarges upon the evils and oppressions of his Hebrew brethren. The evident design of Egypt's king was



to break the energies and lessen the number of the people ; but Providence worked *for* them and *against* Pharaoh, and though his taskmasters executed with a rigorous exactitude his orders, “yet the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew.”

About this time, the impression was received that a child would be born to the Israelites, who, if permitted to live, would overthrow the Egyptian dynasty, elevate his nation, and acquire a glory which would be remembered through all ages. This awakened new jealousies, and led to that most cruel edict, that every male child among the Hebrews, at its birth, should be cast into the river Nile.

This was blotting out, as it were, the stars that had as yet glittered through the night of their bondage. It was making the present all wretchedness and the future all hopelessness. Hitherto *home* had afforded a soft spot, where the weary heart might find repose, a retreat from the oppressor's tyranny. But now he revels amid the homes of Israel, and, deaf to the cries of feeble infancy, or the pleadings of maternal affection, he does his work, as if he were some demon of wrath, that



knew no mercy, heard no groans, and felt no relenting. The sun rose and set as usual, but it brought no joy to the heritage of Jacob.

At this fearful crisis, the history of Miriam, the heroine of our story, begins. She was the only daughter of Amram and Jochebed, two pious Israelites, of the tribe of Levi, who trusted in God for the redemption of their nation. She is supposed to have been, at this time, about nine, and her brother Aaron about three years old. The mother knew the severity of the king's decree, and what must have been her varied emotions as she contemplated her *own* condition? Joy, hope, fear, all contended for the mastery, and each claimed its hour of separate triumph; but the event which usually thrills the parental bosom with every joyful and tender emotion, was the occasion of overwhelming sadness to this pious Hebrew family. An unusual beauty shone on the countenance of their babe—"his parents saw that he was a goodly child."

But, then, who can paint their agony as they bent over their boy, radiant in his beauty, and with streaming eyes and bursting hearts bewailed the untimely fate which hung over him? That his



beauty was more than an ordinary beauty, is evident from the terms employed in the New Testament to describe it. He is there said to have been "divinely fair," or fair to God—Hebraisms denoting the greatness of his beauty. But must he die—must he share the fate of other children, and find a grave in the waters of the Nile? All the feelings of the mother are stirred, all the supernatural energies of faith are aroused, and she resolves to save him. But how can she escape the vigilance of Pharoah's officers? To love and cherish her child as a mother, is the greatest crime of which she can be guilty by the law of Egypt. But she feels the promptings of an inner and higher law—the *law of love*—and she resolves to obey *that*. She dares to be the *mother*, and, if need be, the *martyr*. It was something more than parental impulse that controlled her, something more than admiration for the beauty of her babe. She acted under the high sanctions of faith. She had made herself familiar with the promise given to Abraham, that his seed, though doomed to be strangers in a land not theirs, and to endure a bondage unequalled for severity, should yet be gloriously delivered. She felt that this promise, confirmed



by the dying breath of all the patriarchs, must be hastening to its fulfillment. This hope had supported her heart in the evil days, that had already passed over her nation; and if the fires of the furnace now blazed higher than ever, the time was so much nearer when they would be extinguished. The great beauty of her babe, she took as the badge of his high commission, and the radiance which shone on his face, as the dawning light of Israel's redemption.

Actuated, therefore, by faith, seeing the King who is invisible, and rising above the fear of the king who was visible, she concealed her son for three months in her own house, and was not afraid of the king's commandment. But what awful dread and anxiety must she have endured from day to day!

Every footstep that fell upon her ear sounded as the death-knell of her offspring; in every stranger who approached her dwelling, she saw, or apprehended she saw, the executioner of her babe. Its every murmur awakened apprehension of detection. All the ingenuity suggested by maternal love was brought into requisition to protect it. But the dangers increased with its age—rumors were afloat—the search of Pharaoh's officers be-



came more strict, and concealment was no longer possible. Faith now ventures to extremes, and the babe which Jochebed could no longer protect with her own arms, or watch over with her own eye, she would boldly adventure on the care of Divine Providence. But faith works in connection with means, and hence an ark must be prepared. Night after night did the anxious parents work over the frail structure, weaving every reed, of which it was composed, with a prayer, and consecrating it with their tears.

Come now to the banks of the river—the unconscious babe is gently hushed to slumber by the sweet music of the mother's voice, and laid in its narrow bed, which Miriam's tiny hands have lined with softest down. The mother looks first at her babe, then at the stream, and there is a dreadful conflict within, but she breathes one earnest prayer to God, and the tumult of her soul subsides into a holy calm.

The ark is deposited, and she retires—the stars look down in their quiet beauty, while the low wind rustles among the flags which border the Nile. Yonder, beneath the clustering palms, with her hands clasped upon her throbbing breast, is



little Miriam, watching, with all a sister's deep anxiety, to wit what would become of her infant brother. The night air is chill and heavy upon her tender frame, and many are the sounds of alarm that come to her wakeful ear, but her vigil is unbroken. Hers is now the only mortal eye that watches over the child. Alas! so young, so helpless, and so utterly abandoned; whose heart does not tremble, when he beholds the future saviour of Israel committed to the mercy of the waves, or to the officers of Egypt, more merciless than the monsters which play in their sacred river? Here was Israel's hope—the world's hope—all wrapt up with Moses in that ark of bulrushes—and should it miscarry, should a single wave rise higher than the rest, and overturn it, or should the keen-eyed officers of Pharaoh, on their midnight patrol, discover it, or should a hungry crocodile devour it; what, then, shall become of the promise of God, and how shall that seed arise in whom all the families of the earth are to be blessed? What a night of periled hopes and trembling solitudes must that have been, when Moses was thus exposed on the dark waters of the Nile!

Morning at length breaks upon the city of



Pharaoh, bathing its gorgeous palaces and temples with its golden beams. Morning, too, breaks on the Nile, as from its low bed comes up the wail of infant voices, and the early rays struggling through the overhanging foliage, fall doubtfully upon its silvery surface, as if trembling for a welcome.

And will not the morning, which clothes with fresh beauty the trees and fields, warms into aroma the dewy flowers, and wakes into sweetest melody the song of birds, bring deliverance to that little prisoner in his ark of bulrushes? It brings Thermutes, the daughter of Pharaoh, to the river's brink, to take her morning bath. But surely she will not deliver the child. The heir of the throne, and the daughter of the man who is employing his whole power to exterminate the Hebrew race, surely *she* will not be so unmindful of her birth as an Egyptian, or act so much in opposition to her father's decree, as to show compassion to a Hebrew babe. All carelessly she approaches nearer and nearer to the river, attended by her maidens, bearing palm branches and vases of perfume. At length she descried in the distance the floating vessel among the flags, and "she sent her maid to fetch



it; and when she had opened it, she saw the child, and behold the babe wept."

What a crisis is here! The secret retreat is discovered, and, to all human appearance, the whole of the tender stratagem to preserve the child is broken up! Miriam, carefully concealed behind a clump of trees, had witnessed the whole scene, and now her swelling bosom apprehends the evil that may befall the beloved object of her charge. She approached with all the agitation of infantile tenderness. She marked well the countenance of the princess. She saw the tender compassion of her bosom, and the tears starting into her dark eyes, and heard her say, with deep emotion, "This is one of the Hebrews' children."

Being encouraged by this circumstance, with an artful, but an innocent and most willing officiousness, she approached the princess, and said, "Shall I go and call thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee? And Pharaoh's daughter said unto her, Go; and the maid went and called the child's mother."

Who shall describe the feelings of that mother? So suddenly had her sorrow been turned into joy, that she was, as one who dreamed. A little while



since, and we beheld her building the ark of bulrushes, and plying her task with a melancholy industry, uncertain whether she was preparing a grave for her child, or a shelter from the oppressor's tyranny.

When she had finished her task, we saw her take her babe and lay him in his beauty in the ark, and then lifting up her heart in prayer, she intrusted to the waves a nation's hopes. She left Miriam the only visible guardian of her treasure. But other guardians were encamped on the banks of the Nile, and had her spiritual eyes been opened, she might have seen the waters of the river reflecting the celestial splendors of God's host; she might have seen the sentinels of heaven going their rounds, and keeping watch about the ark of bulrushes. To the eye of sense there was naught but peril and exposure, but faith quieted the tumult of her fears, and now she is permitted to reap the reward of her fidelity, and to see her babe *rescued*—the object of royal compassion. On beholding her babe smiling in its beauty, she felt all a mother *could* feel. But there was no outburst of emotion, no external signs of joy, no tender expressions of recognition. These must all be concealed; and, with a stranger's appa-



rent indifference, she listened to the charge of the princess. "Take this child and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages." The officers of Pharaoh were charged in relation to the house of Jochebed, and it alone of all the dwellings of Israel was safe from fear. Receiving her child back, as it were, from the dead, she renewedly consecrated him to God, and felt an increased assurance that he was yet to act a sublime part in the future history of her nation. His young sister, whose dark eyes already flashed with the first glimpses of prophetic rapture, felt it too.

Thus did the child Moses receive his first lessons from the lips of faith, and his susceptible mind was early made familiar with the great facts of Hebrew history—the calling of Abraham, the covenant and the promise, the reign of Joseph, the commandment concerning his bones, the oppression of his brethren, the long-cherished hope of their deliverance, Messiah's coming through the seed of the woman, and Israel's future glories. All these were inwoven with his earliest thoughts, and awakened a sympathy for his oppressed nation, which all the splendors of Egypt could neither alienate nor destroy. Hence, "when he came to years of discre-



tion, he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." Unseduced by the lights of a false philosophy, and undazzled by the grandeur that surrounded him, he esteemed the heritage of his father Jacob more glorious than all that Egypt could offer. He was admired and caressed both for his beauty and his wisdom; but his steadfast resolution to devote himself to the deliverance of his enslaved countrymen, remained unshaken. No one dreamed that other themes than those of Egyptian science, or Egyptian policy, or Egyptian honors, ever occupied his thoughts. But Moses was a man of one *idea*—the great idea of liberty for the oppressed. It entwined itself around all his prospects, and nerved every great energy of his soul. It was for this he lived. When he retired from the evening festival or the gay saloon, it was not to pore over the page of Egyptian lore, as men imagined, but to meditate on those mightier themes which his mother had taught him in his early youth. In these hours of solitary musing, her voice would break in upon him, reminding him of his early consecration to a nobler service than that of gov-



erning Egypt. And when, quitting his privacy, he sought again the society of the palace, above the mirth with which its galleries resounded, he heard the wail of his brethren's misery. And even when he stood before Pharaoh, with a calm eye and a brow unruffled, he still nourished those vast designs which were destined to convulse Egypt to its center, and to shake the foundations of a throne which, indeed, extended a shelter to himself, but employed its power to crush his brethren. The sacred record does not associate Miriam with her heroic brother during the period of his education; not until after he had fled as a fugitive to Midian, received his high commission from the mouth of God at Horeb, and returned to work out the redemption of his people by the wonders of miracle. The haughty king at length trembles under the appalling judgments which Moses, in his meekness, had marshaled from the earth and the sky, and the thousands of Israel have shaken off their oppressive burdens, and, under the command of their Heaven-appointed leader, are marching to the land of promise.

Miriam had not been an indifferent spectator to all the scenes of trial and tragedy, in which



Moses had been the conspicuous actor; she had seen him wield the mysterious rod of destiny, and strike down the crest of kingly pride; she had witnessed the successive plagues which had swept in their awful fury over the land of tyranny. She had beheld, with exultant gratitude, the marshaling of the hosts of Israel for their long and weary travel. Her voice had mingled like a clarion amid the shouts which heralded the triumph of their God. And now she stands pre-eminent beneath the flashings of the cloudy pillar, among the leaders of her ransomed people. The prophet Micah, in speaking of the wonders of God to Israel, mentions Miriam in connection with Moses and Aaron, as the chosen and honored instrumentalities of their redemption.

We have seen the Hebrew maiden in her deep trial, when, fearful and forsaken, she kept solitary vigil on the banks of the Nile; we are now to view her in her triumph, as she leads the chorus of Israel on the shores of the Red Sea.

The exodus of God's people had awakened the direful wrath of Egypt's proud monarch, and his mighty hosts are assembled to pursue, with threatened vengeance, the fugitives from his realm. Lo!



they come, exulting in proud array, with waving banners, and nodding plumes, and shields flashing in the sunlight. When the children of Israel beheld all the chariots and horsemen of Pharaoh wending their way through a rocky defile, their hearts failed them for fear, and they cried unto the Lord, and said to Moses, "Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness!" In calm majesty he replied, "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord." Then he raised his wondrous rod over the sea, and its mighty waters rolled back, and stood like walls of crystal on each side of their safe and ample path. The mysterious cloud ascended, and, moving behind the Israelites, settled like a pall of thick darkness upon the Egyptians. But light shone along the carved highway of Israel, as they passed through on dry ground. When they had ascended the opposite bank, they beheld their enemies in hot pursuit, raising the exultant shout, "We will pursue, we will overtake, we will divide the spoil." Moses raised again his rod, and the parted waters collapsed, and wrapped, as in a winding-sheet, Pharaoh and his mighty host, and the surging waves, mingling with the



deafening shrieks of dying men, sent up to the frowning heavens the requiem of their glory.

The Israelites had gazed in silent wonder at this scene of awe and omnipotence, when Moses began his noble song of triumph, and the great multitude, as if moved by some mysterious impulse, raised aloft the magnificent anthem :

“Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power; thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy.” “And Miriam, the prophetess, the sister of Aaron,” with her bosom swelling with great emotions, and her eye kindling with inspiration, “took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances.” And Miriam answered them with a voice ringing like a trumpet peal to the sky, “Sing ye to the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously—the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea.”

Poets have since sung, and wove for themselves chaplets of undying fame, but the song of Miriam still lives to warm the feelings of the pious heart, and to awaken the desire to join the hosts of Israel, in their loud shouts of deliverance.

We have seen Miriam in scenes of striking contrast, in her trial, and in her triumph, a watcher



on the banks of the Nile, and a victoress on the shores of the Red Sea.

Her life, thus far, like the portrait which adorns these pages, has been picturesque and beautiful, and we would prefer to leave her, with her timbrel in hand, leading the dark-eyed daughters of Zion in songs sweeter than any which have since floated over the Adriatic, or breathed among the islands of the Ægean. But with all her genius, and devotion, and lofty spirit of poetry, she was human, and subject to the frailties of her sex. As beauty had been the snare of Sarah and Rebekah, ambition was the stumbling-block of Miriam.

She had conceived that her power over the people was limited by a prudential measure suggested to Moses by Jethro, his father-in-law, and priest of Midian. *This* chafed her proud spirit, but when she saw Zipporah, her brother's wife, monopolizing his affections, and surpassing her in the respectful attentions of Israel, her dark eye kindled with the fires of jealousy, and she "spoke *against* Moses." She did not go to him, as an offended, yet loving sister ought, and state the reasons of her grievance, but she meanly used the language of detraction, for the purpose of aliena-



ting his friends. In this domestic treason she soon succeeded in enlisting her brother Aaron. "And they said, Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses; hath He not spoken also by us?" The Lord heard this complaint, and bid the conspirators, together with their injured brother, to go up to the tabernacle of the congregation.

Moses, with a countenance radiant with inexpressible beauty, and serene in his conscious innocence, passed up in the presence of the people, his manly form enveloped in a simple mantle. Aaron moved with a statelier tread, bearing the signals of his priestly office, his breastplate magnificently wrought, his flowing robe sparkling with jewels, and fringed with golden bells. The aspiring Miriam walked between them, gorgeously appareled, but her haughty brow clouded, her countenance expressive of varied and conflicting emotions.

The descending radiance of the Almighty soon enveloped them from the gaze of the wondering multitude, while from His cloudy pillar He spake in vindication of His servant Moses, referred to his high commission, his lofty purity, his undeviating integrity; "Wherefore, then," said He, "were ye



not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?" Humbled at this signal rebuke, and paralyzed with fear at this manifestation of the Divine displeasure, they stood mute and trembling. "The cloud departed from off the tabernacle," the encircling mist vanished, and the gazing tribes beheld Moses calm in his transcendent meekness. But lo! Miriam was changed, the flush of pride had faded from her cheek, and she was leprous, white as snow!

Aaron gazed upon his fallen sister, while the big tears swam in his eyes, and falling prostrate at the feet of Moses, he said, "Alas! my lord, I beseech thee, lay not the sin upon us, wherein we have done foolishly, and wherein we have sinned." Moses was touched by this tender appeal, and forgetting, as it were, the rebellion of his sister, her hatred of his wife, her spirit of envy and detraction, and thinking of her only in the innocence of her young girlhood, when she watched his cradle on the waters of the Nile, he raised his loving heart in earnest supplication to God on her behalf. From his meek lips there was no word of rebuke, and we may conceive how such a display of brotherly love and pity would sink into the heart of Miriam, and utterly subdue the evil of her spirit.



No reproof, no protracted punishment, could be so affecting to a sensitive and generous mind, as this manifestation of active, unaltered affection on the part of Moses.

The Lord heard the prayer of His faithful servant, and cured the leprosy both of her body and mind, but she was obliged, as a token of the Divine displeasure against her sin, as well as in conformity to the laws of Israel, to endure the painful mortification of being an exile from the camp of Israel seven days. As an expression of their high esteem for her former distinguished character and services, the people, notwithstanding their impatience at every delay, and their great anxiety to tread the soil of the promised land, journeyed not until the days of her probation were ended, and she received again to their welcome embrace. After this, we hear no more of Miriam until we read the record of her death in the desert of Zin, where she was buried with appropriate funeral honors.

Thus ended the life of one who had acted a conspicuous part in that great drama of Providence, which, in its coming scenes, was to introduce the advent, an inaugural of the Messiah,



as the antitype of Moses and the Deliverer of God's spiritual Israel from a bondage more hopeless and oppressive than that of Egypt.

Miriam first rises to our view, like a guardian spirit, watching with sisterly affection the ark of bulrushes, then we see her gentle nature impressed with the dread afflatus of prophecy, and penetrating with a seer's glance the mysteries of the eternal—then we hear her voice mingling with inexpressible sweetness with the loud anthems of Israel—then her glory is concealed, for a moment, by a passing cloud, but she reappears, like the morning star, which goes not down behind the darkened west, but melts away into the light of heaven.

Her character, for the most part, was a model of high devotion, of heroic faith, of ardent affection, and her name will live as long as Liberty shall have votaries to worship at her altar, and poetry and song find a responsive echo in the human heart.

It is well for us, who live under a milder and better dispensation, and have realized the substantial glories that were prefigured only in type and shadow, to look back to the wonders of antiquity, and imitate the heroic virtues of a primitive age.



The dispensation of Moses was splendid and divine—a type of the surpassing glories of Messiah's kingdom. It was suited to the age, preparatory and progressive, ultimating in the fulfillment of the prophetic saying, "For 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, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgement and with justice, from henceforth even forever."

Let us briefly review the history we have been contemplating, and see how faith struggled and triumphed in the earlier periods of the church.

The deductions of human reason and the high promptings of faith are oftentimes antagonistic and conflicting. The one is involved in doubt and perplexity by the mysteries of Providence, while the other is serenely hopeful. Reason is driven from her moorings by the storms which drift athwart the sea of human destiny, while faith soars above the clouds and casts her anchor within



the vail. Reason gropes and stumbles amid the gathering darkness, while faith, undismayed, ascends her watch-tower, and beholds light radiating from the throne of God and the Lamb. What different conclusions would have been formed by the one and the other, regarding the prospects of Jacob's posterity. Could reason have discovered in the hour of their bondage, when the fires of their furnace were waxing hottest, the least glimmerings of hope? To the eye of reason all was dark, but faith saw through the mystery, and looked forward to brighter days and serener skies. To the ear of sense all was silent—no sound announced an approaching deliverance; but let the ear of faith listen, and it shall hear from the coffin and the moldering bones of Joseph the still, small voice of encouragement, "God shall surely visit you."

The whole scene in the house of Jochebed—in secreting the child, in framing the ark of bulrushes—in committing it to the mercy of the waves—in the adventures of Miriam—in her lone vigils on the banks of the Nile—in her artless address to the princess—*all, all* is the work of faith.

Reason would have said Moses must die—by the hand of Pharaoh's armed officials, or on the raging



tide, or by the jaws of hungry crocodiles. But faith came to a different conclusion, and saw that frail vessel freighted with a treasure costlier than all the wealth of Egypt—saw in that helpless nursing of the Nile the future scourge of Pharaoh—the deliverer of Israel—the historian of creation—the legislator miraculously commissioned—the prophet divinely inspired; and all these amazing hopes and interests, in that hour of their apparent peril, were cast, in faith's sublime ventures, upon the great arm of God.

These were the trials of faith struggling against darkness and the deductions of human reason.

Come now to the sea-shore and witness faith's triumphs. The proud and pursuing monarch, with his armed legions, his chariots of war, and all his glittering array, have found an inglorious sepulcher in the depths of the sea. But Moses, whose young life was periled among the rushes and on the wave, whose wondrous rod had made the old dynasties of Egypt tremble, walks matchlessly triumphant on the shores of the great sea, a conqueror of conquerors—a victor, not by the power of arms, but by the sublime power of faith.



“And Miriam! no longer the weeping watcher, the tried, the trustful; but Miriam the victoress—Miriam the prophetess of God! Behold how, with her queenly tread, and her blazing eye and exulting voice, she leads the triumphs of Israel, sending up to the bending heavens God’s great hallelujah!”

Thus do these contrasted and dramatic scenes in the life of Miriam teach us trust in the God of Abraham. “Hath He said and will He not bring it to pass?” Has He spoken to us either in covenant or promise? Then whatever may be the strength of opposing reasons, or high the barriers to obedience, or formidable the menacing host, let faith venture on, and a path shall be opened, if need be, through the deep waters, the enemies shall be scattered, and faith shall not fail of her victory. True faith is not fanaticism, but the soundest philosophy. It is taking God at His word, who has the hearts of all men in His hands, and all the elements at His control.

But look again into this Hebrew household, and see how faith works—by love, by means wisely adapted to the end, by diligent pains-taking, and prayer. There is, indeed, a hopeful and active



reliance on Providence, but not a presumptuous confidence, which paralyzes exertion, and expects miracles to take the place of means. God, under no economy and by no arrangement, has made provision for man's indolence. The great forces of nature work, the elements are in ceaseless activity, and man, if he would realize the great wish of his heart, must *work* for it. "Faith without works is dead, being alone." It is presumption, and not faith. The former would have said, "Let Moses alone; God, who has chosen him for His own glory, will preserve him without concealment from the violence of Pharaoh's officers. He needs no ark of bulrushes, no mother's careful work, no sister's tender watch." But faith teaches a different philosophy, and unites means with providential agencies. And observe how beautifully they tally with, unite, strengthen, and support each other. The concealment, the rushes, the slime, the pitch, the water-proof ark, were the mother's prudent and necessary preparation. The lone watch of Miriam on the banks of the Nile, her tender address to the princess, fill up the part which human sagacity is to accomplish in this living drama of peril and hope. In the mean time,



God has been preparing His materials and arranging His instruments—the heart of the king's daughter—the flow of the current—the concurrence of circumstances too fine for human eye to discern, too complex for human understanding to unravel, and too mighty for human power to control.

See how an invisible and wonder-working Providence harmonizes with the feeblest human instrumentality, how events the most unlikely and persons the most uncongenial are made to meet for the out-working of God's most benevolent design. The wife of Amram and the daughter of Pharaoh would seem to have nothing in common, yet Providence brings them together, gives them a mutual concern, a mutual charge, a mutual interest. By how many accidents might this most fortunate coincidence have been prevented. A day, an *hour* earlier or later in the active care of the one, and the contingent amusement of the other, and the parties concerned had never met. The slightest alteration in the setting in of the wind or the tide—the particular temperature of the fleeting air; the operation of all, or any one of these might have defeated the design, and Moses would never have been the leader of Israel



or the type of Christ. But these and a thousand such like contingencies, unstable as water and changeable as the wind, subdued by the hand of Omnipotence, acquire the solidity of the rock and the steadfastness of the poles of heaven.

The mother could not part with her child a moment sooner, durst not retain him a moment longer; Miriam could not be intimidated or diverted from her faithful watch. The princess could betake herself to no other amusement or employment, could fix upon no other hour of the day, could resort to no other part of the river, the wind could blow in no other direction, the tide could rise no higher; *all* were controlled by Him, who hides himself, and works all things after the counsel of His own will. And Moses was not safer when king in Jeshuran, encompassed by the thousands of Israel—was not safer in the mount with God, nor on the shores of the Red Sea, than was Moses in the flags, at the mercy of the waves or the monsters of the Nile. Surely there is a Providence in the world, who directs not only the orbs of light, but clothes the grass of the field, paints the petals of the lovely flower, wings the flight of birds, watches over the infant in the cradle,



or wrings the mother's heart with agony when He lays it in its early grave.

We are not in a fatherless world, bereaved of the care and guardianship of its great and blessed Author. And though His ways are often mysterious—in the paths of the great deep—though the lightning is winged with His wrath, and the pealing thunder is but the distant echo of His power, yet he who abideth beneath the covert of His wings *is safe*.









Staal.

Bannister.

R A H A B .



R A H A B.

**T**HE perils of the great wilderness were now passed, the forty years of weary travel were ended, and the Israelites, to the number of six hundred thousand, were encamped at Shittim, on the east of the Jordan. Moses, their distinguished and Heaven-commissioned leader, having viewed from the top of Pisgah the land of promise, in its wide extent and boundless fertility, has found an honored yet unknown grave, and his body sleeps under the guardianship of angels, while his noble spirit stands in glory before the throne.

His mantle has fallen upon Joshua, his successor, who, by the appointment of God, was to consummate and realize the sublime work which Moses had the honor to commence, but was not permitted to finish. Before we proceed with this victorious



general beyond the Jordan, and mingle in those terrible scenes of slaughter and conquest, let us ascend to the top of Nebo, and mark the outlines of the land to be possessed.

The broad plain immediately beneath, the verdure of which is so richly shaded with palm-trees, and so plentifully watered with living rivulets, is the plain of Jericho.

Yonder is the strongly-fortified town from which it takes its name, with its numerous towers and pinnacles adorned with richest gems and gold. On the west of the city rises a succession of hills, their summits clothed with verdure, their sides luxuriantly covered with vine-beds, fig-trees, patches of dark-green olive, and fields of waving grain. The white dwellings of the little town of Gilgal glimmer on the plain, half way between Jericho and the Jordan, where the curse was subsequently rolled away from the Israelites, and the rite of circumcision renewed.

Running our eye up the river, which winds, like a silver thread, through the middle of the valley, watering with its annual flood the plantations of figs and the luxuriant meads which clothe the plain, we come to the beautiful Sea of Galilee, gleaming



amid the hills. As yet it is remarkable only for its simple beauty, but in ages to come the Prophet, like unto Moses, is to walk there, uttering along its shores words of purest wisdom, sweeter than ever fell before upon the ear of mortal.

Tracing the same stream southward, we come, at length, to another sea, in whose still and sluggish depths are lost the clear and sparkling waters of the Jordan. No beauteous ripple plays upon its leaden surface, no flowers or green adorn its desolate shores, no song of bird ascends its bleak and overhanging cliffs. The mountains around are scathed and barren. The whole scene is funeral-like, bearing the marks of some dreadful curse. Four hundred years ago, the stately palaces of Sodom echoed here to the voice of mirth, and the thousand beating hearts were full of festivity and hope, but now all is silence and death. But we take our eyes from these sad tokens of the divine displeasure, to gaze upon a land of varied and wonderful beauty. Far in the north stands the goodly Lebanon, like a magnificent rampart, dividing the fertile fields of Palestine from the dwellings of the Assyrian. The bottom of this goodly range is cleft into valleys innumerable, clothed in living green,



each with its mountain cascade filling it with the melody of waters.

What forests of cedar wave on its sides ; while its summits form a continuous line of dazzling peaks, which run along the shores of the Great Sea. The ocean defends it on the west, and on the south the great wilderness, the sands of which form a barrier as impenetrable as the waves which break along its western shores.

Such are the boundaries of the land now about to be possessed ; but where shall we find words to depict the rare beauty and fertility which these boundaries inclose—the hills melting with wine, the rocks dropping honey and oil, the pastures flowing with milk, the valleys waving with corn ? When Jehovah arranged and beautified this land, it would seem that He had in view some magnificent design—to make it the sanctuary of truth, the dwelling-place of that highly-favored people, to whom were committed the covenants and the promises—a grand central point, from which light might emanate to illumine the nations, and then return to bathe, with mild and millennial glories, the soil trod by patriarchs and hallowed by the footsteps of the son of God.



Joshua, inspired by so enchanting a prospect, and firm in his reliance upon the divine promise, stands at the head of his armies, anxious to realize the great wish of his heart. But obstacles are before him, such as no human valor or foresight can obviate or overcome. Who shall presume to cross the Jordan, now swollen beyond its banks, and its surging waves spreading far and wide, like a deep, impassable sea?

The Canaanites to be dispossessed were numerous and warlike, of gigantic stature and strength, their towns fortified by nature and art, their forces concentrated, their interests united, and, with a heroism not easily subdued, were they determined to repel the approach of hostile invaders.

Joshua kneels in the presence of the great congregation, and his prayer ascends to the throne of the Infinite. He rises, strong in the possession of great thoughts; his face radiant, as if light from the wings of the cherubim had fallen upon it. The great outlines of the expedition are divinely planned and made known to Joshua.

And now the drama of peril and hope, of faith's ventures and faith's victories, begins, in which



Rahab, the subject of our sketch, appears as a prominent actor.

It is a cloudless day in the month of April, and all nature is serenely beautiful. The birds are singing merrily in the groves, and the wide, extended plain is decked with bright wild-flowers. Two thoughtful young men may be seen, clad in light, Oriental robes, emerging from the fords of the Jordan, and wending their quiet way toward the city of Jericho. To the numerous passers-by they are taken for shepherds, who have come from the hill country of Judea, or, perchance, exiles from the plains of Moab, who would seek refuge from the agitations of their country in the quiet city of Palm Trees. They are unarmed, and move with a careless air, or recline at leisure beneath the spreading palm, as if to enjoy the strange beauty of the surrounding scene. To the more observant eye they may be seen, ever and anon, glancing at the high and massive walls that inclose the city, its strong towers, and proud fortifications. At length they approach the city gates; the sentinel is off his guard, or, perchance, he thinks there is nothing to fear from these unarmed and rustic men, who would simply gratify an idle curiosity. Little does he



dream of their secret mission—of the great thoughts that have taken full possession of their minds. Little do the scornful multitude, as they pass proudly by, suppose that these covert wanderers of the desert are to be the future lords of the land. Unmolested, save by the crowds of idle boys, they pass up and down the city, not viewing the more attractive works of art, not pausing at the saloons of pleasure, but noting well the military fortifications of the town—the many means of defense—the thickness and strength of the walls—the fastenings of the heavy iron gates—the probable number of men capable of bearing arms—their courage and power of resistance. They find themselves surrounded on all sides by wealth, power, and the splendid memorials of a false religion. The masses of the people seem gay and untroubled, as if conscious of safety within their well-fortified city; but, among the more intelligent and thoughtful, there is an under-current of deep concern. Tidings, from time to time, have come to them from the Hebrew army, of their exodus from Egypt, their mysterious passage through the Red Sea, their ready conquest of all the tribes that had opposed them. They had witnessed from afar the flashings of the cloudy



pillar, their steady and resistless march ; and now, as they viewed them near, strong in their unwasted energies, and unshaken in their peculiar faith, they felt that there might be cause of alarm ; still, they will defend their city and their sacred altars to the last.

Thus the day is spent, and the soft evening twilight begins to deepen upon the city. The crowds that have gathered at the market-place disperse, the weary laborer leaves his toil, and the affluent merchant seeks his luxurious abode.

But who shall afford shelter to the Hebrew strangers? They find themselves without friends, exposed, suspected, faint with hunger and fatigue, and any expression from their lips would only betray their Jewish accent, and lead to their speedy arrest. But God has been providing a shelter for them far at the outskirts of the city, in the humble dwelling of Rahab, and thither, as by some strange impulse, are they led.

It is a lowly thatched cottage upon the wall, hung round with mantling vines, presenting a quiet air of neatness and simplicity. It has sheltered many a weary traveler, who has been fed, and blessed, and sent on his way rejoicing. They knock, and the



hostess meets them at the door with words of generous welcome. Her noble form, but half revealed in the evening twilight, her lofty brow, her dark and mildly beaming eye, her hair falling in raven ringlets over her neck and shoulders, present her as a person of no ordinary beauty.

Her manifest good-will, her words of kindly sympathy, soon win the confidence of her stranger guests, and there is a free interchange of thought and sentiment. She is somewhat startled at the announcement that they are from the camp of Israel, and when she hears from their lips that they have traversed openly the streets of the city, she apprehends that some evil eye may have traced their footsteps to her dwelling, and she suggests the propriety of concealment. She is made fully acquainted with the object of their mission, and the purpose of God in relation to her nation. Already has she seen the absurdities of her own religion, and her soul has sickened at the abominations of her people, and she has been feeling in the dark after the true God. When, therefore, she hears of all the wonders He has wrought, of the might of His arm, she is conscious of a new and strange impulse stirring within, and she resolves to make their God



her God, and their people her people. She is not unmindful of the peril of her guests; but faith is quick to devise, and as ready to execute, and as soon as they had partaken of her ample repast, she conducts them to the house-top, and carefully conceals them beneath bundles of flax, which had been laid upon the flat roof to dry. All is now quiet within the house of Rahab—the bright stars look down approvingly upon this simple act of faith, and she retires to await the issue.

In the mean time there is a stir in the city—rumors have been afloat, and suspicions borne to the ears of the king; something must be done—search made, these emissaries arrested, and condignly punished. Already does the quick ear of Rahab hear in the distance the heavy tramp of armed men. She knows that a crisis is approaching—a trial of her faith—but her heart is fixed. Now they are at her door clamoring loud for admission, and with stern voices saying, “Bring forth the men that are come to thee, which are entered into thine house, for they be come to search out the country.” “They are spies, and must be taken, or our city is ruined!”

The dreaded hour of her peril has come—it is an



extreme case—a case of life or death—and resistance is in vain. The men are on the house-top, and she knows it, and the stern demand of the king is to deliver the fugitives. Shall she obey? Shall she presume to endanger the safety of her country, and evade the royal edict? But she feels the promptings of an inner law, and she has conceived that it is the will of God, that these men should not be handed over to the officers of the king. What in the premises shall she do? There is a conflict between conscience and kingly authority, faith and fealty to government. She was but a new disciple, a recent convert to the true religion, and she did not conceive that stratagem to preserve life, might peradventure be interpreted as inconsistent with the principles of a sound morality. At all events, she will try the artful device, and abide the consequence. She therefore turned the lattice of her window, and replied, “There did, indeed, come unto me men, but I knew not their character or designs, and at early nightfall, about the time of the closing of the city gates, they left, and if ye pursue hastily after them, ye shall overtake them.”

There was an apparent earnestness and sincerity



in her tones, which produced conviction, and, without pausing to search her dwelling, they started in hot pursuit; some for the "fords of the Jordan," to intercept their crossing, should they seek the Hebrew encampment, and others were stationed at the city gate, that their arrest might be made sure, should they still linger within the walls. No sooner had the sound of their retreating footsteps died away, than Rahab sought her stranger guests. She addresses them in language earnest, full of pathos, and meaning. It is the outgush of a heart tremulous with tender emotion, yet strong in faith. "I knew," said she, "that the Lord hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you. For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites that were on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed. And as soon as we had heard these things our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you; for the Lord your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath. Now, therefore, I



pray you, swear unto me by the Lord, since I have showed you kindness, that ye will also show kindness unto my father's house, and give me a true token; And that ye will save alive my father and my mother, my brethren, and my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death."

Such was her confession of faith, and her earnest request. Her whole language and conduct were evincive of entire confidence in the God of Israel, a desire and hope of His favor, an affection for His people, a disposition to forsake, venture, and suffer any thing in His cause. She felt, too, as was natural, for her kindred, and would see them rescued not only from impending destruction, but from the soul-destroying influence of idolatry. She prefers a plea on the basis of what she herself had periled and done on their behalf. Her appeal is effectual, and she is assured that her friends, if found in her dwelling at the time of the general siege, shall share the rewards of her faith. She receives what, indeed, there was no necessity to give, a strict charge of secrecy and fidelity; a defenseless and feeble woman, who has the combined courage, fortitude, and heroic faith unwaveringly to meet the crisis through which she has just passed, may be



safely trusted for any future emergency. There is much more reason to apprehend that her well-meaning friends, for whom she has periled her life, will, in the heat and excitement of battle, everlook her humble dwelling. She desires, therefore, some pledge or token that she shall not be forgotten in that coming hour of peril. It is mutually agreed that the scarlet cord which is laying by them shall be extended from the window out of which the spies are about to make their escape; and as the blood of the paschal lamb sprinkled upon the doorposts, was the pledge and token of Israel's security, when the destroying angel was passing through the land, so *this* should be the seal of their covenant, and a signal to the fierce soldiery for her safety.

Mutual pledges and congratulations being thus exchanged, Rahab lets them down by means of this same scarlet cord, in a basket from the upper window, outside of the city wall; and bids them hasten, and take refuge in the fastnesses of the neighboring mountains. Her eye follows them, until they are lost in the deep shadows of that perilous night.

The succeeding days were full of interest to the anxious dwellers of Jericho. A deep mystery hung over the fate of the fugitives. Every path



leading to the Jordan, and every secret place of retreat within the city had been explored to no purpose. In the mean time, the two men had returned to the camp of the Israelites, and related to Joshua all the things which had befallen them, and the terror that pervaded the inhabitants of the land. Preparations were now made for the solemn march. The people sanctified themselves, and the priests bearing the ark—the symbol of the Divine presence—opened the procession. Each tribe observed the same order which they had done in their previous marches. The movement commenced on a day answering to the thirtieth of our April—the day on which the paschal lamb was selected and separated—a day for the trial and triumph of Israel's faith. The waters of the Jordan were rolling deep and impetuously before them. But no sooner had the feet of the priests, who bare the ark, touched the waves, than they rolled back, and stood in heaps far beyond the city of Adam, while the flood below, continuing its course to the Dead Sea, opened a passage of about sixteen miles in breadth—a way miraculously prepared for the ransomed of the Lord to pass over. The priests, calm and trustful, tarried in the midst of the arid channel,



until even the most timorous of the army had reached the opposite bank, and then they selected twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes, and left them standing one upon the other, while twelve more were carried to Gilgal, and reared into a monument to perpetuate this signal deliverance.

Who can conceive of the unutterable emotions, the fervent gratitude of this people, as now, for the first time, they trod the soil of the promised land—a land of which they had often heard—the ideal of all that was beautiful and grand—which they had cherished in their heart of hearts during their long and weary pilgrimage.

All was confidence and exultation on the part of Israel, whose long-delayed, yet dearly-cherished hopes, were now ripening into the fruitions of actual possession. Far different from these were the feelings of the terror-stricken inhabitants of Jericho. They had just witnessed that scene of awe and wonder at the Jordan, and now their dreaded enemy were encamped within a couple of miles of their city. The king is in deep trepidation and alarm—he orders a council called—defensive measures are discussed—forces are rallied—battalions of infantry are stationed at the city gates—the



walls are covered with men who breathe deliberate defiance as they move amid a dense forest of spears. Days pass on; and there are no outward manifestations of hostility. The Hebrews are celebrating the week of the Passover, renewing a long-neglected, yet divinely-instituted rite, burnishing those weapons which are not carnal, but mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strongholds.

The religious festival is now passed, and Joshua has gone forth alone at eventide, to reconnoiter the city, and to deliberate upon the best mode of besieging it; when, on a sudden, there appeared a mysterious personage standing at some distance, clothed in bright armor, with a drawn sword in his hand. Undaunted at this unusual sight, Joshua advanced, and said unto him, "Art thou for *us*, or for our adversaries?" The vision replied, "I am for Israel, and as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come." And as Joshua, in humble adoration, fell prostrate at his feet, he ordered him, as he had done Moses at the burning bush, to loose his sandals from his feet, and then he proceeded to instruct him as to the manner of the siege; that it should be, not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord. To all this



Joshua gives his earnest and hearty assent, and returns to his people with a serenity beaming upon his face, as if the crisis were already passed.

It is morning; and the Hebrew camp is in motion—the cloudy pillar rises—the signal is given, and the embattled legions are in the order of march—the voice of Joshua, ringing out like a clarion, makes even the timid brave, the most vacillating firm.

An army of forty thousand, including the unconquerable tribes of Reuben and Gad, and the half tribes of Manasseh, with their streaming banners, spears, and shields glittering in the early sunlight, lead the van. The trumpet-bearers follow, with a slow and measured tread. Then comes the wing-shadowed ark, covered with its pall of purple and crimson, borne by the consecrated priests, clad in their sacerdotal robes, wearing the breast-plate, studded with gold and gems, while the sixty thousand warriors of Dan, unfaltering in faith and heroic in arms, bring up the rear.

At the sound of the seven trumpets, blowing in solemn concert, they advance toward the city. Rahab looks out of the chamber window, from which she helped the spies to escape, with no ordi-



which she helped the spies to escape with no ordinary feelings of concern, and trembles, at times, lest the simple token may be overlooked in the dread hour of approaching slaughter. Still, it is her only hope; and, putting her trust in the God of Israel, she calmly awaits the issue. The excitement within the city begins to be intense. The two-leaved gates are shut and closely barred. Every possible assailable point is securely guarded. Armed sentinels are stationed upon the walls, and watch, with anxious look, the movement of the army. No hostile demonstrations are made, no formidable engines of war are seen, no warlike shouts are heard, no voice of command is given. The dreaded procession moves in solemn pomp around the city, and then, as if repelled at the bare sight of the frowning walls, repair to their encampment. The day declines, pacific songs are borne on the night air, and earnest prayers ascend from a thousand altars, and then all is hushed and still.

Morning breaks, and again the seven trumpets peal forth their long and terrific blast, and the city is again encompassed, but still there is no appearance of attack, no belligerent word is uttered, no sword leaps from its scabbard. Thus, for six suc-



nessed, and the walls of Jericho stand in their gigantic strength, while the hitherto anxious multitude begin to breathe more freely, and to conclude that all this movement is a broad farce, nothing to excite dread or alarm. Scorn and derision are freely cast upon the cowardice of the Israelites, upon their vain presumption in supposing that the walls of Jericho will fall by the simple blowing of rams' horns. "Are *we*, fortified and protected as we are, to be frightened by these fugitives from Egypt—these gaunt wanderers of the desert, delicately fed on quails and manna, whose energies are broken by long fatigue and travel?" Thus they cast off fear, while the shouts of revelry begin again to be heard in their palace halls.

But Rahab sits thoughtful in her lonely dwelling, knowing that the great crisis of peril and suffering is yet to come. Her kindred have taken refuge under her roof, like a flock of timid birds from a dark and threatening storm.

The seventh morning dawns. The early sunbeams glance, like molten silver, upon the shields and spears of Israel's mustering hosts—the dewy flowers sparkle, like thousands of gems, all over the surrounding plain—the winds sigh mournfully



through the forests of palm—Jericho stands out, like a picture of living beauty, from the dark background of retreating hills, while her polished domes and towers flash like mirrors of gold in the morning light. A voice like a clarion is heard through the ranks of Israel. Joshua has given the word of command, and every man is in the line of march—the seven trumpets peal long and loud, and the grand procession moves.

The sentinels look out from their lofty watch-towers, and say, sneeringly, “Lo! they come again to take their morning walk.” As usual, though with a quicker step, they move around the city. They do not return to the encampment, as before; but again, and yet again, they make the accustomed circuit, each time drawing somewhat nearer the towering walls.

“What can all this mean?” cry the half-terrified yet half-scoffing multitude within. “Surely they intend to view us well to-day. True, they look bold and calm, and their leader walks exultant, as if confident of victory. But where are their strong weapons of attack—the mighty enginery with which they expect to batter down these massive walls? We will see.”



Rahab looks out, once more, of her open lattice, upon her doomed city. She feels that the dreaded crisis has come, and the big tear-drops hang upon her dark lashes, as she thinks of the fate of her countrymen.

The Israelites are going their seventh round—the peal of trumpets is prolonged, until its reverberating echo, like the ocean's roar, dies away beyond the hills. Then there is an awful pause, and, as if moved by some strange and simultaneous impulse, the hosts of Israel wheel and face the frowning walls. Now the voice of Joshua, louder than the trumpet's blast, is heard: "Shout! for the Lord hath given you the city!" And a myriad voices send up to the listening heavens the loud shouts of victory! The old walls and towers, reared by the hands of giants, moved to and fro, as if rocked by an earthquake—temples and proud palaces crumbled into a mass of shapeless ruins! Terrific shrieks and agonizing groans rend the very air—the scene of horror continues, until that beautiful city, the pride of many generations, filled with heroic youth and warlike men, is leveled to the dust!

The day, so beautiful in its commencement, closes



in darkness over a melancholy scene, and a long night, without moon or stars, shuts up the mournful view. So utter was the destruction of the city, that Joshua predicted that it should never be rebuilt, and whoever should attempt it, should "lay the foundations thereof in his first-born, and set up the gates thereof in his youngest son." This curse was literally fulfilled above five hundred and fifty years after it was denounced. Hiel, the Bethelite, attempted to rebuild it; but "he laid the foundations thereof in Abiram, his first-born, and set up the gates thereof in his youngest son, Sequb, who both died in consequence of the trespass of their father.

But where, in the mean time, is Rahab? Has her heroic faith averted the descending thunderbolts of the Almighty? Her house, indeed, survives the wide-spread ruin, and from out her open window may be seen suspended the scarlet cord. Her Jewish friends, recognizing the appointed token, and, faithful to their covenant, are at her door to aid her down the broken walls, and introduce her and her favored kindred to the fellowship of Israel.

Rahab is afterward mentioned as forming a matrimonial alliance with one of the chief princes of



Judah, so that if a stain rested upon her former life, it is remembered no more; while she sits honored among the "Daughters of Zion," raised by the power of her simple faith from the office of an innkeeper to be a princess in Israel, the distinguished ancestress of David, and of David's divine and greater son.

She fully identified herself with all the fortunes of Israel. When three thousand of her chosen men fled before the men of Ai, she was there with her steadfast faith, to encourage a renewal of the attack, and when the scene was changed, and the devoted city blazed to heaven, like a volcano, her voice rang clear and loud amid the exultant shouts of the victors. She lived, indeed, in troublous times—times of cruelty and conquest. She saw the hitherto unconquerable tribes of her native Canaan melt away like snow-flakes before the advancing hosts of Israel. Still she regarded this land as given in covenant to the descendants of Jacob, and they were chosen, instead of the pestilence or the famine, as the instruments to exterminate its idolatrous and unbelieving inhabitants, and to hold it as a heritage and a blessing from God forever.

From her first appearance in the sacred history,



Rahab seems to have acted under the high promptings of faith, as seeing Him who is invisible, merging her patriotism in the loftier principles of piety. Hence by two of the apostles her name is set in that glorious galaxy of worthies, whose lives adorned the older church, who by faith inherited the promises, and secured an enduring memory-place in the affections of the just.

In reviewing her history we are impressed with some lofty traits of female character. How manifest that in her breast reigned the law of kindness.

Her younger life may have been irregular and impulsive, though of this even there is some doubt, as the term employed to designate her may, in its primitive import, refer either to her character or profession. She was an *innkeeper*, and may have lived virtuously in her humble profession. At all events, she possessed a noble heart, and generously responded to an appeal for succor and relief.

The spies who came to her dwelling were encompassed with peril. Armed men were in pursuit of them—they were oppressed with hunger and fatigue—they were Jews, aliens, foreigners, and, in the estimation of her countrymen, dogs; yet her house is open to their reception, her ready



hands prepare a table for them in the presence of their enemies. She sits with them and urges them to eat, even until desire fails. Nor is this all: when informed of their mission, she identifies herself with them, makes their cause her own, offers them protection, even at the hazard of life. She appeared fully to anticipate the spirit of the apostolic injunction: "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." If she did not conceive that these lowly exiles were angels, she conceived that they were men who needed sympathy and help, and this was enough.

Did the same generous and kindly feeling glow in every woman's heart, what a change would be effected in this sad world! How many crushed hearts would be relieved—how many fugitives sheltered and protected—how the star of hope would glimmer over the path of the friendless and dejected—how soon would this scathed and desolate earth begin to glow with the joy and beauty of a recovered paradise!

Another virtue which shone with peculiar luster in the character of Rahab, was her *courage*. She lived at an age and under circumstances adapted



to develop and strengthen the heroic and stern, rather than the softer and gentler virtues of woman. Her eye was accustomed to stirring scenes, and her ear to the shriller notes of martial music. In her native state she was an idolatress, and had but vague and misty conceptions of God, or of the nature of His awful attributes. We are rather surprised, therefore, to find her heart so accessible to truth, and so ready to peril all in its defense. At once she seems to have apprehended the relative position of Israel and Canaan—that the one must increase and the other decrease; that the one was identical with truth and its triumphs, the other with error and its defeats.

Now her courage is coincident with her convictions. She no sooner apprehends what is right than she resolves, in the face of the most imminent danger, to *do* what is right. Her duty involved sacrifice and peril. It was to identify herself, for the time, with the weak and the defenseless—to make the cause of the fugitive her own. A timorous heart would have faltered here; *hers* was heroic and sublimely steadfast, adequate to the great emergency. She was not ignorant of the hostility of her people to the Hebrews—of the fate of her



guests, should they be arrested, or of the peril to which she was subjecting herself by the attempt to conceal them. Does she hesitate, does she parley? She boldly takes her stand, and maintains it with a heroism and self-sacrifice which have shed an immortal luster around her name. Such women are the ornaments of the church in every period of her history—women who are not afraid to commit themselves to the cause of truth and humanity, whatever may be the peril or persecution incident to such a course. We would not have woman move out of her appropriate sphere, neither *does* she, when she shows sympathy for the suffering and oppressed. In such a sphere we find Rahab, and hence her name is rescued from infamy, and recorded among the heroines of sacred story.

But her crowning excellence was her *faith*. This was the secret germ of all her other virtues. We do not say that she was perfect: we would not say this of any woman. She was an ignorant heathen, and had lived beneath the shadows of a false religion, and her works were not perfect before God. But her faith is commended both by Paul and James. It is the principle that actuated her in thus artfully misleading the enemies of her guests,



and not the *act itself*, which is the subject of apostolic commendation. Who, even under the light of a purer morality, in the circumstances, would have done better? But whatever may be said of the *act*, her faith was sublime. Had she hesitated, had she yielded to the clamors of those rude men knocking at her gates, she might have received a wealthy treasure of kingly gold, as the price of perfidy to her guests. But she prefers rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy all the wealth of Canaan. And this choice, too, is made at the *bare hearing* of what had been wrought for Israel in their travels through the wilderness, while she could have no opportunity to know, from sight or experience, of the truth of the report.

Such is the faith that saves: not the *certainty* of things seen, but the *conviction* of things not seen.

Multitudes, who had seen all the miracles wrought in Egypt, at the Red Sea, and in the wilderness, and who had every advantage of instruction from the lips of Moses, continued unbelievers. Very few, indeed, manifested such strong faith, such holy fear, such confidence in God, and such a disposition to labor and suffer for His sake, as this



humble daughter of Canaan, who had only heard a general and indistinct report of His wonderful works for Israel. Hers was that Scriptural and saving faith which proved "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." She has long since passed away from the earth, but her example lives, and her brief history is as a pillar of light set up in that far-off age, whose flashings through the darkness are still seen, to guide pilgrims in the path to heaven.



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*Jephthah's Daughter.*



## JEPHTHAH'S DAUGHTER.

**T**HE nameless daughter of Jephthah is linked in her tragic and beautiful history with that of her heroic father. He rises, like a star of destiny, to the view of prostrate and powerless Israel, on a long night of gloom and darkness. They had deserted the pillar of fire, the emblem of the Divine presence; they had ceased to consult the "Urim and Thummim," the appointed medium of Divine communication, and were left to wander through labyrinths of error, and to weary themselves out with useless prayers to their dumb and senseless deities.

Worn and wasted by vice, and the depleting and corrupting influence of idolatry, they were exposed to the insult and invasion of surrounding hostile tribes. They felt their imbecility against the com-



bined forces of the Zidonians, the Philistines, and the Amorites, and in the crisis of their distress they cried unto the Lord God of Israel for help. But His holy nature was kindled to indignation at their multiplied offenses, and He replied—"Go, and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation." And it was not until they had put away their strange gods, and were humbled in the dust, that His compassions were excited, and He gave them promise of succor and deliverance. But who was to rally their scattered forces, and lead their armies on to battle and victory? The threatening hosts of Ammon were encamped in Gilead, and who will be captain of Israel in the hastening conflict?

The name of Jephthah, an illegitimate yet valorous son of Gilead, comes flashing up to the remembrance of the elders of Israel; but he is an exile. He has been driven from his home and his paternal estate by the envy and cutting sarcasm of his brethren. But he has left the impress of his great mind behind him, and when now the nation are in trouble, in danger of being plundered of the lands bequeathed to them by Providence, as the reward of their former valor and fidelity, they at once send



a deputation of elders to recall the heroic exile from the land of Tob, to which he had fled, as an asylum from the persecution of his brethren. He had gathered around him a band of armed men, who had met with similar rebuffs from the world, and identifying their interests, they had determined to seek their fortunes in this new and strange land. They had lived a wild, and, perhaps, piratical life—had been successful in conquests, and become a terror to surrounding tribes. But Providence is opening a more ample and honorable field for the display of Jephthah's genius and military prowess.

The elders of Israel are commissioned to bear the unanimous voice of the people, to place him at the head of their armies. A train of camels bearing presents from Gilead, and the venerable embassy, may be seen wending their way to the northern extremity of Palestine. On the success of their mission depend the hopes and destiny of Israel. Shall they be welcomed, or repulsed, is a question which fills the heart with alternate joy and sorrow. Their journey at length is ended; they unload their weary camels, and allow them to feed on the rich pastures beyond the Jordan. They gird their flowing robes around them, and,



with heads uncovered, proceed in solemn procession toward the rude tent of Jephthah.

He rises from his grassy couch, and hails them as men of Judah. They bow in respectful deference, and state with deep and tremulous emotion the condition of Israel, and their need of his interposition as a man of war. Jephthah's heart is touched as he sees these venerable men bowing to the earth before him. He recognizes in some of them, perhaps, the religious teachers of his early youth, now bending beneath the weight of years, now chafed with the apprehension of a most desolating war, now appealing to him in behalf of their country, their firesides, and their sacred altars.

But he had received injury at their hands; they had sanctioned, rather than *silenced*, the reproaches of his brethren, and his proud spirit, still smarting under the remembrance of former wrongs, he replied in language which cut, like a sword blade, to the heart: "Did not ye hate me, and expel me out of my father's house, and why are ye come unto me now when ye are in distress?"

For a moment they were struck dumb by this just and cutting rebuke; but at length they conciliate him, by an appeal to his ruling passion for



conquest, and stipulate that should the Lord be favorable to them, and deliver the enemy into their hands, he should be head and judge in Israel. To this offer he promptly responded, not, as we have obvious reasons to believe, from love of country, or a desire to redeem it from the disgrace of vassalage, but from motives of personal aggrandizement.

Placed, however, at the head of the government, and in the possession of absolute power, he reigned with moderation, and gave general satisfaction, without staining his administration with the reproach of oppression, even toward those who occasioned his expulsion, and unrelentingly exposed him to all the hardships and horrors of banishment. He adopted, as his first act of administration, the wise measure of sending a formal embassy to the Ammonites, to reason with them upon the injustice of their aggression; and while he held out to them the olive branch of peace, he, with becoming dignity, signified his determination to oppose them, should they persist in their threatened hostility. In this respect, we find him acting in the spirit of moderation, as well as firmness, the part of a prudent guardian and protector of his country's rights,



and like an experienced governor and general, preparing all the means in his power to make his efforts for peace effectual by the sword, should this be left him as the only alternative.

Neither was he entirely insensible of his dependence upon an overruling Providence, though his views of religious duty and truth were evidently vague and shadowy. He desired to propitiate the divine favor, and vowed a vow unto the Lord, and said, "If thou shalt, without fail, deliver the children of Ammon into mine hands, then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the Lord's, and I will offer it up for a burnt-offering."

A vow made in the heat of excitement, when his heart was flushed with the idea of conquest and victory—a vow which afterward unnerved his strong heart, and rendered his home a scene of sad and painful reminiscence.

Now the clarion of war is heard, and the hosts of Israel respond to the summons. The young and the brave gird on their armor, and resolve to peril all in the cause of freedom; husbands and fathers embrace their loved ones, and leave the endear-



ments of home for the dangers of the battle-field; even the aged are inspired with fresh ardor, and glow with enthusiasm at the sound of martial music.

Jephthah is in his prime, and his eye kindles with ineffable luster as he gives the word of command. The dark-eyed daughters of Judah are assembled to witness the glorious pageant, and chant the praises of heroes who jeopard their lives in defense of their homes and their holy altars. Amid shouts and deafening music, with nodding plumes and glancing spears and shields, flashing in the sunlight, the embattled legions move to the scene of slaughter and of victory. They pass Mizpeh and Manasseh, and reach the plain of Ammon, where the two armies meet in dread and hostile array—the chivalrous sons of Gilead opposed to the determined children of Ammon.

The might of the Lord came upon Jephthah and his hosts, and the battle begins—fierce and bloody was that scene of conflict—the very earth shook beneath the roar of chariots, the tramp of the war-horse, and the heavier tread of the fighting elephant. The children of Ammon are not easily driven from their strong-holds, neither do they yield, until death



had thinned their ranks, and twenty of their cities had capitulated; then the exulting army marched in triumph, from Aroer even to Minneth, and finally refreshed their wearied energies beneath the clustering vines and olive groves of the vanquished.

Jephthah has conquered, and Israel is free. The glad news is speedily borne to the anxious homes of Gilead, and thousands gather in the streets, and onward press to greet the home-bound conquerors. And wives are there to hail the loved and loving; and maidens fair, with music sweet, and step elastic, and timbrels raised with lily hands, to swell the choral welcome. The daughter of Jephthah, with conscious pride and filial tenderness, went forth to anticipate the maiden throng in their tokens of honor; she would be first to wreath her father's brow with laurel, and hail him king in Israel! She was an only child, and he had often thrown around her graceful form, in sweet caress, those arms that bear the mail and armor of the warrior, and those raven ringlets he had often twined, in musing fondness, with the fingers now skilled in fight; and would he not now embrace her—*love* her? She saw his lordly form, and ran to meet him.



“ Oh, how beautiful !

Her dark eye flashing like a sun-lit gem—  
And her luxuriant hair ! 'twas like the sweep  
Of a swift wing in visions. He stood still,  
As if the sight had withered him. She threw  
Her arms about his neck—he heeded not.  
She called him ‘ Father ’—but he answer'd not.  
She stood and gazed upon him. Was he wroth ?  
There was no anger in that bloodshot eye.  
Had sickness seized him ? She unclasp'd his helm,  
And laid her white hand gently on his brow ;  
The touch aroused him. He raised up his hands,  
And spoke the name of God, in agony.  
She knew that he was stricken, then ; and rush'd  
Again into his arms ; and, with a flood  
Of tears she could not bridle, sobb'd a prayer  
That he would breathe his agony in words.  
He told her—and a momentary flush  
Shot o'er her countenance ; and then the soul  
Of Jephthah's daughter waken'd ; and she stood  
Calmly and nobly up, and said, ‘ *'twas well.*' ”

What an exhibition of female heroism, of filial submission and piety is here ! When she learned the nature of her father's vow, her heart did not falter even for a moment, but she quickly responded, “ My father, if thou hast opened thy mouth unto the Lord, do to me according to that which has proceeded out of thy mouth ; forasmuch as the



Lord has taken vengeance for thee of thine enemies, the children of Ammon.”

Well might her name have had a place in the Scriptural record, as distinguished for some of the loftiest traits that can adorn the female character. Still, a dark cloud of mystery hangs over her subsequent history. It is contended by many learned writers, that her young life was quenched by the hand of her father, that she was sacrificed as a burnt-offering on the altars of religion. It is maintained, that the deep grief of Jephthah, on first seeing his daughter, as well as the nature of his vow, imply this. But we are inclined to a more lenient, and, as we think, a more pious view of this subject. It is true that the history states, that after the lapse of two months, the time allotted to bewail her virginity, she returned to her father, “who did with her according to his vow, which he had vowed.” That the vow did not require her death, but her perpetual devotement to the Lord, we infer from the following reasons. If the reader will carefully notice, he will observe that the vow consisted of two parts. It reads thus: “If thou wilt surely give the children of Ammon into my hand, then it shall be that whatsoever cometh out of the doors of



my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the Lord's, and I will offer it up for a burnt-offering." Now, the paucity of connecting particles in the Hebrew language, requires that the conjunction should often be rendered disjunctively; and the passage may therefore be read, "that whatsoever cometh out of the doors of my house to meet me, shall *either* be the Lord's, *or* I will offer it up for a burnt-offering." This rendering, which is justified by the Hebrew, removes all difficulty.

If a sheep, or a goat, or a turtle-dove, or a young pigeon, or any clean beast, had met him first, then *it* would have been offered in sacrifice, according to the Jewish law regulating burnt-offerings, and in harmony with the last clause of his vow. But if his *daughter*, he had no authority from the *Jewish* or any other law to offer her as a burnt-offering. Indeed it is expressly declared—Deut. xii. 31—that such an offering is detestable and forbidden, "an abomination to the Lord, which He hated." But he might *devote her to the Lord*, according to the first part of his vow, as the pious Hannah devoted her son Samuel to the Lord, even before his birth, and thus render her a *living* sacrifice, holy and ac-



ceptable unto the Lord, which was his duty, and, as we believe, his vow. The sacrifice of children even to Moloch was an abomination to the Lord, of which, in a variety of passages, He expresses His detestation; and it was prohibited by an express law, under pain of death, as “a defilement of God’s sanctuary, and a profanation of His holy name.”—Lev. xx. 2, 3.

Such a sacrifice, therefore, unto the Lord himself, must be a still higher abomination. No father, merely by his own authority, could put an offending, much less an *innocent*, child to death without a judicial sentence from the magistrate. And no priest in all the land of Gilead could have been found to have officiated at the altar, in the sacrifice of the noble and pious daughter of Jephthah.

If this view be correct, it may be asked, how do we account for the grief manifested by the father on meeting his daughter? We answer, that *he*, doubtless, with other distinguished Hebrews, cherished the hope, that he might be the ancestor of Christ, but now such hope was utterly extinguished, as his daughter was his only issue, and she was to be devoted to perpetual virginity, in the service of the tabernacle. Such service was cus-



tomary. In the division of the spoils taken in the first Midianite war, of the whole number of captive virgins, "the Lord's tribute was thirty-two persons."


Thus the daughter of Jephthah was *devoted*, and not slain, and with her his name and family became extinct, and it was this terrible apprehension which led him to exclaim, "Alas, my daughter! thou hast brought me very low." He could not endure the thought that his name and honor must die with himself. To her, too, though she submitted with child-like devotion, it was a source of grief, for she had cherished the hope of becoming a mother in Israel.







## R U T H.

 CELEBRATED English author once proposed to a company of British lords and ladies to entertain them, by reading a story of pastoral life—a production, as he intimated, of rare merit. They met; the *Book of Ruth* was read, simply substituting different names. The party were delighted, charmed, with the simple and truthful narrative. The most extravagant encomiums were passed upon the heroine of the tale. Her decision, her fortitude, her affection, her modesty, her uncompromising integrity and piety, were pronounced to be above all praise. All, of course, were anxious to know the author of this rare and romantic story, as one who might grace the circles of literature and fashion. They were referred to the Bible, as containing this remarkable narra-



tive. They were confounded and amazed, not knowing that it contained a gem of such surprising beauty and interest.

The Bible is really a wonderful book, containing poetry more fascinating than any production of uninspired genius—"truth stranger than fiction."

Much as we admire the poets of pagan antiquity, we do affirm that Homer has been excelled in his battle-scenes by Miriam and Deborah. The Grecian drama rises not to the sublimity of Job; and where shall we find any thing, even in the Orphic hymns, to compare with the richness, the sweetness, the melody of David? Who has ever sung like Jeremiah the dirge of a fallen nation? and what has ever fallen from the pen of the novelist so poetic and pure, so strange and spirit-stirring, as the simple delineations contained in the Books of Esther and Ruth? We yield to the poets and writers of fiction, who have charmed the world by the magic of their genius, all their laurels. We shall not dispute their greatness, or the splendor of their execution. They have written for time; they have delineated with graphic beauty, to chain the gay devotees of earth and sense. But, for the Bible, we put in a prouder



claim: *it* delineates the character of the Universal Father; it throws out its simple verities, so as to affect the character and destiny of earth's population. "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me."

The Book of Ruth is supposed to have been written by Samuel, as the connecting link between Judges and the books bearing his name; and for truthful simplicity and poetic beauty, it has no rival either in ancient or modern literature. No more graphic history ever has or ever *can* be written of Ruth, than is found in the scriptural record. We can add no lights or shadows to the picture, which are not found in beautiful harmony there. We can not improve upon the Word of God. All we propose is, to present to the mind of the reader a brief analysis of the character of the artless heroine of our story. Of her young life we know but little, save that she was educated to the service of idolatry; she had often danced around its altars, and worshiped at its shrine. Doubtless she was sincere—earnest—devout; but her religion was vague—misty—shadowy—and illy adapted to develop those lofty



traits of character which afterward distinguished her history and rendered her name immortal. There was one family in that idolatrous land that shone like a lamp in a sepulcher of gloom and darkness. It was the house and family of Elimelech. He had fled from the altars and temple of his own highly-favored country, to avoid the pinching effects of a wide-spread and desolating famine. We do not justify the course of the pious Elimelech. We think he erred in leaving the land of his fathers, with all its hallowed associations—its beautiful temple of worship—its high privileges and blessings—and going to a land of spiritual darkness, and exposing his family to the corrupting influence of a false and fascinating religion. There seems to have been no necessity, in his circumstances, for such a removal. He was a man of means, of influence, and of honorable connections in the Hebrew commonwealth. A partial distrust of God, and a secret love of gain, must have led him to take a false step, which resulted fatally, in the overrulings of Providence, to the forfeiture of his own life and the fall of his family.

His two sons became interested in the daughters



of Moab; and, in violation of the Divine law, they were subsequently married: but their union was short; death entered that family circle, where all was now happy and hopeful as the young innocence of childhood, and, despite the pleadings of true-hearted affection, made the young and beautiful wives widows, and their home desolate.

Now that the mother was bereft of her earthly all—of her husband and her two sons—she began to think of returning to the land and grave of her fathers. Her two daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth, proposed to accompany her; but, grasping in her mind the distance and dangers of the journey, her impoverished circumstances, and the doubtful manner of her reception by her kindred and former friends, she frankly, yet with trembling solicitude, advised each to return to her mother's house, imploring upon them the benedictions of the God of Israel. She could hold out to them no inducements to share her poverty or be identified with her doubtful and subsequent history; and, with true, disinterested affection, she said, "Turn again, my daughters; go your way; the Lord deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead and with me. Then she kissed them, and they



lifted up their voice and wept." Poor stricken and broken-hearted widow! she preferred to bear her calamities alone, rather than accept the offered sacrifice of her children! It was a moment of deep trial and painful and conflicting emotions—a *crisis* well adapted to try and develop the character of each. Orpah relented, and returned to her home, her kindred, and the altars of pagan idolatry. She had not the strength of character or the piety of Ruth, who, in a strain of lofty and impassioned eloquence, replied to the appeal of Naomi, "Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest, I will go, and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God, my God: where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried. The Lord do so to me and more also, if aught but death part thee and me!" This response of the Moabitess was effectual, and brings out in bold and beautiful relief the striking and attractive features of her character.

Observe her heroic decision blended with becoming diffidence and respect. Decision is an element of character which we all admire. It is a gem that adds beauty to him who possesses it, and



is the more precious in this world, because its exhibition is comparatively rare. A man who can face sarcasm and scorn without relenting, or stand firm in his integrity amid the seductions of vice and the fascinations of pleasure—who pursues the right, through persecution and trial, with unfaltering step—is truly a moral hero, and merits the regards and high admiration of his fellow men. Such a character has solidity and strength, and, when discovered in woman, blended with appropriate modesty and grace, it is a most rare and precious jewel. And was not this one of the crowning characteristics of the amiable and devoted Ruth? She had deliberately come to the conclusion to forsake the land of her nativity, and identify her fortunes with the widowed and afflicted Naomi—and nothing, it would seem, could turn her from her purpose. On the one hand were the associations of her young girlhood, the friends of her youth, the grave of her companion, and the prospect of an honorable competency in the land of Moab—all pleading with her to remain. On the other, toil and exposure, danger and trial, perhaps desertion and perpetual widowhood, seemed to forbid her journey to Canaan. But, in view



of all this, she was firm in her resolve, that her home, her country, her people, her God, her grave, should be the home, the country, the people, the God, and the grave of her bereaved and stricken mother. You will perceive that her purpose was both *filial* and *religious*. She had formed, during the short period of her residence in her family, an unconquerable attachment to Naomi. They had wept and worshiped together—they had been mutually and deeply afflicted—they had stood in pensive grief over the grave of the loved and the lost—their hearts had been cemented by discipline and trial—and no considerations of worldly gain or chilling poverty could separate them. Besides, her young heart had been warmed by a live coal from off the Hebrew altar. She had witnessed the living and radiant piety of Naomi, amid a region of extended gloom and darkness. She had seen her meek patience and heroic fortitude under the most crushing and accumulated misfortunes; and she was persuaded that an invisible and Divine arm must have been her solace and support. She had been impressed by the example of the living, and by the calm and triumphant faith of the dying, with the superior excellence of the



religion of the Hebrews to the religion which cast its dark and lengthened shadows over the land of Moab. She had never, indeed, seen the Tabernacle, with its solemn rites and awful mysteries. She had never beheld the Shekinah resting upon the mercy-seat, and shadowing forth the presence of the Infinite. She had never listened to those deep and organ-like tones which thrilled the hearts of the hosts of Israel, as they congregated for worship beneath the solemn dome and around the sacred altars of their venerated temple. But she had, doubtless, heard from the lips of her sainted husband the story of God's wonders in Egypt—His miraculous deliverance of Israel—His protection and providence amid the perils and privations of the wilderness—His sublime manifestations upon the awful mount—His formal delivery of the law to the awe-stricken multitudes—their subsequent introduction and settlement in the land of Canaan. All this may have operated powerfully upon her sensitive nature, to strengthen her decision, and cause her to prefer the God of Israel to the gods of Moab. She had become convinced that the religion of the Hebrews was the true religion, and that their God was the only living and



true God. She had lost confidence in heathenism. It was dark, cold, and cruel—affording no solace in trouble, and shedding no light over the gloom of the shadow of death, and she had made up her mind to abandon it forever; and no solicitations of friendship, no appeals of worldly policy, no threatening obstacles or frowning poverty, could shake her high resolve, or intimidate her in the path of duty. She would be identified with the bereaved Naomi, and her God and people should be hers, *come what would!*

We scarcely know which to admire most—her deep devotion to her mother-in-law, or her unbending purpose to yield to the convictions of duty. Both are beautiful, and both have helped to embalm her name in the grateful remembrances of posterity.

She was advised by Naomi to return—to go back to her kindred and her father's house. Perhaps she thought she would be happier, so far as personal comfort and worldly advantage are concerned, to return to the land of Moab; or perhaps she wished to test the sincerity and strength of her affection. She was now a widow—poor, heart-stricken, and lonely; and she well



knew that many who make high professions of love—who flatter and fawn in times of prosperity—disappear like snow-flakes when sorrow or adversity comes; and she desired proof of Ruth's devotion, in view of the most frowning and adverse circumstances. And did her plea to return prevail? No; the very reasons that she had urged for her return, awoke the strong womanly affection of her nature, and she would not desert her mother-in-law in the time of her deep poverty. She would help her, lighten her sorrows, and bear the burdens of her crushed heart. With her warm and sensitive heart, all throbbing and alive to the interest of her mother, she felt prepared for any emergency. Let storms and trials flood her way to Canaan, and the waters of affliction drench her shivering form, still her language to Naomi is, "Whither thou goest, I will go, and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God, my God: where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried!"

Can we conceive of any thing more beautiful or sublime in woman's character? But how the firmness of her resolute and heroic nature rises in our estimation, at beholding her cleaving to



Naomi, not merely to perform offices of dutiful affection, but that she might stand with her in the same covenant relations to the God of Israel, and share His benedictions and smiles. Her new faith imparted a sublimity to her character, and, like the morning star glittering above the horizon, announces a day of gladness succeeding the night of her deep gloom. Sustained by this faith, she was enabled to resist every solicitation of flesh and sense, and pursue the path of duty, although it might lead to hardship, contempt, and poverty.

In language similar to the prophetic declaration of her royal descendant, did the voice of Heaven speak to her heart: "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people and thy father's house: so shall the King greatly desire thy beauty, for he is thy Lord, and worship thou Him."—Ps. xlv. 10, 11.

To this voice she heartily responded, and they both pursued their long and weary way to Bethlehem. Many, doubtless, were their surmises, fears, and deep anxieties about the future; but, faith was triumphant—their journey is ended—and the young Moabitess is a gleaner in the rich fields of Boaz. Here another admired trait appears in



the character of Ruth. She submits her hands, unused to toil, to the hard drudgery of the harvest-field. She had been delicately trained in the land of Moab; she had moved in the gay saloons of pleasure; she had been admired and caressed for her beauty and virtue, and was illy prepared for so hard a lot; but uncomplainingly she submits, and, prompted by affection, and with a happy heart, she says to Naomi, "Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn: and she said unto her, Go, my daughter: and she went and gleaned in the field after the reapers." And the God "under whose wings she had come to trust," favored her, and at nightfall she returned to her mother, laden with the precious fruits of her labor. Her strange beauty, her unaffected modesty, and respectful address, had attracted the attention of Boaz, and he had directed the reapers to treat her kindly, and to let fall handfuls of grain on purpose for her. In this direction he had respect not only to the beautiful stranger, but to the law of Moses—forbidding to reap wholly the corners of the field, or to gather the gleanings of the harvest, but commanding to leave them for the poor and the stranger. Ruth acknowledged



the favor, and with artless simplicity said, "Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger? And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been showed me all that thou hast done unto thy mother-in-law since the death of thine husband, and how thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore. The Lord recompense thy work." This address of Boaz was peculiarly grateful to the heart of the young maiden. He intimates, that he had heard of her devotion to her afflicted mother-in-law—the noble sacrifice she had made for the truth's sake—her decided preference for the people of God to her idolatrous kindred.

It seems that the arrival of Naomi with the beautiful stranger had produced no little sensation in the quiet town of Bethlehem. Her changed appearance, her unprotected and prostrate condition, excited the deep sympathy of the people, and, "all the city was moved about them, and they said, Is this Naomi? And she said unto them, Call me not *Naomi*; call me *Mara*—for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. I



went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty: why then call ye me *Naomi*, seeing the Lord hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me?" Her original name was in keeping with her former circumstances—*affluent, pleasant*; but now that the Almighty had "dealt bitterly" with her, she preferred to be called *Mara*—which signifies *bitter*. Boaz had not been an indifferent spectator to all that had transpired; his heart had shared largely in the general sympathy, and hence his courteous address to the Moabitish gleaner. He bid her welcome to his harvest-fields—charged his servants to treat her with peculiar favor—invited her to take of their refreshments and drink of their beverage.

Events are now hastening to a most desirable consummation. The rich, pious, and amiable Boaz is a near kinsman of the departed Elimelech; and it seems that the law of Israel, concerning a man's marrying his brother's widow, when he died childless, extended to other near relatives, when there were no brethren. Naomi, recognizing the application of this law, and conceiving that a change in the relations of Ruth might be productive of good to all parties, suggested to her a simple and inno-



cent device, by which she might modestly and effectively prefer her claim to Boaz as her legitimate and loving protector. The device was eminently successful in winning the heart of Boaz. He was more than ever struck with her modest worth, her amiable beauty; and, while her heart was fluttering like a frightened bird as to the result of the experiment, he quieted her agitation by saying, "Blessed be thou of the Lord, my daughter; for thou hast showed more kindness in the latter end than at the beginning, inasmuch as thou followedst not young men, whether poor or rich. And now, my daughter, fear not; I will do to thee all that thou requirest, for all the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman. And now it is true that I am thy near kinsman; howbeit, there is a kinsman nearer than I."

This last announcement, though tenderly uttered, fell like a thunderbolt upon her warm and sensitive heart. She had preferred Boaz to every other man, whether poor or rich, whether of Moab or of Israel, and she had not even conceived that any one could have a prior claim to his: but Boaz would not do a dishonorable act; he would not take advantage of the absent kinsman, as he had not taken advant-



age of the exposed condition of Ruth. His integrity and virtue upon this occasion are equally conspicuous. Hope, fear, tender and tremulous affection, are now struggling in the young heart of Ruth. Perceiving her trepidation, he assured her that their mutual desire should be realized, if the nearer relative declined to prefer his claim.

At early dawn, with hurried step and heaving breast, he availed himself of the probable opportunity of meeting the nearer kinsman at the city gate. He fully and fairly stated the case: the land of Elimelech must be redeemed, and his name perpetuated in Israel, through the widow of his deceased son. "If thou wilt redeem it," says he, "redeem it; but if thou wilt not, then tell me, that I may know; for there is none to redeem it besides thee; and I am after thee. What day thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou must buy it also of Ruth, the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance. And the kinsman said, I can not redeem it for myself, lest I mar mine own inheritance: redeem thou my right to thyself, for I can not redeem it." The way was now prepared, and the heart of Boaz was at rest. The maiden is informed—whose mind



had been kept in tremulous suspense—that the God of Israel had favored her, and that she was preferred to all the dark-eyed daughters of Judah. She is conducted to the city gate, where, with her mother-in-law, she stands, beautiful in every grace of person, her heart swelling with the purest emotions of love and gratitude; and gently leaning, like the spouse of Christ, “on the arm of her beloved,” the sacred nuptials are consummated in the presence of the elders, and according to the custom of the East.

The Moabitish gleaner is the honored wife of Boaz: she becomes the mother of a son who is the grandfather of David, the sweet singer of Israel; and thus, by the blending in happy marriage of Heathen and Hebrew, was plainly indicated the union of Jew and Gentile, which should be effectually consummated by the birth and mission of their royal Descendant, who was emphatically designated as both the Son and Lord of David. To this glorious union and issue, the congratulations of the women of Bethlehem obviously referred as the fond hope of general expectation, when they said unto Naomi, “Blessed be the Lord, which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman, that



his name may be famous in Israel. And he shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life and a nourisher of thine old age; for thy daughter-in-law which loveth thee, which is better to thee than seven sons, hath borne him." To whatever extent this language might be realized in the temporal circumstances of Naomi, the whole certainly applies, with far greater force and propriety, to the blessing descending upon mankind by the birth of CHRIST. *His* name is indeed "famous," for it is exalted above every name: of Him only can it be said, that He is the Restorer of life; and the church, redeemed out of all lands and kindred by His blood, will thankfully set the seal of her faith to the verity of His promises, and the truth and glory of His mission.













C. Staal.

J. Barnister.

ESTHER.



## ESTHER.

**T**HE history of Esther is replete with interest, possessing all the charm of romance, and the startling incident of a well-wrought tragedy. It is recorded in the book called by her name, and written, as is generally supposed, by Mordecai, or the accomplished Ezra, a little less than five centuries before Christ. It seems to have been written for *Heathen*, and not for Jewish eyes, for the Persians, and other uncircumcised nations; and, to avoid exciting their prejudice, the mention of the name of Jehovah is studiously avoided, though the whole history is a designed and beautiful illustration of His providence in the preservation of His chosen people.

### THE BANQUET.

We are introduced, at the very outset, into the presence of royalty, to a scene of extraordinary



magnificence. Ahasuerus, the reigning king of Persia and the Artaxerxes of history, prepared a most sumptuous feast, to which he invited the nobles and princes of the one hundred and twenty-seven provinces over which he ruled. The object seems to have been to gratify personal or kingly pride, in exhibiting before an admiring court the wondrous wealth and resources of his kingdom, embracing the accumulated treasures of Babylon, Egypt, and Lydia, spreading over the vast territory from India even to Ethiopia.

At the close of this protracted entertainment, which continued for more than six months, a more general invitation was extended to the people of Shushan to participate in the luxuries of this festal scene. More ample preparations were made in the court of the garden of the king's palace. The air was redolent with the perfume of flowers and vocal with the song of birds. It was a perfect Paradise of beauty, combining all of nature and art that could please the eye, the ear, the taste. The broad canopy that was to cover the assembled guests, the gorgeous curtains, the golden couches, the columns of marble, and the tessellated floors, are described as "white, green, and blue hangings, fastened with



cords of fine linen and purple, to silver rings and pillars of marble; the beds were of gold and silver, upon a pavement of red and blue and white and black marble."

Beneath this wide-spread canopy was a table in the form of a cross, covered with every delicate and charming luxury—the most costly viands, fruits, and wines in abundance. Around this sumptuous board reclined, on their golden couches, the *elite* of the capital city and the nobles of the realm. The monarch sat somewhat elevated above his guests, wearing his robes of state, and the royal tiara upon his head.

Day after day the festivities continued—the monarch was complimented and caressed, his kingdom was extolled, the abundance of his wealth and the extent of his power were made the theme of eloquent praise.

The seventh day, the last great day of the feast, at length came. What could be done to add to the splendor of the scene? The sparkling wine flowed freely from golden goblets, the absent queen was toasted, and there was one loud burst of applause. The excitement became intense—the heart of the monarch swelled with conscious pride; a call was



made for the beautiful Vashti, and the king, forgetting the proprieties of the place and the usages of his country, orders her to be brought. To have appeared at any time unvailed, in the presence of men, would have been indelicate, according to Persian etiquette; but to grace a drunken revel by her presence, would be proving her own shameless abandonment. Ahasuerus ought to have known this, but he was excited with wine and intoxicated with the vain desire to exhibit the beauty of his queen. She, in the mean time, was holding a feast to the ladies of the court and the wives of the princes who sat at the king's table. The female department, in which this banquet was held, was ample and elegantly arranged. Its walls were richly painted in fresco; over the windows gracefully fell tapestry of needlework, fringed with gold; the lofty ceiling sparkled with gems, while from the center hung a gorgeous chandelier, throwing a beautiful radiance over the whole scene. Around the table, spread with all that could gratify the most fastidious taste, sat the collected beauty of the realm. The queen, partially reclining upon a damask cushion, her dress of white satin striped with gold, her lofty brow adorned with diamonds,



appeared as the very perfection of beauty and grace.

At this moment seven men were seen to enter. They were immediately recognized by the queen as the king's chamberlains, and, with a clear and firm voice, she said, "What wills my lord the king?"

Mehuman, bowing in lowly reverence, replied, "The king requires your presence to grace the closing scenes of the royal banquet."

"*My* presence?" responded the queen, in a tone of astonishment. "It is not possible."

"The king's order is imperative," answered Mehuman.

The blood now mounted to her face, as she replied, with indignation, "Go, tell the king that his order is *not* obeyed!"

The lord chamberlain, with his attendants, lingered, while the noble ladies sat amazed at the boldness and decision of Vashti.

Harbona, one of the chamberlains, said, "We dare not return without the queen."

"Menial! Wretch!" and, stretching out her hand, glistening with jewels, she said, "Begone! tell your king I know the rights of a Persian lady, and shall not appear at a promiscuous revel."



The scornful message was borne back to the king. Already excited with wine and the adulations of fawning sycophants, his bosom heaved with terrible emotions, his lip quivered, and he was about to speak, when his privy counselor, sitting by his side, said, in a subdued tone, "Let not our closing festivities be marred, but let the king meditate upon a suitable punishment to be inflicted upon the too presuming and obstinate Vashti." And, taking a golden goblet, he drank "Long live the king."

Wine flowed freely—the festal garden rang with the loud shouts of applause. Thus, amid laughter, and music, excess and riot, the feast continued, until the night of the seventh had well-nigh merged into the morning of the eighth day. Instead of honoring the virtue of Vashti, her immovable modesty and pride of character, in the hours of returning soberness, the incensed despot calls a council to determine what shall be done with the haughty queen.

Memucan, the chief of his courtiers, and skilled in the interpretation of Persian law, said, "My lord the king, this affront is not offered to you alone, but to all the Persian nobles, who are in



danger of being despised by their wives, if your royal mandate may thus be set at naught by the queen. Your excellent government, the good of your subjects, require that she be put away, and that her dignity be given to another." To this all responded, and said—

“Let it be wide declared to all,  
That man’s the master of his hall—  
His house—his hearth—his home ;  
That woman’s strength is in her power  
To help and cheer each social hour,  
Beneath her husband’s dome.”

The thought of divorcing his wife fell heavily upon the heart of the king ; but his dignity must be preserved, and the royal edict obeyed, whatever interests are sacrificed.

Vashti was, therefore, divorced, and became an exile from the palace and throne. To avoid the possibility of her being recalled by the still lingering love of Ahasuerus, it was suggested by his counselors that the fairest maidens in all his wide dominions should be collected and gathered to his palace, that he might choose a wife more docile than Vashti, and more worthy to occupy the vacant place in his heart and on his throne. This sugges-



tion was well received by the king; and, requesting his counselors to carry it into execution, he dismissed the assembly.

#### THE RIVAL CANDIDATES.

The royal guests soon departed to the different provinces of the empire—the news spread that Vashti was divorced—the aspiring and beautiful maidens of the land feared and hoped. The officers appointed in the different provinces made their selection to the number of four hundred. Among them were the dark-eyed daughters of India and Ethiopia—the ruddy damsels from Babylon, and the bright celestials from Georgia, Circassia, and Persia—a rare collection of female beauty—all aspirants for queenly honors.

Now, in the vicinity of Shushan, dwelt a pious Jew, by the name of Mordecai, whom Nebuchadnezzar had carried as a captive from Jerusalem to Babylon. His dwelling was humble, but, shaded with palm trees and adorned with flowers, it presented an air of quiet neatness. His young and beautiful cousin, Hadassah, constituted the charm of the place. In her young girlhood she had been left an orphan, and Mordecai had taken her as his



own child, and educated her in the Hebrew faith, and she had nobly repaid his pious toil; for she had been a blessing and a vision of gladness to him in his lonely captivity. He had instilled into her young mind an earnest and hopeful faith in relation to the *future* of his people. They were now, indeed, scattered and depressed, but still they were the children of Abraham, and heirs according to the promise.

It was on a bright summer's evening, and Mordecai and his cousin were sitting at the open lattice admiring the dreamy loveliness of the scene around, when Mordecai, with more of seriousness than was expressed in his tone, said, "Hadassah, how would you like to be queen?"

"A queen, indeed!" replied Hadassah, wonderingly.

"Yes, a queen! Vashti is divorced, and all the fair virgins of Persia, of Babylon, and India are aspiring to be the royal consort. And who could rival thee, my beautiful Hadassah?"

When she perceived that this was said with a deep and serious pathos, she replied half-indignant, yet with a subdued and respectful tone, "I am a Hebrew, and I dwell among my own people, and I



could never consent to abjure the religion thou hast taught me, not even to sit on Persia's throne. How couldst thou even think to have me leave *thee*, and wed the uncircumcised—the enemy of our faith, and the oppressor of our people? And, besides, I am of humble birth, of a despised race, and the king would look on me only to *scorn* me. Dismiss this unwelcome subject, dear cousin;” and, plucking at this moment a jessamine which had crept through the lattice, she began to admire its beauty, and to express herself in raptures of her quiet, rural home, in contrast with the paint and masquerade of an ungodly court; and turning away, she said, with a devotion and earnestness that thrilled to the very heart of her kinsman, “I would rather be a humble Jewess, and worship freely the God of Abraham, than to be queen of Persia!”

He saw, as never before, the peerless character of Hadassah; but he felt that a great drama was yet in the history of his people, and his faith recognized the finger of Providence as pointing directly to Hadassah, as the fair and successful actress. He now appealed to her patriotism, and intimated, if perchance she should be successful in winning the



heart of the king, what wonders she might perform for her vassal and exile people.

In a strain of chaste and beautiful eloquence he dwelt upon their past history—the humble instrumentalities raised up, from time to time, to deliver them from their distresses, and the glorious destiny that yet awaited them.

At this presentation Hadassah yielded, and said, in a subdued tone, “If Providence calls I will go.”

“’Tis well, my child; the God of Israel shall work for thee, and give thee favor in the eyes of the king. To-morrow I will see that the way is open for your introduction to the palace. But thy faith and lineage had better be concealed until, at least, the trial be past, and hereafter thou must be known as *Esther*.

Mordecai, who had studied deeply the workings of Providence, saw in the passing events something more than the temporary wrath of Ahasuerus, and the exile of his wife; he saw, or thought he saw, hope for his trembling and scattered nation.

Night passed, and earnest prayer went up from that lonely dwelling to Him who seeth in secret. Early in the morning, Mordecai, exchanging his *Hebrew* for a *Persian* dress, sought an interview



with Hegai, the lord chamberlain, who had charge of the women's court.

To him he delineated the virtues and beauty of Esther, as one who might be deemed worthy of the king's preference. "Let her be brought," said Hegai; "perchance she may be the favored one." And the day was appointed for her reception. Mordecai returned to cheer the doubting, trembling spirit of Esther. He found her reading the history of her people, and musing upon that wonderful Providence that had led them out of Egypt, along the pathless wilderness, subduing their enemies, and causing even the elements to work for them, and her timorous heart was emboldened to venture all upon his arm. The appointed day at length arrived, and Esther, arrayed, not in gorgeous, but beautiful apparel, bade adieu to her lovely and quiet home, and proceeded with her cousin to the royal palace. They were conducted through an open court to the room where the chamberlain awaited their coming. As her long flowing vail, which covered her face and person, was removed, Hegai stood for a moment in silent and almost adoring wonder. Her form, her features, her expression were angelic. As he gazed



upon her beauteous face—her rich, raven hair confined with a band studded with gems—her soft, dark eyes—her countenance radiant with thought—her queenly form, the very model of perfection—he dropped upon his knee, as if in the presence of a superior being. She was, of course, received, and treated with distinguished favor. She was conducted to one of the most ample and elegantly furnished rooms in the palace. Oil, wine, myrrh, and sweet odors of various kinds were at her disposal. Seven of the choicest female servants were given her as constant attendants. Thus, during the long, tedious twelve months of her preparation, she lived like a princess, winning, by her gentleness and beauty, the unwilling homage even of her rival competitors. Her religion, as yet unknown, save in the precious fruits seen in her daily life, gave to her countenance a benignity of expression, which disarmed even envy itself, so that all who saw her, *loved* her. Her influence with the lord chamberlain had secured to Mordecai the situation as porter to the king, so that he walked daily before the gate of the palace, and heard often of the welfare of his favorite cousin.

A year passed, and the trial came. The hearts



of the virgin candidates fluttered with various and sometimes conflicting emotions, as one by one they came forth beautiful in their gay attire to win the heart of the monarch.

Some returned smiling with hope, others sick at heart, for as yet the issue was unknown.

At length Esther's turn came. She was arrayed with exquisite taste and richness, though she had required nothing in the way of excess of ornament but such as Hegai had appointed. Never did she appear so transcendently beautiful. The tone of moral sentiment diffused over her highly intellectual face—her dark eyes, expressive of deep yet subdued thought—her tall and finely-developed person—her queen-like step, left the lingering impression upon those who saw her, that all competition was useless. The lord chamberlain felt a conscious pride as he led her away to the presence of the king. The monarch gazed upon her with inexpressible wonder and admiration. Thoughts of other days, when Vashti stood, a beauteous maiden, by his side, came flashing up to his memory, and he was speechless. The pure flame was rekindled. He took her trembling and delicate hand in his—her very touch was electric—a strange, undefinable



sensation passed over him—the *king* was merged in the *man*—he felt the magical power of her charms, as she raised her dewy eyes, beaming with gentleness and love, upon him. It was enough; and, taking the royal crown, he placed it upon her head, and, in a tone which betrayed the deep and thrilling emotions of his heart, said, “Thou art my queen, O Esther, inasmuch as thou hast obtained grace and favor in my sight above all the other virgins!”

The important news soon spread, and was heralded with demonstrations of joy. The disappointed candidates, who had been kept, as in quarantine, for a year, were dismissed, with presents, to their homes, and Esther was publicly and with great pomp installed queen in the palace of Shushan, instead of Vashti. In honor of his chosen bride, Ahasuerus made a great feast, and proclaimed a jubilee throughout the land.

#### THE KING'S FAVORITE.

It would seem that Mordecai, who had added so rich a jewel to the king's crown, who once had detected treason among his principal officers, and



thus saved his life, should have been remembered and rewarded. But his relations and worth were still unknown, and he was destined to the humble office of porter, while Haman, the son of Hammedatha, a foreigner, with no claims to royal favor, was exalted to be the king's favorite. He was vain, proud, and unprincipled, but his position as chief counselor to the king gave him influence, and he was worshiped almost as a god by the multitude, who bowed the knee before him as he rode loftily out of the city gate upon his Arab courser. In that country, kings seldom appearing before the people, Haman was the observed of all observers, the representative of kingly pomp and power. His word was law, his smile life. His pride knew no bounds, his magnificence had no rival. He had all but the responsibility and peril of kingship. He reaped its honors, feasted on its viands, appropriated its wealth, bathed himself in the adulation offered by a servile people. His name might be used as a proverb of happiness, and his station regarded as the very acme of all that the human heart could seek or desire. But, alas! there is a worm at the root of his felicity.

He goes forth in his robes of state—the king's



favorite and vizier—and all but the Jewish gate-keeper do him homage. He, either because he feels an inward contempt for his character, or because he regards the honors rendered a species of idolatry, stands erect, not even so much as removing his hat, while the crowd is prostrate at his feet. His fellow-servants, seeing his apparently bold effrontery, first expostulate, then threaten to expose him as an offender of the royal law. Mordecai now, for the first time, boldly acknowledges his faith and nation, and declares that his homage shall be rendered alone to the God of Israel. This was taking a bold stand, one full of peril to his safety. He was virtually coming in conflict with the king's decree, but he was conscientious and firm; and "When they spoke daily unto him, he hearkened not unto them."

The next day, as the retinue passed and the people were vieing with each other in acts of lowliest reverence, Haman's eye was directed to Mordecai, who stood like a pillar of strength, with his arms folded upon his breast, as though all this pageant was nothing to him. "And when Haman saw that he bowed not nor did him reverence, then was he full of wrath." He was



stung to the quick; all his greatness, power, honor, availed him nothing. This one little spot covered the whole heavens. He saw nothing, heard nothing, dreamed of nothing, but that "Mordecai bowed not." All his pride changed to shame—the flatteries of his friends seemed now bitter taunts—his luxurious banquet became loathsome. Such is the power of envy! such everywhere, at our firesides as in the palaces of kings' favorites, beneath the naked vault of heaven, and the canopied purple and gold. Haman goes to his palace, his bosom rankling with hate of the Jewish gate-keeper. A cloud is on his brow. His very look, and voice, and motion are all sullenness—the dark brooding of a storm. His wife and friends gather around. Anxiously they ask what severe calamity has befallen him—what injury which they might resent—what enemy had he discovered whom they could remove? They tried to comfort him, and spoke of the extent of his riches, and honors, and intimacy with the king. Mark, now, the meanness of his reply: "Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate." He would have revenge. He would procure a decree for the massacre of



the whole Jewish nation, when his enemy would surely fall amid the death-groan of his kindred. It is not enough for him, that for the affront he has received, one man should perish. A whole nation must be offered up as a sacrifice to his wounded pride. With this purpose he went and said to the King Ahasuerus, "There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed in all the provinces of the kingdom; and their laws are diverse from all people; neither keep they the king's laws; therefore it is not for the king's profit to suffer them. If it please the king, let it be written that they may be destroyed, and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver to the hands of those who have the charge of the business to bring it into the king's treasuries."

This plea, prompted by envy and devoid of truth, prevailed. The weak and cruel monarch declined the offer of money, as a recompense for the loss of Jewish labor or revenue to the government. But he gave to Haman full power to frame and execute such a law as would utterly exterminate the race, and gave him his signet ring, that it might go forth into all the provinces under the seal and sanction of the king. The fatal de-



cree which was designed to blot out the very name of Israel from the earth, and cause their very memory to perish, is as follows: “Artaxerxes, the great king—to the rulers of the one hundred and seven and twenty provinces, from India even to Ethiopia, sends this writing: Whereas I have obtained the dominion of all the habitable earth, according to my desire, and have not been obliged to do any thing insolent or cruel to my subjects, but have shown myself mild and gentle, guarding their peace and promoting their prosperity; and whereas I have been informed by Haman, who, on account of his prudence, justice, and fidelity, is first in my esteem, that there is an ill-natured nation intermixed with all mankind, yet unsocial and untractable, neither adopting our religion nor submitting to our laws, of habits and manners diverse; therefore do I decree that these people be destroyed, with their wives and children—that not one of them be spared, and that no pity be shown them, and that their goods be taken for spoil. This I will to be executed on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month of the present year, that thus our enemies being destroyed, we may be allowed to lead the rest of our lives in peace and quiet-



ness." This decree being sealed and sent into every province, and published in every language, the king and his favorite "sat down to drink," as if pity were a stranger to their hearts.

#### THE LAMENT.

Bitter lamentations are heard without the walls of the palace. The irrevocable sentence has passed, and there is no appeal—*no hope*. The great plan of God in relation to Israel seems utterly defeated. The light which had glowed along the path of prophecy seems extinct. The law which alters not has fixed the day for Israel's slaughter. No wonder there was mourning in Shushan; no wonder that the thousands of Jews, who were scattered throughout the land, were covered with sackcloth. Though captives, and far away from their favorite country and temple, they clung with pious fidelity to the covenant mercies of their God, and through the long period of their gloom, hoped for the day of their promised glory.

But now, this decree fell like a crushing weight upon their hearts. Parents gazed upon their little ones in all the agony of bereaved affection, as



victims doomed to the slaughter. Their domestic altars were bathed in tears—their homes were as desolate as if the angel of death had already commenced doing the cruel work of destiny. The fatal decree, like a dark spirit from the pit, strode over the entire land, wrapping, as in a funeral pall, the hopes and prospects of the Hebrew nation. Even Shushan, the gay metropolis, “was perplexed,” and shared deeply in the wide-spread and general gloom. Mourning Jews, clothed in sackcloth, might be seen wending their solitary way along its streets, which appeared like the deserted avenues of Balbec and Palmyra. The Jews, during all the season of their captivity, had been inoffensive, industrious, and civil, and now, that they were doomed by a most unrighteous law, shared largely in the sympathies of the people.

But the saddest of all sights was Mordecai, who sat *dumb* with grief before the king’s gate. At times, he would rouse himself from his delirium, and go through the streets of the city with rent garments and ashes upon his head, uttering exceedingly great and bitter lamentations, and saying, “A nation that had been injurious to no man



was to be destroyed." No one was able to calm the tumult of his feelings, and his cry continued day after day, lamentable to be heard. It was a sad sight to behold this devoted Jew bewailing the fate of his people.

As yet Esther, who dwelt in the interior of the palace, excluded from the sights and sounds of the outer world, had not even heard of the king's decree, and the consequent fate of her unhappy people. At length she chanced to hear, through one of the chamberlains of the palace, that Mordecai the Jew had been sitting, for days, without the king's gate, looking unusually sad, and ever and anon, he would go through the city, as one ready to die with grief. At this recital, her noble heart was touched with a generous sympathy, and her first impulse was to go to him and lift, with her own fair hand, the pressure from off his agonized heart; but she must not violate the courtesies of the palace. She can not divine the nature or cause of his trouble. Has any calamity befallen him, or any friend betrayed him? "Perchance," she says within herself, "it may be poverty. I will send him costly presents and changes of raiment, and bid



him lay aside his tattered robe and leathern girdle, and he shall know that one heart beats as true within the walls of a palace as beneath the thatched roof of the most humble cottage. But how must doubt and conjecture have alternated in her troubled bosom, when the presents were returned to her. “What means this?” she said; “what dread calamity has fallen upon him, to render him thus insensible to the offerings of friendship? *I must know.*” And calling “Hatach, one of the king’s chamberlains, whom he had appointed to attend her, she gave him a commandment to Mordecai, to know what it was, and why it was”—what was the cause of his lamentation, and why he refused to be comforted? “So Hatach went forth to Mordecai, unto the street of the city, which was before the king’s gate. And Mordecai told him of all that had happened unto him, and of the sum of money that Haman had promised to pay to the king’s treasuries for the Jews, to destroy them. Also he gave him the copy of the writing of the decree, that was given at Shushan to destroy them, to show it unto Esther, and to declare it unto her, and to charge her that she should go in unto the king, to make supplication unto him,



and to make requests before him for her people. And Hatach came and told Esther the words of Mordecai.”

Her young heart had never before known sorrow, but now a dark cloud came over it.

“Mourning within her palace in her room,  
 The young queen sits alone. A soft perfume  
 Mingles its odors with the evening breeze,  
 As steals it through the garden’s fragrant trees,  
 Ere fanning her white brow. Soft music  
 Upon the air—the wild bird’s joyous notes  
 Are gushing forth. A jeweled coronet  
 Is gleaming close beside her. Not as yet  
 Have tears bedimmed its luster, nor has care  
 Made that light crown too wearisome to bear;  
 And yet her brow  
 Is sad, and in calm, motionless despair,  
 Her small white hands are clasped. Why mourns she now?”

Alas! she has read the fatal decree, and sees the evil that must come on her nation. And *this* is why she mourns. Such a dread slaughter, so universal, so unprovoked, even of a strange people, could not fail to have aroused the deep, womanly feelings of her sensitive nature; but,

“’Twas her own nation. Heaven’s peculiar trust  
 In years long past, now bowing to the dust;



Condemned to die to gratify the pride  
Of one weak man. And she, the monarch's bride,  
Was of the number, though *he* knew it not."

But what could she do to stay the impending curse? How could she turn aside a law on which the king had placed his signet? Full well she knew that it was death for man or woman to approach his throne unbidden when in his sullen mood, unless, perchance, he might extend the golden scepter in token of forgiveness. She dares not venture now, for thirty days have passed, and no welcome word has reached her—no monarch's smile to cheer her loneliness. For aught she knows, his heart is changed, and *cold*. Her returning message, therefore breathed a spirit, *sail* and *broken*.

Her stern cousin, however, was not thus easily subdued; and he aroused all his slumbering energies to avert the dreaded calamity. He had given way to excessive grief, but now faith began to triumph, and to realize that man's emergency is God's opportunity, and deliverance should come, even though the queen's heart should falter and fail. His keen eye glanced along the path of Jewish history, and he thought of Egypt, and



Sinai, and the Red Sea, and the splendid line of patriarchs, whose faith staggered not at the promises, even in the darkest hour of the church's captivity, and the heroic spirit of martyrs came over him. His faith rose above the edicts of the king, and the frowns or flatteries of his favorite. He comes not now as a suppliant to the queen, but he speaks with assurance, as under the dread afflatus of prophecy. He bids Hatach go and bear this unqualified message back to Esther: "Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house more than all the Jews. For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed; and who knoweth, whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" He brings before her mind the great idea of personal responsibility and duty—that she has come to the throne, not as a mere appendage to the king's happiness, not to consult her own ease and safety, but to meet a great and trying emergency, to interpose her influence in behalf of her suffering and doomed people.



He believes that she has been raised up from orphanage to honor, from the cottage to the palace, not to lounge upon golden sofas, and tread marble halls, but to act the part of a woman and a wife, and to have her name live in history, as the heroine of her age, and the savior of her people. And thus the sequel proves.

#### THE CONFLICT.

Hatach returned to the private apartment of the queen, bearing the message of Mordecai. As he perceived her reclining upon a divan, worn with grief, he stood pale and hesitating, knowing that the words he had to utter would fall heavily upon her sensitive heart.

As she raised her eyes, an expression of ineffable serenity came over her angelic features, for the strength of holy trust in God had entered her soul. As she said in a clear, full voice, "Fear not; tell me the whole bitter truth; I am prepared," the faithful chamberlain felt that he might speak truly; and he delivered word for word the message of Mordecai.

When he had ended, she rose and stood with her hands clasped and eyes raised, for a moment,



as if in silent prayer. Then with an unfaltering tone, and a sad, yet sweet expression, she bade Hatach bear back this answer to Mordecai: "Go, gather together all the Jews that are at present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise: and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law; and if I perish, I perish."

From this moment, the true character of Esther began to unfold itself. She shrank, indeed, at the first thought of obtruding *uncalled* into the presence of the king. But now, all considerations of personal safety are absorbed in the thought of liberating her condemned people, and she at once rises to the courage and dignity of a martyr.

"I will go in unto the king, which is not according to the law; and if I perish, I perish." What a sublime renunciation of self in a noble cause! a beautiful example of patriotism and courage standing out to the admiration of the world from the dark background of universal selfishness and timidity. But she is not about to enter upon so perilous a work in her own strength. Her



thoughts recur to the great lessons of trust which the pious and noble-hearted Mordecai had taught her—not only *taught*, but *instilled*, as it were, like colors into the flower and blended with her very soul. She had realized both in cottage and palace the sublime efficacy of prayer. Her request to Mordecai to assemble all the pious Jews in Shushan and fast for three successive days, is an expression of her dependence, her reliance upon the God of Jacob. Then it was that earnest prayer went up from every Hebrew altar—prayer that enters heaven and reaches the throne of the Infinite. Our vision is too often limited to the visible instrumentality. We gaze upon the gorgeous panorama, and see kings and princes passing before us, great events transpiring, and heroic deeds acted, and we are apt to forget the relations of the lowly and the prayer of the contrite.

That fast in Shushan, appointed by the queen, was not an unmeaning ceremony, but a cause operating and destined to work out the most magnificent results.

Let us turn now to the palace, and see what is transpiring within. The king sits in a dark and sullen mood upon his throne, brooding over the



bloody decree he has sanctioned, or the tragedy of suffering about to be enacted within his dominions.

The queen, for days, has not been seen in the open court, enjoying her accustomed recreations. She has been secluded, and approached only by her favorite attendants. The numerous servants move noiselessly through the marble halls, fearful lest they may disturb the sad reverie of the queen. They have a dreamy, half-formed consciousness that some dread calamity has fallen upon her young and sensitive heart.

Some surmise that the king has deserted her, and, in his capricious temper, is contemplating another divorce. Others suppose that she has heard of the death of some loved and absent friend, and all the pomp and splendor of her state could not prevent the workings of excessive grief.

Sorrow will enter kings' abodes, and work like a canker beneath splendid robes. The shadows of a dark and oppressive melancholy will, at times, creep through the gorgeous hangings of blue, silver, and crimson, that curtain the rich and the favored, as well as through the humble lattice of the poor. But none can tell the depth of that



young queen's agony, as she kneels, pale and lonely, on the tessellated floor.

Her private apartment, the scene of her trial, is richly ornamented—the softened light, stealing through shaded windows by day and reflected from golden lamps by night, on marble columns and burnished mirrors, falls as powerless upon her heart, as though it were already entombed. *Hers* is not simply the agony of *grief*—it is the agony of a heart wrestling with God in prayer for an object dearer to her than life—an agony akin to that of Jesus in the garden, when angels came to strengthen Him. Already has she fasted two days and nights, and the blood has retreated from her pale cheek, and though her frame seems feeble, her spirit has gathered up the great elements of endurance and strength. Her faith has gained the mastery of her fears. The great conflict has passed, and now comes—

#### THE PETITION.

Artaxerxes the Great sat upon his ivory throne, beneath a golden canopy, surrounded by the nobles of his court, gorgeously attired with blue and crimson, the favorite colors of Persia. There he



sat, the mightiest monarch of the world, his jeweled crown flashing upon his brow and a golden scepter in his hand. He holds at his disposal the destiny of millions; his will is the highest law, and to resist it is certain death. Who then shall presume unbidden to come into his presence? Who shall thus dare to peril his life? The great crisis, which was to decide the fate of a nation, was hastening on. Never before did it become queen Esther to appear so beautiful, and never before did she make such an effort to enhance every charm, that her very presence might subdue and overpower the haughty monarch. The royal tiara, or turban of twisted silk and gold, bound her dark tresses over her polished forehead; while the queenly mantle of purple velvet, richly embroidered with pearls, fell from her shoulders, and hung in graceful folds behind her; her Persian dress of snowy white, interlaced with gold and glittering with diamonds, exposed her neck and arms of chiseled beauty. Thus arrayed in the most studied magnificence of princely apparel, she sallied forth, with her trembling maidens, to the royal chamber. Already is she at the threshold, and as she turns aside the crimson curtains, she feels a slight sensation



of fear, but one thought of her suffering people and of her protecting God quelled the momentary tumult, and she enters into the august presence of her royal lord. He raised his flashing eyes and fixed them, in awful wrath, upon the bold intruder. Her small white hands clasped together, as she stood in an attitude of entreaty—her cheek pale as the opening lily, yet indescribably beautiful—her penciled brow, slightly contracted in the intensity of her excitement—her long dark lashes dripping in tears, and lips trembling with agitation, made an appeal so silent and touching as effectually to disarm the tyrant of his wrath.

She saw his stern brow begin slightly to relax, and the golden scepter extended toward her. Emboldened by this signal of royal favor, “Esther drew near and touched the top of the scepter.” As the king perceived her pale cheek brightening, like a rose in the first rays of the morning sun, and her pleading, dewy eyes beaming with deep emotions of love and gratitude, he said, in a tone of tenderness that thrilled through and through the heart of the young queen, “What wilt thou, Queen Esther, and what is thy request? it shall be even given thee to the half of the kingdom.”



The king is taken captive, and Esther has triumphed. But she knows too well the heart of her royal lord to tell him all, and expose the meanness and duplicity of his prime minister. She must win gradually his confidence, and throw over him still more magical charms. And with consummate skill and tact, peculiar to woman, she defers the great wish of her heart, and says, "If it seem good unto the king, let the king and Haman come this day unto the banquet that I have prepared for him." This was a flattering unction to his vanity—an offering of love—an evidence that the queen preferred his presence to life. He could not deny her so reasonable a request; and Haman is immediately sent for to join him at the queen's table.

How his honors are thickening upon him—his proud heart is elated, and he orders the richest robe for the occasion.

Never did Esther appear more queenly—never did she preside with more dignity and grace—never was Ahasuerus more proud of his wife—and never did he feel more the transcendent power of her charms. As he gazed admiringly into her loving and inquiring eyes, he fancied that some secret desire was struggling for expression. And



he said, kindly, "What is it, queen Esther? What is thy petition, and it shall be granted thee, even to the half of the kingdom?"

She felt half inclined to speak; but she hesitated. The favor she would seek was so great—the failure would be so appalling! She must afford a little time for the king's heart to be chastened by the alternate feelings of doubt and desire. The arrow which had brought him a charmed and willing captive to her feet, must find a still deeper lodgment, before she would venture to a point so full of peril and hope, and hence she simply said, "If I have found favor in the sight of the king, and if it please the king to grant my request, let the king and Haman come to the banquet, that I shall prepare for them, and I will do to-morrow as the king hath said."

Ahasuerus was now convinced that Esther had something to ask—something beyond *his* or Haman's presence at a convivial banquet—something that lay heavily upon her heart. But what could it be? What had he done, or what had he failed to do, during her residence in the palace, that should create the occasion for a request, to gratify which she would peril *all*?



He found himself perplexed, and “on that night could not the king sleep, and he commanded to bring the book of records of the chronicles; and they were read before the king. And it was found written, that Mordecai had told of Bigthana and Teresh—two of the king’s chamberlains—the keepers of the door, who sought to lay hand on the King Ahasuerus. And the king said, What honor and dignity hath been done to Mordecai for this? Then said the king’s servants that ministered unto him, There is nothing done for him?” “This, indeed, was a strange omission,” replied the king, “something *should* have been done; something *must* be done. The man who has detected treason in the royal household, and saved the king’s life, must be suitably rewarded. Haman must be consulted.”

Now Haman had gone out from the queen’s banquet “joyful, and with a glad heart.” As he passed the outer gate, there was still “the fly in his ointment”—his Jewish enemy—and while others around were kissing the very dust at his feet, he stood erect, unbending as the proud, old oak of the forest. Haman was filled with wrath, and his first impulse was to strike him to the



earth; but "he refrained himself." "And when he came home, he sent and called for his friends, and Zeresh his wife. And Haman told them of the glory of his riches, and the multitude of his children; and all the things wherein the king had promoted him, and how he had advanced him above the princes and servants of the king." And how the queen had honored him in inviting him to sit at her banquet, "and to-morrow am I invited unto her also with the king." Notwithstanding *all this*, Mordecai the Jew refuses to do me honor. I will endure his insolence no longer; and though I have secured the massacre of his nation, I will have vengeance upon his *person*. His friends are base enough to applaud his resolution, and fan the fire already kindled to a flame. They advise that a gallows, fifty cubits high, be erected before Haman's door; then from his own banquet-room could the Emir catch the last groan, and see the last struggle of his unsuspecting enemy. Then should soft music sound its mockery of the helpless death-cry!

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

Early the next morning, Haman appeared at the



court of the king, to gain permission to execute his cruel purpose.

Hearing the sound of his footsteps, the monarch inquired, "Who is in the court? And his servant said unto him, Behold Haman standeth in the court. And the king said, Let him come in; so Haman came in. And the king said unto him, What shall be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honor?" The proud heart of Haman exulted; for he thought *he* was the favored one, and that the king designed to confer upon *him* some new token of honor, and he therefore exhausts his imagination in accumulating circumstances of grandeur.

"And Haman answered the king, For the man whom the king delighteth to honor, let the royal apparel be brought, which the king useth to wear, and the horse that the king rideth upon, and the crown royal which is set upon his head; and let this apparel and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king's most noble princes, that they may array the man withal, and bring him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaim before him, Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honor."



Had a thousand thunderbolts fallen at his feet, Haman could not have been more astonished than he was, when the king said, "Make haste and take the apparel and the horse, as thou hast said, and do even so to Mordecai the Jew, that sitteth at the king's gate; let nothing fail of all that thou hast spoken." He felt the hot blood coursing to his temples, his brain reeled, his heart fluttered with every agitated emotion. But there was no alternative, no remonstrance, no evading the humiliating service. All the princely pomp, which his vain imagination had appropriated to himself, he must bestow upon one, the most obnoxious to him. The *king's favorite* must serve as a common herald before the despised Jew. Instead of being his hangman, as he had hoped, he must be his groom, to conduct him on horseback through the streets of the city, proclaiming before him, "Thus shall it be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honor."

There is not, in all history, a more striking instance of mortified vanity than this. No wonder that he hasted to his house, mourning, with his head covered. He felt his proud estate giving way beneath him. But still he endeavored to rally his energies by the thought that he was yet to enjoy a



high honor in sitting at the queen's banquet; and the hated old Jew might yet suffer, when the irrevocable decree touching the fate of his nation should be rigorously executed. His proud head should be the first to fall. He would make sure of that.

While he was thus aiming to calm his troubled feelings by the thought of his sweet revenge, the king's chamberlain arrived to escort him to the banquet. Nothing could be more gratifying to his vanity than this—to *sit two days in succession at the queen's table!*

When all had partaken of the sumptuous repast, the king expressed his desire to hear, and his readiness to grant the petition of Esther, whatever it might be, even to the half of his kingdom. The way now seemed prepared, and she said, "If I have found favor in thy sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be given me at my petition and my people at my request. For we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish."

Haman understood the reference, and he felt a shudder run through his frame.

The king's eye kindled with rage, and, in a tone



that sent a thrill to the heart of his favorite, said, "Who is he, and where is he, that durst presume in his heart to do so? Thy people doomed to be slain! *thy* life in danger! Let the wretch know, who would dare to lay his hand on thee, that he aims a blow at his monarch's bosom. Who is he?"

And Esther said, as she raised her finger, and pointed it to the trembling culprit, "The adversary and enemy is *this* wicked Haman!"

The whole conspiracy now flashed upon the mind of the king, and his wrath was too big for words, and casting one look of terrible vengeance upon his ungrateful favorite, he strode into the palace garden to give vent to his passions, now boiling in his bosom like a seething caldron.

Haman perceived that his hour had come, unless the queen would interpose; and falling prostrate at her feet, he began to plead most piteously for his life. In the mean time the king returned, and observing him leaning over the couch, on which Esther reclined at table, and mistaking the nature or design of his attitude, he exclaimed in a paroxysm of anger, "Wretch! will he also force the queen before me in my house? Guards, seize the villian!" The words were no sooner out of his



mouth, than they covered Haman's face with a napkin—the dread signal of death!

“And Harbonah, one of the chamberlains, said before the king, Behold also the gallows, fifty cubits high, which Haman had made for Mordecai, who had spoken good for the king, standeth in the house of Haman. Then the king said, Hang him thereon”—a fitting retribution. “So they hanged Haman on the gallows which he had prepared for Mordecai.”

Thus miserably perished the *Favorite* in sight of his agonized wife and children. Thus successful was the petition of Esther, as will be more fully seen in the sequel and in

#### THE TRIUMPH.

The execution of Haman, who had occupied so distinguished a place in the confidence of Ahasuerus, and in the affairs of the government, produced no little stir in the city of Shushan. But when his conspiracy was fully known, all felt that his retribution was merited and just. Esther was now more fully enthroned in the confidence of the king. He consulted her in the weightier matters of his administration, and she became the guiding star



of his destiny. Her relation to Mordecai is made known, and he is elevated from the humble office of porter to be the prime minister of the king. Haman's house and all his possessions, together with the royal signet, which he had worn as the badge of his office, were now given to Mordecai. Thus God raiseth up one and casteth down another. "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill, that He may set him with princes, even with the princes of His people."

Notwithstanding the wicked device of Haman had recoiled upon his own head, and his hated rival had been fully installed into his forfeited honors, still the fatal decree relating to the slaughter of the Jews had not been repealed. "And Esther spake yet again before the king, and fell down at his feet, and besought him with tears to put away the mischief of Haman and his device that he had devised against the Jews. Then the king held out the golden scepter toward Esther, so she arose and stood before the king, and said, If it please the king, and if I have found favor in his sight, and the thing seem right before the king, and I be pleasing in his eyes, let it be written to



reverse the letters devised by Haman, the son of Hammidatha, which he wrote to destroy the Jews which are in all the king's provinces. For how can I endure to see the evil that shall come unto my people? or how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred?" This was a most touching and eloquent appeal—such an appeal as the king had no heart to resist. But the fatal decree had already passed, and according to the laws of the Persians, it was irrevocable—the monarch himself could not reverse it. But he could put weapons of defense into the hands of the Jews, and multiply their forces, and bid them “stand for their lives.”

This he actually did, and gave his seal to Mordecai, and told him to write letters to all the lieutenants and deputies of his one hundred seven and twenty provinces, and seal them with the king's seal, and dispatch couriers on horseback, on camels, and mules, to every part of the kingdom, that the Jews, on the day appointed for their slaughter, might be prepared to strike simultaneously for their lives and their sacred altars. When this was done in the king's name and by the king's authority, “Mordecai went out from



the presence of the king in royal apparel of blue and white, and with a great crown of gold, and with a garment of fine linen and purple; and the city of Shushan rejoiced and was glad. The Jews had light and gladness, and joy and honor.”

The fatal day at length came, and the Jews assembled in every province, fully armed and prepared to defend themselves even to the death. Under the patronage of the king, and under the higher sanction of the King of Kings, they went forth to battle, and fought in every city and province, like moral heroes, neither did they spare nor pity, until in Shushan they slew eight hundred of their enemies, and in the different provinces more than seventy-five thousand. Their cause was triumphant—their enemies were scattered and defeated, and Mordecai, the old Jewish gate-keeper and gallant chieftain, returned to the palace, to live in favor with the king, to seek the wealth and happiness of his people, and share the honors of a wise and peaceful administration.

In commemoration of the days appointed by Haman for the destruction of the Hebrews, a feast was appointed, which is continued to this day, called *Purim*, when the book of Esther is read in



the synagogue, and at the name of Haman, the whole congregation stamp with their feet, and cry, "*Let his name perish!*"

#### THE SEQUEL.

In a brief review of this history, we see much to admire, much to condemn, much that is profitable for doctrine and instruction. Esther is presented as a model of excellence, combining those elements of character which reflect honor upon her sex, and give her a place among the most interesting personages in Jewish history. The sweet and gentle graces adorned her young life; and, when introduced into the palace, she was not unduly elated, forgetful of the early lessons of piety taught her, or of her humble kinsman, or her suffering people. Though enjoying the splendors of a court and the honors of a queen, she identifies herself with the poor and oppressed, and worships still the God of her fathers. Her native dignity, beauty, and grace fit her for the most exalted situation, while her courage and decision are equal to the most trying emergencies. When apprised of the intrigue of Haman, and the decree



which consigned her countrymen to a premature and violent death, she manifests the heroism of a martyr, and resolves to peril all for their rescue. In the execution of her sublime purpose, she moves forward with a discreet and unfaltering step, not defeating her own ends by overacting or asking too much, but gaining by degrees, until the monarch was conquered, her petition granted, and her cause triumphant. Her action at the banquet, when she bearded the lion and charged him with crime, is the very climax of the tragical; and her answer to the enraged monarch, when he inquired, "Who is he, and where is he, that durst presume in his heart to do so?" is the very perfection of the morally sublime. "My adversary and the enemy of my people is *this* wicked Haman." Her virtues and her heroic deeds have given a deathless renown to her name, and enrolled it among the pious and patriot "Daughters of Zion."

We learn from this history what a curse revenge proves to itself.

How surely he who digs a pit for his neighbor falls into it himself—at least an abyss of restless, feverish passion within his own bosom.

It would seem that the king's favorite might



have been satisfied with his honors, that his thirst for indulgence might have been quenched from the overflowing cup of royal favor—that his pride might have made itself drunk on the incense offered at his shrine, though Mordecai *did* sit, with head unbent, at the king's gate. True elevation of mind would have taught him to overlook this slight deduction from the sum of his glory. True generosity would have made him forgive the Jew, out of regard to his manly independence of character, or the inherited dignity from which it came. But headlong passion hurled him down its own dread precipice. Satisfaction for a fancied wrong drove him on, as if mad, until his thirst for revenge revenged itself upon him. Thus will it always be. The man who attempts to injure his neighbor, will injure himself. Every unholy passion indulged has a two-fold effect, an *inward* and an *outward*. Every wrong act goes forth, and does its work on the character, property, or moral feelings of some other man, but it returns and does its retributive work on the evil-doer. "He who sows to the wind, shall reap the whirlwind." This is the law of our moral being, fixed as the law of the Persians, which alters not.



We learn, also, from this narrative, how wonderful is the providence of God.

His plan is oftentimes complicated, like the vision of Ezekiel, embracing various and apparently conflicting agencies, yet all working harmoniously, and producing issues the most beautiful and sublime. "We see threads of His designs laid out at remote distances, and gradually brought together to form the web of events." The self-respect and decision of Vashti—the wrath of the monarch—the divorce—the birth and the beauty of Esther—the treason of the king's chamberlains—its detection by Mordecai—his failure at once to be rewarded—his independence—Haman's wrath—his decree—the grief of the Jewish gatekeeper—the queen's petition—her feast—the wakefulness of Ahasuerus—his unusual request to have the book of the chronicles read—his discovery—the opportune arrival of Haman, are *all* events, some of them unimportant in themselves, yet connected and harmoniously arranged so as to work out the eternal purpose of God in the preservation of His people.

Surely, we may trust *all* to Him, who directeth all things after the counsel of His own will, who



bringeth good out of evil, and causeth even the wrath of man to praise Him. Doubt and mystery may be on our path; we may be called to battle with calamity, and to pass through the deep waters of affliction, and, like the good old patriarch, we may be led to say, "All these things are against me," still we may be calmly submissive, being assured that "all things shall work together for good to them that love God."

We may be persecuted and despised, and the human heart may be disposed to resent the injury; but let us remember that it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord."

The poisoned shaft of envy or malice may be hurled at us, but innocence shall protect us, and the injury shall fall upon our enemy.

"When haughty guilt exults with impious joy,  
Mistake shall blast, or accident destroy,  
Weak man, with impious rage, may throw the dart,  
But heaven shall guide it to the *guilty* heart."













C. Staal.

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BATHSHEBA.



## BATHSHEBA.

**T**ERRIBLE and severe had been the wars of Palestine. The sacred soil had been enriched by the blood of martyred heroes. On the one side, Israel was contending for rights and possessions, guaranteed and secured both by covenant and promise. On the other, the native population, divided into numerous petty, yet resolute tribes, were determined to defend their altars and firesides against the invaders of their land, claimed by right of possession since the days of Noah. Under divine sanction, Israel went forth to slaughter, and their enemies melted away like snow-wreaths before their embattled hosts.

At such a time as this, amid the glooms and glories of defeat and conquest, Bathsheba rises like a beautiful star, over a night of gloom and



darkness. Her recorded history is brief, but linked as it is with the genealogy of our Saviour, and illustrative of that mysterious Providence, which was continually shaping events preparatory to His advent, it is worthy a place in these sketches of the Daughters of Zion.

Her father's name was Eliam—"the servant of God"—an earnest and devout Hebrew; and the sacred history states that she was "*very beautiful to look upon.*" If the Scriptures, which are almost invariably silent in relation to personal appearance, say so much, then we have the outline of a portrait which it would require the hand of an artist to fill up. The picture which adorns these pages represents the blithe and beautiful maiden after she has expanded into womanhood, and the laughing face of young girlhood has put on the aspect of chastened and sober thought.

Though we have no very definite account of her young life, yet we know that she was a Jewess, trained up to reverence and worship the God of Abraham, and doubtless she was familiar with all the varied and wonderful history of her people.

She had heard of Egypt, and of its task-masters—of the fierce-pursuing Pharaoh—of the Red Sea



and its devouring waves—of Sinai, and the mysterious voices issuing from its awful summit—of that strange cloud and fire-pillar leading the hosts of Israel through the pathless desert—of Jordan and Jericho, so remarkably distinguished for the Divine interposition in the annals of her nation. All these stupendous realities had risen often before her, and impressed her young mind with the grandeur of her father's God. She, too, had rejoiced in the conquest of the hostile tribes, and when the youthful prince was returning from the field of battle, flushed with great thoughts of victory, she may have been among that band of dark-eyed maidens who went out, with garlands in their hands, to crown the victor, singing, "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands!"

In the pious family of her father the years of youth glide swiftly away; as yet no cloud is on her brow, no shadow is upon her path; all is beauty to her eye, all is verdure to her foot—her exuberant feelings have begun to ripen into maturity. Time adds to her charms; and as her mind and moral nature expand, as she begins to mingle in the activities of life, to return, in acts of filial



kindness, the love which had watched over the sleep of her infancy—to ply with skillful hand the distaff, to cultivate with care a knowledge of all those little feminine offices, and those homely domestic duties, which appear so amiable in her sex—then it was that parental hopes, which had hitherto hung, like loose and floating mists over the future, began to assume a more definite and palpable shape. She became the light of her father's dwelling—the charm of the social circle—and her deep, full voice chanting the favorite hymns of her nation—her easy address, united to a native sensibility of heart—her quick sense of duty, placed her among the most admired of the many Daughters of Zion.

Thus was her maiden life full of beauty and promise, like the morning star, which heralds the day-dawn of hope.

Years roll by, and the dreams of youth ripen into reality. The maiden has become the woman, and her history is no longer left to conjecture, but finds a place in the Scriptural record.

A new life now opens before her—a life, not of anticipation, but of reality. Already has she been led to the altar—the pompous rites have been celebrated—the marriage gifts exchanged, and by



a chosen band of youths and maidens has she been wreathed with flowers, and, with many congratulations, conducted to the home of Uriah, the Hittite. The gallant soldier, patriotic and chivalrous on the field of battle, is proud to own her as his chosen bride.

In these new and hallowed relations, she shines still as a star with no borrowed luster. She is the jewel of his household. His manly heart exults in this new achievement, not of martial prowess; for she has become the willing subject of that all-conquering principle—*love*.

Being much his junior in years, she clings to him, like the ivy to the tower, like the vine to the tall forest oak. He is every thing to her, and she, in turn, makes his home bright and happy—a paradise of beauty—a soft, green spot, on which his weary heart finds repose. The music of her sweet voice is a welcome contrast to the shrill and warlike notes of the bugle, with which his ear has long been familiar.

“Each was the other’s mirror, and but read  
Joy sparkling in their dark eyes like a gem;  
And knew such brightness was but the reflection  
Of their exchanging glances of affection.”



Little does he dream that the serpent is lurking near, which will one day sting him to the heart, and convert this earthly paradise into a wilderness of thorns. How little does man know of the future. He hopes that his path will be bordered with roses—that the landscape will widen as he advances—that the sun will be brighter as he ascends the meridian. Thus is he ever led forward by the illusions of hope. These treacherous hopes; alas! how often they beguile and deceive us!

“Like a foam on the billow,  
When it swells o’er the deep;  
Like a tear on the pillow,  
When we sigh, while we sleep;  
Like the syren that sings,  
We ne’er can tell where,  
Is the fond hope that brings  
The night of despair.

“Like the starlight of gladness,  
When it gleams in death’s eye;  
Like the meteor of madness  
In the spirit’s dark sky;  
Like the zephyrs that perish  
With the breath of their birth,  
Are the hopes that we cherish  
While poison’d on earth.”



Thus it was with Uriah—he had painted the future with all the hues of hope. But the beautiful visions which he had created would not last—the scene, so entrancing, must change. Already are the Ammonites in the land—the altars of his adopted country are besieged, and the soldier's heart stirs within him, and he resolves to exchange the caresses of home for the dangers of the field.

Bathsheba is left alone in her neat, quiet home; and as nightfall comes down upon the earth, to beguile the lonely hour, she takes her eight-stringed harp, and plays a favorite national air; and then kneeling at the altar of her devotions, she remembers the faithful soldier exposed to the perils of battle.

Now comes a new scene in this moral drama—a new character is introduced. The armies of Israel are besieging Rabbah—the capital city of the Ammonites. “But David tarried still at Jerusalem.” He had been a man of war—a moral hero—a host within himself, standing at the head of his armies, inspiring them with confidence, and sending such a thrill of martial ardor over the feelings of his soldiers, that the most timid became brave, the most irresolute daring. But care, luxury, and



kingly honors had enervated his soul, and now he preferred to luxuriate in the royal palace, while Joab was sent to head his armies, and lead them on to victory. Hitherto God had befriended him, had made his cause His own, had raised him from the shepherd's tent to the palace, from the hillock to the throne. But his heart was not impervious to temptation, and, perhaps, unduly elated by his unparalleled prosperity, he forgot the source of his strength, lost sight of the Providence that had elevated him; his holy service became a weariness, and his harp unused.

Now commences that career of crimes which turned the tide of his fortunes, which has left a dark shadow upon the luster of his name, and which furnished the occasion for that outgush of penitent emotion recorded in the 51st Psalm.

It was eventide, and in the hushed stillness of that twilight hour, David arose from his luxurious couch to walk upon the flat roof of his palace, commanding an enchanting prospect of the surrounding city.

Then it was that his eye caught sight of the lovely wife of Uriah, just emerging from the bath.

A light robe is thrown loosely over her exquis-



itely moulded form—her dark hair hangs in long and graceful folds over her beautiful neck and shoulders; while in her hand she holds a vase of rich perfume.

No thought of wrong has ever mingled with the workings of her pure mind. Her look is thoughtful, indicative of a modest and amiable sensibility of heart.

The passions of the king, however, are stirred—a tumult is in his soul. He knows that the crime he contemplates is contrary to the laws of God, and we can readily imagine that conscience smote him as the temptation crossed his mind; but he suffers his eye to rest on the beautiful and forbidden object, until excited desire gains the mastery, and his deafened ear no longer hears the echo of the dread voice within him. What a humiliating picture of man! to see his angel nature doing homage to the brute within him—sense asserting supremacy over conscience—his soul, dark and full of earthly passion, borne down beneath the crushing weight of guilt!

We would scarcely have expected this of David—the man after God's own heart—whose delight had been in the law of the Lord, and whose soul



had responded, in pious ecstasies, to the melodies of his harp.

“But when lust

Lets in defilement to the inward parts,  
The soul grows clotted with contagion,  
Embodies and imbrates, till she quite lose  
The divine property of her first being.”

Thus he who had never wronged a rival, or envied his well-earned fame—who vexed his soul for the distress of one who pursued him with a deadly hatred, and wept bitter tears over his dishonored grave—who had been the hero and the successful warrior, is found, when left to himself, too weak to resist an ordinary temptation—too callous to regret the wrongs he had inflicted upon one of the most faithful of his subjects, or the insult he had offered to the God of heaven. Thus lost to the high sense of honor which once characterized him, and clothed with an arbitrary power, which no subject might resist, he “sent messengers and took” the artless and unoffending wife of Uriah, perhaps by force, “to his own house.”

If no violence were used, yet when she remembered that it was the demand of the king—when she thought of his majesty—his heaven-derived



authority—his official sanctity—his almost visible divinity—she dare not resist, and her womanly spirit was borne down into a quiet and passive acquiescence. But did it serve to comfort the hapless victim, as she returned to her dishonored home—

“Despoiled of innocence, of faith, of bliss”—

that her royal seducer was guiltier than she? Ah! she felt that the fairest rose in her wreath of beauty was faded—that sin, though sweet to the taste, in its commission, is bitter—that, at last, it “biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder.” Her bright home was clouded, the flowers that had crept over her lattice lost their sweet perfume, and the strings of her harp failed to awaken pleasant memories in her heart.

Thus it is, that the outer world receives its hue from the reflection of the inner mind. If *it* be sad, no beauty will be seen upon the landscape, no music of bird-voices will be heard in the grove.

“We receive but what we give,

And in *our life* alone does nature live,

Ours is her wedding garment, ours her shroud;

And would we aught behold of higher worth?

Ah! from the *soul itself* must issue forth

A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud



Enveloping the earth  
 And from the soul itself must there be sent  
 A sweet and potent voice of its own birth,  
 Of all sweet sounds the life and element."

Bathsheba was not happy—her spirit was haunted with the dread consciousness of wrong. David, too, doubtless, had many misgivings; but he had taken the first step in sin, thus creating almost the necessity for another to succeed. The passions once aroused, *indulged*, acquire the mastery, and hold in meek abeyance the high behests of reason, conscience, and the law of God.

"Some dream that they can silence when they will  
 The storm of passion, and say, *Peace, be still*;  
 But *Thus far and no farther*, when addressed  
 To the wild wave, or wilder human breast,  
 Implies authority, that never can,  
 That never *ought* to be the lot of man.

When man has entered the territory of evil, he is under a new *regime*—new and mighty forces begin to operate—he is not himself, not his own master—he has voluntarily surrendered himself to the dominion of another. Thus it was with David. He had committed himself, had set causes in motion which he could not control. He knew this,



but he would aim to conceal his own guilty agency in the matter. He would send for Uriah; not to confess or repair the wrong he had done, but to make him the unconscious instrument to cover his crime. He would give him a respite from battle, and permit him to enjoy, for a time, the pleasures of home. But the noble-minded Uriah, thus suddenly summoned from the field, was found to possess a soldier's chivalry quite too exuberant and sensitive to suit the guilty purpose of his royal lord. When asked by the king, why he did not go down to his house, his answer reveals his self-denying and patriot spirit. "The ark, and Israel, and Judah abide in tents, and my lord Joab, and the servants of my lord are encamped in the open fields; shall I then go into mine house to eat and drink? As thou livest and as thy soul liveth, I will not do this thing."

Foiled in his purpose, the king makes a second attempt, by inviting Uriah to his palace, to eat and to drink, and after his heart was intoxicated with wine and his passions excited, he presumed he would return to his home to be the unconscious concealer of his own shame. But, when all his efforts failed, and his trespass in invading Uriah's



home was likely to be known, he resolved to invade his person. He would add the guilt of murder to that of adultery. After having committed the greatest of all wrongs, he would close the lip of complaint, by sealing it in everlasting silence. He would put the hand of death upon the mouth of reproach, and throw the chain of mortality upon the arm of revenge. Hence his royal order to Joab was, "Set ye Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retire ye from hence, that he may be smitten and die." This was done, and the intrepid hero, inspired with a lofty enthusiasm for his country, faced the enemy and fought most valiantly, until he reeled in death.

Joab, doubtless, regretted the loss of so brave a soldier; but still he was encouraged by David to increase his forces, and press the battle to a victorious issue.

Bathsheba, "when she heard that Uriah was dead, mourned for her husband," and thoughts of other and happier days, when the brave soldier took her to his home, as his honored and chosen bride, came flashing up to her troubled memory. But the days of her widowhood were short; for after the first tumult of her grief had subsided,



“David sent and fetched her to his house, and she became his wife, and bare him a son. But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord.”

The turning-point in his fortunes had now come. He had made others suffer, and he himself must suffer in turn.

The sword was no more to depart from his house, over which the maledictions of Heaven hung. Amid the glory to which the Israelites were rising under his rule, and the zenith of which they had well-nigh attained, his life became chequered with trial. Misfortunes rapidly succeeded each other, until his heart was broken, and we see him prostrate and penitent as a child. Death soon entered his palace, and bore away the precious offspring—the fruit of his illicit love—and his heart quivered beneath the terrible stroke. His domestic peace was destroyed by the dishonor of his daughter, and by the slaughter of his son, who effected it. He was driven from his kingdom by the rebellion of his son Absalom, whom he had recalled from banishment for his brother's murder, and with an ill-judged lenity had readmitted to his presence. His kingdom was ravaged by a dread-



ful pestilence, which destroyed over seventy thousand of his subjects.

His heart was torn with unutterable grief at the violent death of his still cherished, though rebellious son. And his last days were disturbed and embittered by the conspiracy of Adonijah against Solomon, whom he had appointed as successor to his throne. Thus, in his own bitter experience, did he learn that the way of the transgressor is hard. That he was *the* transgressor—that there was a connection between his offense and his misfortunes, he could not doubt, after that terrible reproof administered to him by Nathan, the prophet, under the beautiful and touching allegory of a little ewe lamb, plundered by a rich lord from the bosom of a humble wayfarer. And as the venerable seer proceeded to delineate the affecting features of the supposed case, for the purpose of exposing an actual wrong, the heart of the royal auditor waxed warm with a just indignation at the unpardonable offense, and at once determined a fitting retribution. But what a terrible collapse of emotion when the application was made, and the accusation came thundering upon his conscience, *Thou art the man!*



Thus it is that the verdict of the heart is just in any case of morals, not affecting personal practice, and we are too often ready to censure a principle in others, which we are free to sanction in ourselves. Relations and circumstances too often utterly revolutionize our judgments of right and wrong.

We have all read or heard of the honest farmer, who came before the judge with the complaint, that his neighbor's ox had gored his cattle. The case was adjudicated, and appropriate damages awarded to the complainant; when the shrewd yeoman remarked, "Your honor, I mistake, it was *your* ox that gored my cattle."

"Ah!" replied the judge, "*that* essentially alters the case."

"I *appeal*," said a poor woman, who had unsuccessfully sued for justice at the hands of the Macedonian monarch.

"To whom?" inquired the monarch.

"From Philip *feasting*, to Philip *fasting*," was the reply.

David could pass just sentence upon the rich man who had robbed the poor wayfarer of "the one little ewe lamb, which he had brought up and



nourished in his bosom;" but not until he saw *himself* imaged in the parable did he say, "*I have sinned against the Lord.*"

Heartily did David repent of his sin with the wife of Uriah, and his life, so wonderfully varied—so chequered with joy and sorrow—so full of prosperity and adversity—so distinguished for piety—and yet so dishonored with crime, began to draw to a close.

Ever did he cherish the beautiful Bathsheba as the most honored of his wives; and by conjugal love and fidelity—by the promise, that her son should sit upon his throne, did he endeavor to repair the injury he had done her.

As her fatal charms had first ensnared the heart of the monarch, and involved his family and the nation in a labyrinth of woes, she shared fully all his sorrows, and shed over the evening of his days the light of a subdued and heavenly piety. She became the mother of the wisest king, that ever sat upon the throne of Israel, whose proverbs and prudential maxims are a legacy to all coming time.

With her anxious eye ever on his elevation to the throne, she carefully trained him for his high



destiny, instructed him in the religion of his father, and laid, in many prayers and tears, the foundation of that character which was to be the wonder of the world.

The great desire of her heart was realized, and Solomon, her son, sat upon the throne of his father David. He soon rose to the very zenith of worldly glory, and such was the extent of his wisdom, and the splendor of his riches, and the magnificence of his palace, that, when the Queen of Sheba came to see and realize what she had but partially conceived, she exclaimed, in bewildering amazement, "The half has not been told me!"

He had the honor of building the temple—the most gorgeous and magnificent edifice ever constructed for the worship of God.

Yet, with all the splendors of a throne, and vast multitudes doing him homage, he ever cherished a most filial regard for his mother. And when she appeared in his presence, "the king rose up to meet her, and bowed himself unto her, and sat down on his throne, and caused a seat to be set for the king's mother, and she sat on his right hand." Thus did he show an example of filial reverence coupled with the greatest exaltation. He had not forgotten



the lessons of piety received in his early youth. Her dignity of character, her grace and gentleness, her fullness of feeling, and depth of affection, had left an indelible impression upon his heart.

Thus honored and cherished was the wife of David, long after his harp had ceased to vibrate beneath the touch of his fingers, and his voice had failed to awaken the melodies of her soul.

The storms and clouds of life have passed, and left a calm and tranquil sky, and, with a serene faith, she looked through a mysterious future to the birth of David's greater son.

Her life had been one of discipline and faith—her youth beautiful as the morning—her day darkened by a passing cloud—her evening cheered by a soft and mellow light.

Hers is among the few female names recorded in the genealogy of our Saviour.

Penitent herself and freely forgiven, she anticipated His coming to bless her race, and roll away the reproach of her people.









G. Staal.

J. Bannister.

J U D I T H .

whose name is recorded



## JUDITH.

**T**HE history of Judith is found in the "Apocrypha," so called from the Greek word *apokrupto*, signifying concealed, or put out of sight.

These books, though not canonical, or admitted into the Sacred Writings as inspired, are still read in the English Church, "for example of life and instruction of manners."

These books, though Apocryphal, ought not to become obsolete, as they throw light over a period of Jewish history, concerning which the seers of the prophetic ages are silent; during which period, the Church passed through many trials, and suffered heavy persecutions, both from the Greeks and Romans, and many were the faithful who bled in martyrdom among the bravest, whose names find no mention in the list of heroines recorded in Sacred Story.



The subject of the present sketch was a Jewess—a true daughter of Abraham—and her lofty self-devotion to her country's cause, her singular faith and courage, entitle her to an honorable mention among the *Daughters of Zion*.

She was a widow of Bethulia—a daughter of Merari—of wealth and influence, who, for more than three years, had treasured, with a painful distinctness, in her heart of hearts, the image of the lost and loving Manasses.

Nebuchodonosor, the great king of Assyria, had, at this time, reached the very zenith of power, and his armies had passed, like the tread of an earthquake, over all the surrounding cities and countries.

Numerous and powerful allies from conquered tribes and kingdoms had joined his army. Arphaxad, the Median conqueror, had surrendered to his sway—the strongly fortified city of Ecbatane had been taken, its lofty towers had been leveled to the dust, its streets spoiled, and its beauty turned into shame.

Against the nations westward, who had not joined in his wars of extermination, he swore eternal vengeance, and solemnly declared, in the



presence of his officers and nobles, that he would go forth with his all-conquering army and destroy them, until the slain should fill their valleys and brooks, and the rivers should overflow with their blood.

To Holofernes, his chosen general, he said, "Let not thine eye spare, but put them to the slaughter and spoil them, wheresoever thou goest. And take heed that thou transgress none of the commandments of thy lord, but accomplish them fully, as I have commanded thee, and defer not to do them."

Having received this commission, he went forth from the presence of his royal master, and gathered all the captains, governors, and subalterns of his army, and chosen men of war, to the number of an hundred and twenty thousand, and archers on horseback to the number of twelve thousand, and camels, asses, fighting elephants, and war chariots innumerable. As this splendid and warlike retinue passed in review before the haughty monarch, his proud heart exulted, and he saw, in the prospective, his empire extended—his army victorious—his dominion universally acknowledged.

Holofernes, courageous as cruel, elated by the



victories which had recently crowned his arms, and whose command was the presage to his soldiers of still greater success, stood proudly at the head of this powerful and promiscuous army. Westward, like a destroying angel, he moved—devastation and ruin followed in his train—cities, that did not capitulate, were sacked, and their treasure taken for spoil.

He crossed the Euphrates, entered Mesopotamia, and its high cities and walled towns at once surrendered to his arms. His victorious army spread over the plains of Damascus, treading down their harvest-fields, killing their flocks and herds, spoiling their cities, and putting their young men to the edge of the sword.

No wonder that great fear fell upon the inhabitants of the sea-coasts, and that Tyre and Sydon, those wealthy maritime ports, sent ambassadors to treat for peace. They knew that resistance was vain, and that they might as well attempt to stay the sun in his course, as to oppose these hostile invaders, and hence, their language was that of unconditional surrender:

“Behold,” say they, “our houses, our fields of wheat, our flocks and herds, our cities and the



inhabitants thereof, lie before thee; come and deal with them as seemeth good to thee." All this was tendered as a peace-offering to Holofernes, whose heart knew no pity, whose cruelty was insatiable as the grave.

Thus far, the progress of his army had been a triumphant march, gaining strength and courage as they advanced, while he and his officers had been everywhere received along their victorious highway with "garlands, with dances, and with timbrels."

Onward still swept the tide of desolation, until the mighty army stretched, like a far-extended sea, along the great plain of Esdraelon over against Judea. Here they tarried for a month, to recruit their energies, and prepare to advance over the hill country of Galilee, to the great city of Jerusalem, and thus intrench themselves in the very strong-hold of their enemy.

In the mean time, Israel was not unmindful of the aggressive movements of this most formidable army. They had heard of the capitulation or sudden capture of other towns and cities—of the countries made desolate by their tread, and they felt troubled for their holy city and the



temple of their God. They had but recently returned from captivity, had rededicated the vessels and altars of their sanctuary, and felt a renewed confidence in the Jehovah of their nation. A Heaven-inspired enthusiasm took possession of their hearts, and they resolved to defend their country and their sacred city to the last. But realizing that their success did not depend upon might or power, but in the timely interposition of their fathers' God, they cried unto Him with one consent, and with great fervency, that He would look upon all the house of Israel graciously, and save them from the mortification and reproach of another and a more dreaded captivity. A fast was also proclaimed throughout the land, and all the priests put ashes upon their miters and sackcloth upon their loins and upon their altars, and offered daily burnt-offerings, and the people brought their gifts to the temple. But their faith worked *prudentially*, as well as religiously. Theirs was not the faith that expends itself in genuflections, abstinence, and temple offerings. It was the faith, which animated *our* fathers in the time of *our* country's perils, when they prayed with their arms upon their shoulders, ready for battle. Thus the



Israelites prayed, and when they had fortified their city, accumulated the means of defense, and guarded well the narrow pass leading up the mountain, they turned and looked over their enemy in the spirit of deliberate defiance.

This chafed the proud spirit of Holofernes, and calling together the princes of Moab, the captains of Ammon, and all the governors of the sea-coast, he said unto them, "Tell me, who are these people that dwell in the hill-country, and what are the cities they inhabit, and what is the multitude of their army, and wherein is their power and strength, and what king is set over them or captain of their army? And why have they determined not to come and meet me, more than all the inhabitants of the west?"

Then Achior, the captain of all the sons of Ammon, came forward and said, "Let my lord now hear a word from the mouth of thy servant, and I will declare unto thee the truth concerning this people which dwelleth near thee, and inhabiteth the hill-countries. Know thou, that they are descendants of the Chaldeans, and they sojourned heretofore in Mesopotamia, because they would not follow the gods of their fathers, which were



in the land of Chaldea; but worshiped the God of heaven, whom they knew. Thence they removed to the land of Canaan and greatly increased in cattle and gold and silver." He proceeded briefly to delineate their history in Egypt, and how their God had worked for them and against their enemies, ever making them victorious in battle, except when they had fallen through their own error or unbelief. "But," continued he, "they have returned to their God, and possessed Jerusalem, and beautified the temple, and now, my lord and governor, let us consider this, that if we go up against them, their God will go before them and defend them, and we become a reproach before all the world."

At this recital, the eye of Holofernes kindled with rage, and his bosom heaving with terrible emotions, he defied their God, and said, "Who art thou, Achior, and ye hirelings of Ephraim, that have this day prophesied against us, that we should not make war with the people of Israel, because their God will defend them? And who is God but Nebuchodonosor? We will tread them under foot, and their mountains shall be drunken with their blood, and their fields shall be filled with their dead bodies, and their footsteps shall



not be able to stand before us, and they shall utterly perish from the earth. And thou Achior—traitor—shalt not perish until thou be destroyed with them.” And all the people, boiling with fury, shouted, “So let it be.” And a band of armed men took Achior and bound him, and bore him away to the summit of the mountain, where they left him, and retired to the camp of the Assyrians. He, however, was taken up by the Hebrew sentinels and carried to the house of Ozias, the governor, to whom he related the conduct of Holofernes, and all the vengeance he had sworn against his nation.

Matters were now hastening to a crisis—the Assyrian general was thoroughly aroused, and his soldiers were burning with desire for the conflict—their banners were unfurled to the breeze—sword, and shield, and cimeter flashed in the sunlight. The twelve thousand horse, in armor glittering with gold, headed by their invincible leader, took up the line of march. Then followed, rank after rank, of footmen armed, some with cimeters, others with short swords, and many with huge clubs tipped with iron, according to the war-habits of the different tribes or nations to which they origin-



ally belonged; but still one great purpose of utter extermination animated the entire army.

Bethulia, a city of the Israelites, reposed on the eastern slope of one of the highest hills of Galilee, and if this point were gained by the enemy, then an easy descent might be made upon the holy city, and the hope of their country would be forever extinguished. The people knew this, and hence the narrow defile leading to the city was safely guarded, while armed sentinels were stationed upon the high towers to watch the movements of the belligerent army.

As the multitude gazed upon that hostile array, now nearing their devoted city, their bosoms heaved with alternate emotions of fear and hope; still they trusted in God, and felt that the cause of their country was committed to their hands, and they were determined to stand in the pass of their Thermopylæ, and fight for their homes and their sacred altars.

The day declined, and as night came down upon the earth, the kindling fires upon their watch-towers threw a lurid glare over the beleaguering hosts of the Assyrians.

As morning dawned, Holofernes, acting under



the advice of a company of Moabites, proceeded, with his twelve thousand horsemen, to take possession of the fountains from which the inhabitants of Bethulia were supplied with water. This was an unexpected movement—a device which would not have been dreamed of, but for the treacherous Moabites. They had anticipated and prepared themselves for an attack. Every man that could bear arms was at his post. But the hearts, which would have stood the charge of the enemy on the field of battle without a tremor, began now to pulsate with fear.

The Israelites were no cowards. They had stood in dangerous passes before, and fought with a desperation worthy the noblest cause. But now the resources of nature were cut off, and they seemed hemmed in to die of thirst.

Weeks passed—their cisterns were emptied—their temporary supplies failed—their strength was exhausted—young men and maidens died in the streets. Then it was, that “all the people assembled to Ozias, young men, women, and children, and cried with a loud voice, and said before all the elders, God be judge between us and you: for you have done us great injury, in that you have not



made peace with our enemies. For now we have no helper; God hath sold us into their hands, that we should be thrown down before them with thirst, and great destruction. Now, therefore, call them unto you, and deliver the whole city for spoil to the people of Holofernes, and to all his army. For it is better for us to be made a spoil unto them, than to die of thirst; for we will be his servants, that our souls may live, and not see the death of our wives and infants before our eyes. Then there was great weeping, with one consent, in the midst of the assembly, and they cried unto the Lord with a great and bitter lamentation.”

Then Ozias said to them, “Brethren, be of good courage, let us yet endure five days, in the which space, the Lord our God may turn his mercy toward us; for He will not forsake us utterly. And if these days pass, and there come no help to us, I will do according to your word.” And he sent the people away, faint and sick at heart.

There was one in that city who had seen and heard all, who had watched from the roof of her palace, with anxious heart, the movement of the enemy—who had listened, with an answering echo, to the deep cries of distress, and had endeavored to



inspire the desponding hearts of her countrywomen with her own trustful and courageous spirit. *It was Judith*, the widow of Manasses.

When she heard that, within five days, the city was to be delivered into the hands of the enemy, unless the Lord interposed, all the patriotism of her nature was stirred, and she resolved to save it, or perish in the attempt. She sent a message to Ozias, Chabris, and Charmis, the elders of the city, to meet her at her palace. In this interview, the true character of Judith unfolded itself. She had been seen before, as a deeply-stricken mourner, always clad in sackcloth, except upon the festal days of her religion. Now she rises to the dignity of a martyr. Her own sorrow is lost in the deeper sorrows of her nation. In a strain of touching and beautiful pathos, did she address those venerable elders of Israel, and bid them still hope in their fathers' God. And, as she dwelt upon the singular history of her nation, so lustrous with the light of Divine promise, so distinguished for the interposition of Divine Providence, her eye kindled with an ineffable luster, and they felt as if listening to the responses of an oracle. "Now, therefore," said she, "worthy elders, let us show an example to



our brethren, because their hearts depend upon us, and the sanctuary, and the house, and the altar rest upon us. Moreover, let us give thanks to the Lord our God, which trieth us, even as He did our fathers. Remember what things He did to Abraham, and how He tried Isaac, and what happened to Jacob in Mesopotamia, when he kept the sheep of Laban, his mother's brother. For He hath not tried us in the fire as He did them, for the examination of their hearts, neither hath He taken vengeance upon us; but the Lord doth scourge them that come near unto Him to admonish them."

This pious address, so rich in historic reminiscence, spoken with all a woman's deep pathos, produced the desired effect; and Ozias responded, "Thou hast spoken well, most noble Judith, and out of a good heart, and there is none that can resist thy words. Thy wisdom has ever been the guide of our councils. Pray for us, that the Lord may send us rain, and fill our cisterns, that we perish not."

The faith of Judith rose higher than a mere temporary relief, and she answered, "Hear me, and I will do a thing which shall be remembered throughout all generations. You shall stand, this night,



in the gate, and I will go forth with my waiting-woman; and within the days that you have promised to deliver the city to our enemies, the Lord will visit Israel by mine hand. But inquire not you of mine act; for I will not declare it unto you, till the thing be finished that I do."

Then said Ozias and the princes unto her, "Go in peace, and the Lord God go before thee, to take vengeance on our enemies."

They return, and Judith was left alone; and about the time that the evening incense was offered in Jerusalem, she bowed herself before the Lord and prayed. "O Lord God, the Father of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to whom vengeance belongeth—Thou who hast been the refuge of thy people in the day of trouble—who hast led them in a way which they knew not, and didst scatter their enemies before them; hear now the prayer of thine handmaid. For, behold the Assyrians are multiplied in their power—they are exalted with horse and man—they glory in the strength of their footmen—they trust in shield and spear, bow and sling, and know not that thou art the Lord that breakest the battles—the Lord is thy name. Throw down their strength in thy power—scatter them in



thine indignation; for they have purposed to defile thy sanctuary, and to pollute the tabernacle where thy glorious name resteth, and to cast down with the sword the horn of thy altar. Behold their pride, and send thy wrath upon their heads: give into mine hand, which am a widow, the power that I have conceived—break down their stateliness by the hand of a woman. For thy power standeth not in multitude, nor thy might in strong men: For thou art a God of the afflicted—an helper of the oppressed—an upholder of the weak—a protector of the forlorn—a savior of them that are without hope. I pray thee—I pray thee, O God of my father, and God of the inheritance of Israel, Lord of the heavens and earth, Creator of the waters, King of every creature, hear thou my prayer. O Lord, strike now for our altars and our homes, by the hand of a feeble woman, and make every nation and tribe to acknowledge that thou art the God of all power and might, and that there is none other that protecteth the people of Israel but *thou*.”

When she ended this prayer, she rose, calm in the strength of great thoughts—her faith had triumphed.



Laying aside her mourning apparel, she decked herself in the most costly attire. The rings of pearl which she had not worn since the death of Manasses, now hung suspended from her ears—a tiara of rich gems glittered above her braided hair—bracelets studded with diamonds sparkled upon her arms, and a golden chain adorned her neck. But the ornaments, which so profusely enriched her person were not equal to the beauty, that shone upon her face. The history states, that she was “of a goodly countenance, and *very* beautiful to behold.” She was a Hebrew, and had that peculiar cast of features, in their most perfect development, which have ever characterized that sacred, that mysterious race—a beauty unequalled in its glossy, raven locks—lustrous dark eye—full red lips, opening like a summer rose—finely arched eyebrow—and the rich, clear, yet slightly-tinged complexion of the East. And then her queenly step, her majestic form, her calm self-possession, gave her an air of dignity and independence, fitting her pre-eminently for the great crisis which she had chosen to meet.

Having laid upon the shoulders of her faithful servant a bag filled with provision, a lump of



figs, fine bread, parched corn, a cruise of oil, and a bottle of wine, that she might not be compelled to eat the food of the uncircumcised; she started at early twilight in the direction of the city gate. The elders were in waiting for her, and when they saw her so changed in countenance and apparel, they wondered greatly at her beauty, and said to her: "The God of our fathers give thee favor, and accomplish thine enterprise to the glory of the children of Israel, and the exaltation of Jerusalem." Then the massive iron gate was opened, and she and her maid left, amid the benedictions of her people, who followed her with eager gaze as she descended the mountain, and until her majestic form was lost amid the deepening shadows of the valley.

She had not proceeded far on her perilous way, before she was met by the first watch of the Assyrians, who said, in a stern voice, "Who art thou? Whence camest thou? And whither goest thou?"

Nothing daunted by this salutation, she answered, "I am a woman of the Hebrews, and I am fleeing from them to the tent of Holofernes, to tell him how he may enter the hill-country, and take



the city without peril, or the loss of one of his men; for my people have sinned, and are given up to be punished and utterly consumed."

"Thou doest well, gracious lady," replied the officer, "to save *thy* life; and be not afraid when thou standest in the presence of our most noble lord, for he shall entreat thee well." So entranced were the guards with her appearance, that they would have periled all in her defense, and at once placed her in a chariot, and ordered a detachment of a hundred horsemen to conduct her to the tent of Holofernes. News of the arrival of a Hebrew woman soon spread through the serried ranks of soldiery, and multitudes gathered to gaze upon the beautiful stranger, and they admired the children of Israel, because of her, and said among themselves, "Who would despise this people, who have among them such women?"

"If such be their *women*, what must their men be?"

Night had now deepened upon the earth, and the Assyrian general was reclining upon his damask couch, beneath a gorgeous canopy, woven with purple, gold, emeralds, and precious stones.

When his private chamberlain stated, that a



lady, richly appareled, was standing without and desiring an interview with his royal highness, he arose and went forth to meet her, attended by his servants bearing silver lamps before him. As he beheld her majestic form prostrated to the earth—her jewels sparkling in the pale light—her noble countenance agitated with emotions apparently of fear, the iron-hearted chieftain melted away into the *man*, and in a tone that told that she had conquered, said, “Woman, be of good comfort, fear not in thine heart, for I will hurt none that are willing to serve Nebuchodonosor, the king of all the earth. But tell me, wherefore hast thou fled from thine own people and come to us? if for protection, be assured no man shall hurt thee.”

Judith knew that the fate of her nation might depend upon her reply, and every word is calculated to tell with thrilling effect. She dwelt upon the great power of Nebuchodonosor, upon the extent and glory of his kingdoms, and, “We know,” she said, “that it is through thy prowess, most noble Holofernes, that powerful nations have been made to bow to his scepter, and now his sway shall extend over all Jerusalem and Judea; for the people have provoked the Lord their God,



in that they have resolved to spend the first fruits of their corn and the tenths of their wine and oil, which they had dedicated to His service. Knowing this, and the destruction that shall speedily come upon them, I have fled to thee, and if it shall be pleasing in thy sight, suffer thine handmaid to pass down through the valley to my nightly devotions, and when it shall be made known to me, by the God whom I serve, that they have committed this trespass, then I will come and show thee; and their strength shall become weakness, and thou shalt go forth with thine army, and I will lead thee through the midst of Judea, until thou come before Jerusalem, and I will set thy throne in the midst thereof, and thou shalt scatter the people as sheep that have no shepherd. All this has been declared to me, and know thou that it shall come to pass, and I am sent to tell thee.”

Effectual often are the words of flattery, and doubly so when they fall from the lips of woman.

The artful device of Judith effectually gained the confidence, while her beauty won the heart of Holofernes. He praised her for her wisdom, and said, “God hath done well to send thee be-



fore the people, that strength may be in our hands, and destruction upon them that lightly regard my lord." And he invited her to eat of his meats and to drink of his own wine.

But she said, "Not so, my lord, lest there be an offense, and I violate the faith of my father's God. I will eat of the provisions I have brought."

"If thy provision should fail, how should we give thee the like? for there be none with us of thy nation."

Then said Judith, "As thy soul liveth, my lord, thine handmaid shall not spend those things that I have, before the Lord work by my hand the things that He hath determined."

Elated at the thought of so speedy a conquest, Holofernes paid his fair guest every possible mark of respect, prepared for her lodgings in a tent hung with curtains of gold, purple, and crimson, bade his servants attend her by day, and gave her a *carte blanche* to pass and repass, through the valley, to her nightly devotions, without molestation from the guards or soldiery.

On the fourth day of her stay, Holofernes called Bagoas, his chief chamberlain, and said unto him,



“It is a shame that this splendid Hebrew woman should be with us, so radiant in her beauty and so distinguished for her wisdom, and we enjoy so little of her company. Go and persuade her to come to a banquet, which I will prepare for her, and let her eat and drink with us.” Then went Bagoas from the presence of Holofernes, and came to her and said, “Let not this fair damsel fear to come to my lord, and to be honored in his presence, and drink wine and be merry with us, and be made, this day, as one of the daughters of the Assyrians.”

Judith replied, “Who am I, that I should gainsay my lord? Surely it shall be my joy unto the day of my death to do whatsoever pleaseth him.”

“May you live forever!” replied the delighted Bagoas.

So she arose and decked herself in her most beautiful attire; and sparkling with jewels, she came to the banquet prepared for her.

Ravished at her appearance, Holofernes said, “Drink now, and be merry with us.”

She was playing a high game for her country, and doubtless the sensitive and womanly feelings of her nature struggled within her; yet, with a



forced smile playing over her radiant features, she said, "I will now drink, because my life is magnified in me this day, in being the chosen guest of my noble lord."

Then she ate and drank at his table what her faithful maid had prepared, as her Jewish faith would not allow her to partake of the delicious luxuries of her Assyrian lord.

The excitement of the scene gave an unearthly beauty to her expression, and her sallies of wit—her graphic delineations of the resources of her country, and of the splendor of *his* achievement, when he should plant his standard within the walls of the holy city, fairly held the monarch as by an irresistible fascination; and again and again he put the sparkling wine-cup to his lips, and drank until his very brain reeled and his flashing eye began to grow dim. Still she urged him to drink.

Hours passed—the day declined—the attendants one after another retired—Bagoas, at last, drew the rich curtains of the tent, and withdrew, leaving Holofernes and his fair guest to settle the preliminaries of the contemplated siege.

"To-morrow," he thought within himself, "will



be a high day for our army, when Holofernes and his charming bride may celebrate their nuptials within the richest palace of the far-famed Jerusalem.”

Judith and her royal host are now alone; but he is insensible to her charms—excess of wine has overpowered him, and he is stretched upon his easy couch in a drunken slumber.

The hour for her to strike for her imperiled country has now come; she steps to the door of the tent—the stars are looking down in their quiet beauty, but all is still—the lights are gleaming from the distant watch-towers of Bethulia, and she knows that many hearts are beating with alternate emotions of hope and fear—her faithful maid is stationed ready at her call—she returns and views in the pale light, reflected from alabaster lamps, the flushed features of the captain of the Assyrian hosts—she listens, for a moment, to his heavy breathings, and as she contrasts her dire purpose, with his recent kindness, her womanly heart relents. But she thinks of her suffering country—the graves of her loved ones—the sacred temple hallowed by old and precious memories, and she thought, “must all these be polluted and destroyed by an



enemy within my power? No! it must not be;" and she lifted up her heart and prayed: "O Lord God, look now upon the works of mine hands for the exaltation of Jerusalem. For now is the time to help thine inheritance, and to execute mine enterprise to the destruction of the enemies that are risen against us."

When she had thus prayed, the tender tumult of her heart ceased; and stepping to his pillow, over which hung suspended a falchion, or a broad Damascus sword, and seizing it with a strong grasp, and twining her delicate fingers in the hair of Holofernes, she said, "Strengthen me, O Lord God of Israel, this day," and then the fatal blow was given, and his head fell from the lifeless trunk!

Her faithful maid was speedily at her side, and pulling the canopy from the pillars, they wrapped the head in it, and concealed it in the sack, in which they had borne their provision from Bethulia.

The great crisis was now over. Unsuspected by the watchful guards, they passed down through the valley, as if to their accustomed devotions. They ascended the mountain to Bethulia, and as



they neared its gate, Judith cried to the armed watchmen pacing the wall, "Open, open now the gate; God, even our God, is with us, to show His power yet in Jerusalem, and His forces against the enemy, as He hath even done this day."

The iron gate is quickly opened, and Judith, the heroine, and the victoress, and her faithful maid-servant, are received with loud shouts of welcome.

The city is stirred from its deep repose—the elders of Israel, and her numerous friends, who have been waiting, with painful trepidation, the issue of the perilous adventure, are assembled to celebrate, in laudatory strains, the faith and heroism of Judith. As she exhibits the gory head of the Assyrian champion, one wild burst of acclamation ascends from the excited populace. When the tumult had ceased, Ozias, the governor of the city, took Judith by the hand, blessed her, and said, "The memory of thy virtue shall not depart from the hearts of thy people, for thou hast redeemed Jerusalem, and saved the Lord's heritage from a perpetual reproach, and blessed be thou above all the women of the earth, and blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who hath



preserved thee, and directed thee to the cutting off the head of the chief of our enemies." And all the people responded *Amen*.

Then said Judith, "Take this head, and hang it upon the highest place of your walls, and at early dawn, let the most valiant men of the city, with a captain at their head, go, armed, down toward the Assyrian encampment, and as the sentinels upon the watch shall perceive the forces of Israel advancing, they will run to the tent of Holofernes, and when they find his headless body, fear will fall upon the whole army, and they shall flee before you. But before you do these things, call me Achior the Ammonite, that he may see and know him that despised the house of Israel, and that sent him to us, as it were to his death."

Then they called Achior out of the house of Ozias; and when he recognized the head of Holofernes, held aloft in the hand of an officer in the assembly, he fainted, and fell upon his face. When he revived, he fell at Judith's feet, and revered her, and said, "Blessed art thou in all the tabernacles of Judah, and thy name shall be blessed." And when she related the tragic story of her adventure, the people shouted for joy, and



Achior believed God, was circumcised, and joined himself unto Israel.

Morning broke over the hills of Bethulia—all nature seemed attired in a new robe of beauty—loud shouts of joy ascended alike from cottage and palace. But the stillness of death pervaded the Assyrian encampment.

A band of armed men, at length, are seen wending their way through the narrow defile of the mountain. “What does this mean?” cry the Assyrian guards. “Do these men, in their desperation, court death? Bagoas, inform the monarch, that these impudent slaves may be summarily put to death.”

Bagoas hastened to his tent—called—all was silent. “Doubtless my lord is heavy with sleep, after the last night’s revelry—I must waken him.” He enters; amazed, petrified with fear, he beholds the headless body of Holofernes in a gore of blood. He rends his garments, and shrieks aloud with terror! The guards without and the captains of the army hear his bitter lamentations; and when the sad tale of horror is told, the loud cries of distress rend the very air.

A scene of terrible confusion ensued. The army



were scattered—their great general had fallen by the hand of a woman! Their courage had fled—their hopes were prostrate—and, in the frenzy of despair, they rushed in every way of the plain, and back to the hill-country; and those who had been stationed round about Bethulia, also fled, every man for his life. The people of Israel now rallied their forces from Jerusalem, and from all the hill-country, and from Galilee, and pursued after, and slew them by thousands, until they were driven far beyond Damascus. Then they returned from their pursuit of the vanquished, and spent thirty days in gathering the spoils and the vast treasures which the Assyrians, in their fright, had left behind them.

And the high priest and the elders of Israel that dwelt in Jerusalem, came to behold all the good things which God had done for their nation, and to Judith, and to salute her. And they blessed her with one accord, and said, “Thou art the exaltation of Jerusalem—the glory of Israel—the rejoicing of our nation—blessed be thou of the Almighty forever.” And all the people said, *Amen*. And they gave her the tent of Holofernes, and all his plate, and beds, and vessels, and all his valuable stuff—



gold, jewels, and precious stones. These were placed in a triumphal car, and Judith and her faithful maid, wreathed with garlands, went before, and the women and maidens and a great number of men followed, waving palm branches, and singing in glad chorus the loud songs of triumph.

Thus the joyful procession moved in the direction of the sacred city, where Judith resolved to consecrate the spoils which her heroism had won, as offerings to the temple. At the marble steps leading up to the outer court, she was met by the high priest, in his splendid robes of blue, purple, and crimson embroidery, sparkling with jewels and fringed with gold and silver tissue, and around stood the sons of Levi, wearing their linen ephods. They conducted her through the temple, where her fathers had worshiped, pointing out to her all its magnificent furniture, its golden vessels, its sculptured marble, its carved work, its altars of brass. "All this," said Joacim, the high priest, "hast thou saved, most noble Judith, from the idolater, and blessed art thou, yea, and thou shalt be blessed." And when he had led her again to the steps of the temple, the people joined in a magnificent



anthem of praise. Judith's heart was now full, and her gushing emotions found utterance in this noble song :

“ Let the timbrels loudly ring,  
To the Lord with cymbals sing ;  
Tune a new psalm—His might proclaim,  
Extol and call upon His name.  
To the wars an end He gave,  
He the people deigned to save :  
In their midst His camp he set,  
When the enemy we met.  
From the northern mountains poured  
On the field, the Assyrian lord,  
In his multitude of force,  
Choking up the torrent's course,  
Covering the valleys far  
With his serried steeds of war,  
Vaunting, in resistless haste,  
With fire my borders to lay waste ;  
In my young men's blood to slake  
Their thirsty swords ; a prey to take  
My infants ; and my virgins fair  
To bind as captives to his car.  
But the Lord's avenging stroke  
The boasting tyrant's power hath broke,  
And a feeble woman's hand  
Crushed the terror of the land.  
No young man's athletic blow  
Laid the proud Assyrian low ;



Nor did the sons of Titan smite,  
Or giants huge against them fight ;  
But a maid—Merari's child—  
On the foe destruction smiled ;  
By the beauty of her face,  
Judith rescued Israel's race ;  
She laid the widow's weeds aside,  
And took the robes of joy and pride ;  
Ointment on her cheek she shed,  
And binding round her scented head  
A sparkling crown—a garment new  
Upon her graceful form she threw ;  
Her jewels sparkled to his eyes,  
Her beauty ravished by surprise.  
She grasped the sword with courage dread,  
And severed from the trunk his head.  
Away our enemies have fled,  
Or on the battle-field lie dead.  
Then raise to Him, whose mighty nod  
Scattered their armies—raise to God  
A hymn of gratitude and love—  
A new hymn to our God above.”

After a festival of three months in Jerusalem, as an expression of thankfulness for Israel's rescue, Judith returned to her home in Bethulia, where she dwelt in honor, and was revered by the people as the savior of her country. Many a noble son of Israel sought to win her affection



and stand in the place of the honored Manasses, but she preferred to cherish his image, until at last, in a good old age, and in funeral pomp and with loud lamentation, she slept by his side, to awake at the trumpet's signal to the resurrection of the just.



## THE VIRGIN MARY.

**T**HE Daughters of Zion, whose history has thus far engaged our attention, lived at a time, and under institutions, calculated to develop the sterner and more heroic attributes of woman. They were familiar with bold and startling events—with battle-scenes and war-triumphs. But the shadows of a darker dispensation have passed away. The battle-songs of Miriam and Deborah have ceased. The wars of Israel have come to an end, and though in bondage, the people are waiting, in patient hope, for a Deliverer. The scattered rays of ancient prophecy are converging to a point, exciting the general expectation, that a great crisis in the world's history is near, when, under the auspices of a Heaven-commissioned leader, they will throw off the Roman yoke, and rise to a greatness un-



known in the history of their nation. The prophetic sayings of their venerated seers are cherished in the deep places of their hearts, and now, that "the scepter had indeed departed from Judah, and the lawgiver from beneath his feet," the glad hour of their redemption must be near. Some, indeed, cherished the war-spirit, and looked for a Messiah, who would marshal their armies, inspire the feeble with strength, the timid with courage, and lead them forth to glorious victory. Many a heroic Daughter of Zion, who could trace her genealogy to the Minstrel King, aspired to be the mother of the military chieftain, who would, one day, humble the proud oppressor, bring back the days of Israel's glory, and plant their national banner on the very walls of the seven-hilled city.

#### THE ANNUNCIATION.

Far up in the north of Galilee, imbosomed with hills, barren of art or cultivation, was the little town of Nazareth, proverbial for its poverty and meanness. The people, for the most, were ignorant and vicious, still there were some few, even there, who, in patient hope, longed to see the day-star that was to visit them from on high.



On the side of a hill, overlooking the squalid dwellings of poverty, was a neatly-thatched cottage surrounded with fig-trees, and adorned with flowers, thus presenting an air of thrift and neatness. Here dwelt the Virgin Mary, unknown by the great world—a *lovely*, yet lowly, Daughter of Zion.

She had, from early childhood, been one of those meek and trusting creatures, who make all light and beauty around them. Her parents had cherished her as the gift of Heaven—as the solace of their lives, and with them did she daily kneel, and worship the God of Israel. Her whole soul was full of the spirit of devotion. It raised her above earth—above sense, and imparted a heavenly serenity to all her features. She shared in the general expectation of her nation; and the hope of a speedily-coming Messiah was becoming stronger and stronger, as she drank deeper and deeper into the spirit of prophecy.

It was at the close of day, and the humble maiden, having finished her weary toil, and laid aside her distaff, had seated herself beside the open window to meditate upon the things dearest to her heart. The evening breeze played among the rich



tresses that shaded her brow, as she gazed thoughtfully upon the neighboring hills, now glowing with the retreating rays of the setting sun.

There she sat, with a sad and subdued expression, as if musing upon the sorrows of her nation. Ever and anon a light would beam in her dark eye, as though kindled by a contemplation of the Divine promise. But why does the color deepen upon her cheek, and the tear tremble in her eye? Why does her gentle bosom heave with deep emotion? Has she dwelt too long or too hopefully upon her coming happiness with the chosen of her heart? Has she pictured to herself in more glowing colors than is becoming a Jewish maiden, not yet summoned to the bridal altar, the pleasures of her future home? No; she has been thinking of the sins of her people, until she has wept in sorrow for the miseries that have come upon them.

And again her eye has kindled with hope as she dwelt upon the ancient prophecy, now hastening to its fulfillment. And as she has traced her ancestry back to the Shepherd King, the thought has glanced across her mind, in spite of her maiden modesty, that perchance she might be the honored



and chosen one from among the thousand mothers of Israel.

Thus musing, the hours of night passed unheeded by, when suddenly her attention was arrested by the entrance of a stranger, and the room seemed bathed in a soft and heavenly light.

His voice fell upon the hushed stillness of that hour, in a tone of sweetness that filled her throbbing heart with emotions both of fear and hope—“Hail, thou, that art highly favored—the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women.”

Startled at so strange a manifestation, and fearing lest some spirit had been sent to reprove her for the lofty aspirations which she had just ventured secretly to cherish, she stood trembling.

In yet sweeter accents the celestial visitant continued, “Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found favor with God; thou art chosen to be the mother of Jesus, who shall be called the Son of the Highest, and the Lord shall give unto him the throne of his father David, and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end.” As the voice ceased, she felt all the tumult of her fears subside, and raised her beaming



eyes in adoring wonder upon the being, who had thus answered to the desires of her heart. But the honor was so great, her condition was so lowly, that hope and fear struggled alternately for the mastery; "and she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be." Her imprisoned feelings soon found utterance, and she said, "Lord, how can these things be, since I have not yet departed from my father's house?"

The countenance of the angel was clothed with a smile as he answered: "Doubt not, Mary; with God all things are possible. His Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee, and that Holy One that shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God. Behold, to the husband of thy cousin Elizabeth have I also been sent with the glad announcement, that she, too, shall become a mother in Israel."

The truth of the message, in all its mystery, and in all its marvel, now broke upon her mind, and she could doubt no longer; and raising her clasped hands, she said, in meek submission, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to thy word."



The struggle was now over, and joy unutterable thrilled her heart, as she bowed upon the low cushion she had left, and pondered upon the sublime mysteries of the incarnation. All the prophecies, with which her mind was familiar, relating to the advent and exaltation of the Messiah, came flashing up to her remembrance, and she saw herself raised, at once, from deep obscurity to the highest glory—from the neglected daughter of Nazareth, to be the most honored and the most envied of all the mothers in Israel.

Exhausted nature could endure no more, and the bright stars looked down approvingly upon the sleeping face of this favored child of heaven.

This same angel Gabriel had, thousands of years before, descended from his starlit home, and marked out to the dwellers in Mesopotamia, the grand outlines of the redemptive scheme—had, from time to time, been sent to encourage the faith of the patriarchs of the older church—had rescued Lot from the perils of Sodom—whose voice Daniel had heard by Ulai's banks, informing him of the four hundred and ninety years that must elapse before Messiah's coming; but *never* had he uttered a sublimer message, than this simple annuncia-



tion to the confiding and humble virgin of Nazareth.

#### THE VISIT TO ELIZABETH.

The early rays of the morning sun were just creeping through the thickly-matted vines, which overhung the lattice, as the virgin awoke. So new, so strange, so *wonderful* had been the scenes of the past night, that for a moment she felt a slight tremor of apprehension, lest, perchance, it might all have been a sweet dream—a vision of her own excited fancy. But no, it can not be a dream—the voice was audible—the vision was a reality—God has indeed visited his handmaid—I must hasten to my cousin Elizabeth—she will confirm all; for she too has found favor in His sight. A short time sufficed to make the needed preparations for the journey, and ere the sun had reached his height, she and her faithful male servant were on their way to the city of Judah, now known as “Juttah,” south of Hebron.

After days of weary travel, and feasting her eyes, as she passed, with a sight of those hallowed memory-places recorded in Scripture—old Tabor, with its chalky heights—Gilboa, with its mountain



peaks—Kishon, with its sparkling waters—Sychar and its well, where Jacob led his flocks—*all* rich in the clustering associations of the past and prophetic of the future; they reached the mountain-home of Elizabeth.

Mary stepped lightly to the door of her kinswoman, and saluted her. “Blessed art thou among women,” was the quick and cordial response of the pious matron, as reverently she stretched forth her arms to embrace her honored cousin; and, as if the inspiration of the Almighty had come upon her, she continued, “and blessed is the fruit of thy womb; and whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?” She had been supernaturally informed both of the faith and condition of Mary—that she was to be the honored mother of the long-expected Messiah; and, as if alluding to the melancholy state of Zacharias, as a chastisement for his momentary unbelief at the announcement of the angel, she said, “Blessed is she that believeth; for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.” Mary’s faith was now confirmed—her heart was full to overflowing—her lips quivered with the burden of her thoughts,



and *she*, the timid girl, became the lofty and inspired prophetess, uttering a hymn of praise, which, for beauty and sublimity, is not surpassed by the most renowned poets of her nation.

“It may be considered,” says one, “a farewell specimen of Hebrew poetry—the last psalm of Jewish inspiration.” Its tone is that of joy and exultation, marked by the deepest humility. It is the outgush of a truly pious and grateful heart. “And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. For He hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: For behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For He that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is His name. And His mercy is on them that fear Him, from generation to generation. He hath showed strength with His arm; He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He hath sent empty away. He hath holpen His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy; As He spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed forever.”



Three months of mutual interchange of sympathy and affection sped away. These loving cousins, whom God had so highly favored, who were to be the instruments of untold blessing to the race, must separate. The pious Elizabeth implores the benedictions of her father's God upon her more honored cousin, and bids her God-speed, as she takes her departure for her home in the north of Galilee. Her visit had been a blessing, and she felt refreshed in spirit, as she pursued her long and weary way to Nazareth.

## MARY'S TRIAL.

The peculiar condition of the Virgin was now manifest, and she felt that a heavy trial was before her. The love of her heart had answered to the love of another—already was she betrothed to Joseph—the carpenter of Nazareth. She was sensitively alive to the feelings that might be awakened in his heart on meeting. Her fidelity might be doubted, and the love which had awakened a responsive echo in her own bosom, might be changed to hatred. Conscious of her innocence, she meditates no defense, no plea, but calmly resolves to leave herself, her hopes, and her fears



with God, who had taken her cause in His own hands.

But the trial came. The eye of Joseph did not kindle with joy at her return. His usually calm and happy face looked troubled—his heart was agitated with tender, yet *terrible* emotions. He had no knowledge of her interview with the angel, and of the distinguished honor put upon her. And the being, whom he had clothed with every beautiful perfection, seemed fallen—a *frail* and erring one. He felt compassion for her, but how could he lead her to the altar, and make her the chosen of his heart? Yet, how could he publicly expose her—bring her to trial—set her up before his nation as a common sinner—an abandoned daughter, and victim of shame?

It will be remembered that the Jewish law inflicted the same penalty upon those betrothed, in case of incontinence, as it did upon married persons, who were unfaithful to their marriage vows, which was, that they should be stoned to death.

What then could Joseph do in his perplexity? He had loved—almost *idolized* her, “and, not willing to make her a public example,” he resolved to put her away privately.



This was in keeping with his character as a *just man*. He was not insensible to her apparent wrong, neither was he inexorably severe—his justice was tempered with mercy.

But, it may be asked, why did not Mary state the facts of her experience, and thus relieve his mind from perplexity, and save her character from even the suspicion of wrong? To this, it may be replied, that she had received no direction from the angel to attempt any vindication of herself; and a voluntary effort to establish her innocence might have been construed into a secret sense and uneasiness of guilt. Besides, her genuine humility may have deterred her from speaking of the distinguished honor conferred upon her. She was not the first to speak of it, even to her cousin Elizabeth, who was in a condition to share all the joys and sorrows of her heart.

But while Joseph is meditating a dissolution of the intimacy and relationship between himself and his betrothed Mary, God interposes, and while the faithful artisan is buried in the depths of slumber, an angel from heaven bends over his couch, and says, “Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary, thy wife; for that



which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call his name *Jesus*; for He shall save His people from their sins."

He awoke in a delirium of joy from this sweet dream. His burden is removed—his suspicions gone—he comprehends, in all its marvel, the prophetic saying, "Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name *Immanuel*, which, being interpreted, is, *God with us*." With very different feelings from those with which he left her, does he hasten to the home of Mary, to tell her *all*, and take the burden from her pure and sensitive heart.

As he gazes upon that clear, open brow, and those mild, truth-telling eyes, never did she appear so transcendently lovely, and he led her to his home, as his own loving and unsullied bride. Thus ended her trial.

#### THE ADVENT.

Months passed, and the great event, around which gathered the concentrated light of prophecy, was hastening to a consummation.



The home, the associations, the kindred, the occupation of Joseph and Mary were in Nazareth. But more than seven hundred years before, Micah had expressly said, "And thou Bethlehem, Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth to me, that is to be Ruler in Israel." Shall that distant prophecy be fulfilled? See how events, the most unlikely and least anticipated, combine to bring it to pass. See how a mysterious Providence is directing the politics and edicts of monarchs, that the inaugural of Jesus may be celebrated on the very spot, hallowed and determined in the counsels of eternity.

Neander says: "The Emperor Augustus had ordered a general census of the Roman Empire, partly to obtain correct statistics of its resources, and partly for purposes of taxation. As Judea was then a dependency of the Empire, and Augustus probably intended to reduce it entirely to the state of a Roman province, he wished to secure similar statistics of that country, and ordered King Herod to take the census. In performing this duty, Herod followed the Jewish usage—a *division by tribes*. Joseph and Mary belonged to the tribe of David,



and therefore had to repair to Bethlehem, the seat of that tribe."

Obedient to this high decree, many a proud and glittering company swept by the humble wayfarers from Nazareth, little dreaming of the high part they were to act in the great drama of Providence.

Toil-worn and weary, they, at length, reached the city of their ancestors; but the rich and the proud had anticipated them, and filled all the houses of public reception, so that they were compelled to take refuge, with the beast that had borne them on their way, beneath the shelter of a stable.

The hum of business had ceased; for night had come down upon the world, and the stars shone softly out from the deep blue heavens above. All nature, like a slumbering infant, was hushed and still. Naught but some faithful shepherds were seen on the surrounding hill-sides, watching their flocks, musing upon their country's wrongs, and cherishing deep in their hearts the promise of Messiah's coming.

The weary travelers have lain down on their bed of straw, but not to slumber. The expected hour has come, and the holy Virgin was permitted to



fold in her maternal arms the promised Son—*the Saviour of the world.*

Never did a mother have such feelings on gazing upon the face of her first-born. Strange, *new, unutterable* were her emotions. She was a mother, indeed, but she was the mother of her Lord! Awe and reverence mingled with the deep maternal impulses of her heart.

Lowly, indeed, was the advent of Jesus. No martial array—no trumpet's peal announced His coming. No richly-ornamented palace, supported by marble pillars, sheltered His defenseless head. No vestments of pure white, fringed and interlaced with gold, covered His tender limbs. No obsequious attendants, gorgeously attired in purple and scarlet, received the weeping babe from His mother's arms. None of the affluent, who had crowded the inns, came out to do Him reverence. But if earth was thus unmindful of the advent of her King, heaven was not.

The harp of prophecy had long since uttered this mysterious saying, "When the First Begotten is brought into the world, let all the angels of God worship Him."

Gabriel, who had acted so prominent a part in



all the preparatory scenes of this divine drama, who had said to the trembling Virgin, "Fear not," who had stilled the tumult of Joseph's heart, hastens to the wondering shepherds, with the startling announcement, "Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger."

Scarcely had his voice ceased, and while their thoughts were struggling for expression, the heavens were illumined by a band of bright celestials, and their native hills were vocal with the swelling chorus, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace and good will to men."

"As earth asleep unconscious lay,  
They struck their golden lyres."

The kneeling shepherds waited but to catch the last faint echoes of the pealing anthem, as, with earnest gaze, they watched the homeward flight of those celestial harbingers of peace and love. Then, starting to their feet, in bewildering ecstasy, they hastened to Bethlehem, and there found Mary, bending, with adoring love, over the sleeping face



of her child. In the hushed stillness of that humble stable, they knelt before the infant Jesus, and related all that they had seen and heard; "But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart."

## THE PRESENTATION.

When eight days were passed, and Jesus had received the rite of circumcision, and the days of her purification were ended, we are introduced to another scene in the history of Mary. She stands beside her espoused husband, in the outer courts of the temple, apart from the crowd of worshipers, awaiting an opportunity to present an offering, according to the usage of her nation. She has no *costly* offering to present in commemoration of the deliverance of her nation from bondage, but two young pigeons nestle in her bosom; and, as the crowd give way, she ascends the marble steps of the temple, and presents the humble offering to the attending priest; and then, turning to Joseph, she received the precious child from his arms, and, stepping forward, amid a forest of massive pillars, toward the altar, she is met by a white-robed, mitred priest, who took it, and blessed it; and, just



as Mary had received back her precious charge, and had gently hushed its infant sobbings, a venerable-looking man, his flowing locks white as the driven snow, entered the temple, and, as if obeying an irresistible impulse, he took the child in his arms, and the Holy Ghost came upon him, and he said, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people—a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel." The parents marveled at this beautiful and unexpected acknowledgment and prediction concerning the child, from the lips of a stranger, and ventured to inquire his name. "Simeon," was the reply, "a just man, and full of the Holy Ghost, who has been many years waiting for the consolation of Israel; for it has been revealed unto him by the Spirit, that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ." Glancing, at this moment, his eye along the divinely-illuminated future, he saw, as no other one saw, the mission of Jesus, his trial and suffering, his rejection and reproach; and he uttered in the listening ear of Mary these words, "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in



Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."

While her heart was throbbing with painful yet subdued feeling, under the influence of the old man's words, Anna, the prophetess, a devout woman, a widow of great age, entered with a trembling step, and received the young child, "and spake of him to all those who looked for redemption in Israel." As Mary received back her child, amid this exciting scene of religious homage and uttered prophecy, varied emotions of joy and sorrow, affection and reverence, dread and submission, struggled alternately in her bosom, until her own trustful words to the angel Gabriel, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to thy word," were again breathed from her lips, and the throbings of her heart were still.

A heavenly calm spread over her lovely features, as she retired from the temple, to fulfill her solemn vows, and train her child for his destined career of suffering and triumph.



## THE VISIT OF THE MAGI.

God had determined that still other witnesses both from earth and sky should be summoned to bear testimony to the great fact of the incarnation. Hence, a strange, bright star shone out from the clear sky, differing from all the heavenly bodies in the planetary system. *These* are distant, and move remotely through the fields of space—*that* was nearer the earth, that it might answer the purpose assigned it. *These* have a circular motion—*that* described no orbit. *These* are permanent, and shine on from age to age—*that*, having completed its mission, disappeared forever. This peculiar phenomenon, called a *star*, was seen by the Eastern Magi—priests and philosophers of Arabia and Persia—men skilled in the various aspects of the heavens, not easily deceived, not likely to be drawn from their native country to Jerusalem, without an intelligent conviction that the appearance upon which they gazed was extraordinary, portending some great and wonderful event.

Comets had ever been held in reverence by Eastern nations, as prognostic of good or evil, and they had often made kings tremble upon their



thrones, or nerved the arm and fired with new courage the heart of the soldier. This, though not a comet, was evidently regarded by the wise men as supernatural, and they yielded themselves to its guidance, and were led by it to the city of Jerusalem and to the palace of Herod.

Apart, in solitary state, the monarch sat, darkly musing upon the condition of his provinces, when one of his attending officers announced the arrival of the distinguished Magi. When ushered into his august presence, they bowed reverently, and said, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen *his* star in the east, and are come to worship him." The dark spirit of jealousy was at once aroused by this unexpected inquiry, and at once assembling the chief priests and scribes—interpreters of Jewish prophecy—demanded of them where Christ should be born. They turned to the sacred books, and replied by quoting the prophecy of Micah, which designated Bethlehem as the place of his birth.

The crafty monarch, concealing his troubled emotions, now turned to the wise men and privately asked them, "What time the star appeared?" As they commenced giving its brief history,



he interrupted them by saying, "Go to Bethlehem, and search diligently for the young child, and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him." Little did his ambitious and haughty spirit care for worship; but he would employ these inquiring Magi to discover his hated rival.

Obedient to his command, the Magi departed, and greatly to their joy, the star still beamed in the firmament, and soon it began to move in the direction of Bethlehem, when presently it rested over the humble abode of Joseph and Mary. As they came near, they wondered, and inquired among themselves, whether so mean a tenement could be the birth-place of him, who is to be the King of the Jews? But the guiding star had designated this as the sacred spot, and they entered. Mary, startled at their strange appearance and unusual garb, pressed the child to her timorous and beating heart; but her fear subsided as they knelt before the infant king and presented their rich offerings of gold and gems, of frankincense and myrrh. "This child," said the chief of the Magi, as he placed his hand upon his head, "is born to a noble destiny, and God has sent us,



from the far East, to worship at his shrine. He shall be king in Israel, and all nations shall do him homage."

These Eastern Magi were, doubtless, Gentiles, and are to be regarded as the first pledges of the rending of the vail—of the breaking down of the partition-wall—of the obliteration of the distinction which had so long existed between the Jewish and Gentile world.

Meekly did Mary again receive this Divine confirmation of her faith, and when the excitement of the scene had passed, the little group are wrapped in quiet slumber.

A dark storm is gathering. The persecution which was to follow the Saviour through his entire life, up to his great agony on the cross, is about to commence. And the Lord appeared to Joseph as he slumbered, and said, "Arise and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word; for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him." Such was the mandate, that stole upon the ear of Joseph in the deep silence of the night; and hastily gathering up their scanty store, ere the morning's dawn had awakened the sleeping world, these



favored objects of Heaven's care were on their way to the appointed land of refuge.

THE MURDER OF THE INNOCENTS.

Vainly did Herod wait the return of the Magi; for not to the humble abode in Bethlehem only had the angel been sent that night with a message from on high. The sages, too, heard the command of Heaven, and wishing to defeat the now revealed will of the tyrant, they returned to their own country another way. But who shall describe the wrath of the incensed monarch, or conceive the plans of vengeance that filled his soul, when he discovered that his commands were set at naught? Or who can paint the gloom, that settled like a pall over the land, when the dire decree went forth to slay all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, that the newly-discovered rival to his throne might not escape?

Who can tell the anguish of mothers, as day after day, they were terrified by the tramp of approaching soldiery, or startled from their midnight slumbers, only to see their little ones butchered before their eyes? Then was a "voice heard in



Rama, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning; Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted because they were not.”

The tyrant was inexorable; not all the pleadings of maternal fondness, nor the cries of infantile weakness, could mitigate or avert the terrible decree. No responsive echo was heard in his dark soul to the voices of warning from the unseen world. Every pure and generous emotion had long since been crushed by the ceaseless tread of human passions and human crimes. Already had he slain Hyrcanus, his wife's grandfather, at the venerable age of eighty—his lovely and virtuous partner, and three of his own children, on principles of jealousy; and now he closes the bloody drama by the murder of all the innocents of Bethlehem.

Not long, however, was this monster of cruelty permitted to cumber the earth. He, who had reveled in the death-struggles of others, and trampled upon the tenderest relations, must meet the king of terrors in his most dreaded form. While writhing in anguish with the most loathsome disease, he ordered the chief men of Judea to be convened, and shut up in the circus; and then, calling



his family together, he said, "I know that the Jews will rejoice at my death. You have these men in your custody. So soon as I am dead, and before it can be known publicly, let in the soldiers upon them, and kill them." Josephus says, that "with tears in his eyes, he conjured them by their love and fidelity to him, not to fail to obey his orders."

When this cruel and hated monarch had thus perished from the earth, the watchful Gabriel sped his way to Egypt, and, standing beside the couch of the sleeping Joseph, he said, "Arise, take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel; for they are dead, who sought the young child's life." Obedient to the divine voice, they started; but hearing on their way, that Archilaus, Herod's son, by his fifth wife, had succeeded to the throne of his father, and that he had distinguished the very commencement of his reign by acts of cruelty, they were afraid to go thither, and being again warned of God in a dream, they turned aside into the parts of Galilee, and came and dwelt in Nazareth, their native town, hallowed by all the tender reminiscences of their earlier days.

Years roll by, and we hear no more of the Vir-



gin and her son, until we find him in the temple disputing with the doctors, and displaying a depth of wisdom, which both startled and confounded them.

We confess to our eagerness often to lift the veil, and gaze in upon that domestic group, and see how the mother's care was rewarded by the docility and meekness of her child—how he grew in wisdom and in favor both with God and man—what the secret workings of his inner life were—what hopes fringed the future, or what fears threw over it their dark shadow. But over the scenes of his early childhood, the Scriptures shed no clear or certain light. We know, however, that during the period of his minority he dwelt in Nazareth, subject to his parents, and following the humble occupation of his father.

In the mean time, a voice had been heard in the wilderness, crying, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord."

Eighteen years from the time of his appearance in the temple, when the divinity stirred within him rolled away, before he entered upon the scenes of his public ministry, and received the divine anointing, and the announcement from heaven was



heard saying, "This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased." As no after mention is made of Joseph, the inference is, that Mary was left a widow, who followed, as a humble and trustful disciple, the suffering course of her Divine Son, even up to his tragic death upon the cross. As she gazed upon that scene, and witnessed all his mysterious agony, how must her maternal feelings have struggled within her! And how inimitably beautiful and touching, in the midst of his dying agonies, is his kind remembrance of his mother.

As she stood weeping at the foot of the cross, he said, "Woman, behold thy son." And then, turning his eyes to John, he said, "Son, behold thy mother." Thus, having committed her to the care of his beloved disciple, he meekly gave up the ghost. Thus did the mother of Jesus, in her loneliness and widowhood, find a shelter and a home in the house of that beloved disciple, whose heart ever throbbed with the kindest and tenderest emotions. There she lived, esteemed by the early Christian Church, for her virtues, revered as the mother of our Lord, until, as Eusebius informs us, some fifteen years after the Crucifixion, she ascended to be reunited to Him, to whom she had



sustained so mysterious, yet endearing, a relationship on earth.

In a brief review of her history we are impressed with her purity, and lofty faith.

The reasons why she was so highly favored above all the Daughters of Zion, in being chosen to be the mother of our Lord, may not be obvious to us; but that she was preëminently devout, a true daughter of Abraham, a beautiful example of the piety which breathed and burned in the ancient Hebrew church, when the faith of God's people fed upon the promise of a coming Messiah, there can be no doubt. It was earnest faith in the Unseen that formed the substratum of her character. When the angel appeared to her, with the startling announcement, that she would conceive and bring forth a Son, under the overshadowing influence of the Holy Ghost, though agitated for a moment, though reason could not fathom the mystery—though the thing was unprecedented, and the eye of sense could perceive no law by which it might be effected, yet in the exercise of a sublime faith, she realized that all things were possible with God. Unbelief might have suggested insurmountable obstacles, or a self-



ish prudence might have arrayed before her excited imagination the cold suspicions and alienation of Joseph, the condemnation of the world, the death penalty for her supposed crime. But no sooner does she recognize the heavenly origin of the annunciation, than she leaves all the issues with God, bows submissively to His will, and says, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word." Throughout her entire life, in all her travels and trials, this same earnest faith is apparent. Under its influence, she hastens to the mountain home of her cousin Elizabeth, responds to her salutation in a lofty and poetic strain, alike creditable to her genius and heart—returns to meet, without a murmur, the temporary alienation of Joseph—then to pass through the crisis at Bethlehem—then to flee as a fugitive to Egypt—then to return, a homeless wanderer, back to Nazareth, and yet not a regret is in her heart, or a doubt to dim the luster of her faith.

She was the first disciple of Jesus, and worshiped him as God, while she cherished him as her son. Neither did she desert him, when the world scorned him—when his own friends forsook him—when Judas betrayed him—when the chief priests adjudged



him to be worthy of death—or when the great crisis of his agony came. But she was there to witness her son tread the wine-press of the wrath of God alone—to see the warm blood gush from those sacred temples, which she had once pillowed upon her own maternal bosom.

We confess, when we contemplate the faith and affection of this Daughter of Zion, we do not wonder at the veneration with which she was held by the early church. And is there not danger that we Protestants, when we see the profane worship rendered to the mother of our Lord by Papists, should defraud her of the honor that is her due? Her exalted virtues and mysterious relationships were understood and appreciated by the early church; but never was she considered worthy of divine honors—never was the petition addressed to her, *Ora pro nobis*, until error crept into the church, and the shadows of a partial eclipse began to obscure her primitive luster. Not until early in the sixth century did the intercessions of the Holy Virgin begin to supersede those of her divine Son. Then poetry and painting helped to inspire the devotees of Rome with an undue reverence for the mother of our Lord, and gradually it expanded



into adoration and worship. Finally, as the deepening shadows increased, and the light of primitive piety became extinct; churches were dedicated to her honor, her praises mingled with the vesper song, and prayers became permanently incorporated in the Sacred Liturgy, for her interposition and help.

While we would honor the virtues of the woman, commend her piety for imitation, we can never cease to *condemn* the gross idolatry of a corrupted church.









Staal.

Bannister.

THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA.



## THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA.

**I**T is high noon, and a traveler, care-worn and weary, is seated beside an ancient well of Samaria. He has been expelled from Jerusalem and from its gorgeous temple, where bleeding sacrifices had been offered and costly rites celebrated—all typical of himself. But when he came, as predicted, in the form of a man, and in the garb of poverty, and not, as expected by the Jews, in the pomp and splendor of the world, they rejected both his person and his mission. He had healed their sick, he had entered their abodes of poverty with the words of blessing, he had raised the dead, he had pointed to his works, as the undeniable proofs of his divine mission; but all this failed to convince them, and they were determined to drive him from their city and country.



history shows, a *bad* woman; but still, she needed what she had no intention of receiving—she needed water, not from Jacob's well, but from the well-springs of eternal life.

At this juncture, Jesus gives her some intimation of the nature of his person and the design of his mission; “and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.” He employed the beautiful and expressive figure of water to represent the purity, the freeness, the refreshing and purifying influence of the blessing he was able to confer. But the saying of Jesus was dark to her; she had no conception of better water than could be drawn from Jacob's well; he himself had drank there, his children, and his cattle. She prided herself upon being a descendant of Jacob; and this well had come down, through thronging and cherished associations, as a gift and a blessing from the venerable patriarch to the Samaritans. She felt almost indignant at the suggestion, that he, a *way-farer* and a *Jew*, should presume to furnish water purer and fresher than that which she was accustomed to draw. And besides, if he thought to draw



from this well, he was destitute of the necessary means: "Whence, then," says she, "hast thou that living water?"

Jesus now introduces a beautiful contrast between the water of Jacob's well and that which he was able to furnish: "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again." It only affords a temporary relief—a momentary gratification. It is neither a satisfying nor a permanent good. "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." Here there is a real good, a permanent blessing. The selfish desires of the woman are excited, but still she has no conception of the rich bestowment. Her mind is carnal, her thoughts are groveling and earthly, and she saith unto him, "Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw." This language implies, that she had no just apprehension of the meaning of the Saviour's words, and no preparation of heart for the reception of the blessing which he came to bestow. She would like to be relieved from the fatigues of her daily toil. She would like a water possessing such re-



markable qualities as to supersede the annoyance of thirst, and the necessity of repairing to the well for the purpose of meeting her urgent and everyday wants. But we doubt whether she had any confidence in Jesus, as being able to furnish such water, and her request was probably the language of irony rather than the simple and earnest desire of her heart.

Jesus now, with the most consummate skill, and without any apparent design, proceeds to expose her guilt and her manner of life. "Go," says he, "call thy husband, and come hither." With a careless indifference she replied, "I have no husband." Jesus said unto her, "Thou hast well said, I have no husband; for thou hast had five husbands, and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband; in that saidst thou truly."

The woman is startled at this announcement; not that it is strange or new to her, but that a stranger, whom she had casually met, who had no intercourse with her countrymen, and consequently could not have been informed of the facts of her previous history, should thus be able to mirror forth the characteristic features of her life. Though he was gentle and unostentatious, yet



there was an earnest and quiet dignity in his manner, which gave tremendous power to this revelation of her guilt. She felt condemned for her sin, and overwhelmed with the conviction that she was in the presence of One who knew her whole life. She could not deny the allegation touching her present criminal connection, or her past irregular conduct; and hence, with troubled emotions, she replied, "Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet—a person gifted with superior knowledge, and favored with secret revelations from the Most High.

Stung by self-mortification and reproach, she desired to divert the mind of the Saviour from conversation so painful as that touching her personal guilt, and endeavored to draw him into a controversy as to the appropriate place of worship. "Our fathers worshiped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." This had long been a vexed question between the Jews and Samaritans—the former maintaining that Mount Zion was the spot on which the temple was to be erected. Accordingly, after their return from their captivity in Babylon, and by the authority of God, they set



about the work. The Samaritans, at first, proposed to assist them ; but the Jews, perceiving that they were actuated by political motives rather than from any love for true religion, declined their offer. This greatly exasperated the Samaritans, and, with Sanballat at their head, endeavored to defeat the efforts of Nehemiah in building the walls. Foiled in this, they at length obtained leave of the Persian monarch to build a temple for themselves. This was erected on Mount Gerisim, a short distance from Sychar ; and they strenuously contended, that that was the spot designated by Moses as the place where the nation should worship. Priests were selected irrespective of the Levitical order, rites were celebrated, and thus the religion of the Samaritans was perpetuated, and became, of course, a constant source of quarrel and alienation between the two nations.

The Saviour, however, was not to be drawn into an unimportant matter in relation to the place or the formalities of worship. His aim was to impress the mind of the woman with the importance of personal religion—*spiritual worship*—superior to any which consists in mere outward form or ceremony. Hence his reply: “Woman, believe



me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father." The dispensation of forms and onerous services is about to close—a new and better one is about to commence, when "the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship Him." He needs no ecclesiastical pomp of pillars and fretted roof as the *place*, or golden censers and gorgeous vestments as the *means* of acceptable worship. He demands the worship of the inner man; and he is the most acceptable worshiper who presents to Him "the offering of a broken heart and a contrite spirit; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." The broad, all-brilliant arch of heaven, or the quiet grove, vocal with the carol of bird-voices, or even the humble cottage, may be the temple where such sacrifices are offered. In addressing the true worshipers, the apostle says, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? For the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." There were those in the days of our Saviour who were continually chanting the praises of the temple; whose religion consisted in a heartless observ-



ance of forms and outward display; and there are those in these latter days who are ever speaking of *the church*—the beauty of its worship, and the regular succession of its priesthood. Now, Jesus, by his reply to the woman of Samaria, would teach us, that forms, and chants, and regular successions are of vastly less importance than the worship of the heart. Not that he was indifferent to an appropriate form; for every thing in his kingdom must be done decently and in order. He recognized the Hebrew ritual as of Divine appointment—as adapted to facilitate the purposes of worship, and through which a knowledge of God could be secured and retained. The form of the Samaritan worship had never received the Divine sanction, and its tendency was only in the direction of darkness and error. Hence he says to the woman, “Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship; for salvation is of the Jews.” God had selected them out of all the nations of the earth as the depositories of His word, as the honored agency for preserving and perpetuating the knowledge of himself in a dark and degenerate world. The Samaritans, on the contrary, had received no such honor, but were aliens from the



truth, and had built a temple, and adopted a corrupted form of worship, without Divine authority. Our Saviour, therefore, indirectly though really, settled the question at issue as to the place of worship; yet so settled it, as to leave the impression that place and form were of less consequence than the moral state of the affections.

The woman, though she recognized the weary traveler before her as a prophet, seems not to have been satisfied with his exposition, and said unto him, "I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ; when he is come, he will tell us all things." The Samaritans receiving, as they did, the Pentateuch, cherished the expectation of a coming Messiah. They believed that he would instruct them more perfectly as to the manner of their faith and worship. The conversation had now reached that point when a sublime and startling announcement might be made. The mind of the woman had become interested; she had acknowledged that the person speaking to her was a prophet, and hence truthful and worthy of confidence; she had confessed her belief in the Messiah; and Jesus could say to her what he could not say to the Jews, for they were not able to bear



it, "*I that speak unto thee am he.*" The truth flashed upon her mind as from a thousand mirrors. She bowed to his Divine authority, and believed; and, forgetful of every thing else, and in an ecstasy of joy, "she left her water-pot, and went away into the city, and saith to the men, Come, see a man that told me all things that ever I did! Is not *this* the Christ?" She was doubtless converted to the faith of Jesus; yet she states her faith modestly, in the form of an inquiry, lest she should appear to dictate in a matter, of all others the most important, and deserving the highest consideration. In the streets of the city she boldly declared, that—

"He told me of things that I deemed were unknown,  
Save unto myself and my chosen alone;  
And all that I knew he perused in my soul,  
As it bowed to his will, and confessed his control.

"A prophet! a prophet!" I uttered, amazed;  
'Our God for His people a prophet hath raised!  
An angel hath come from the light of His throne,  
The Messiah at last to the world to make known!"

"O'erawed by his words, from his presence I turned,  
With my heart full of thought, as it flutter'd and burn'd  
With the weight of the marvels I heard and I saw,  
By that fountain whose water I wandered to draw.



“ Thus, thus have I told what so lately befell  
My wondering soul at the patriarch’s well ;  
Where the waters, though sweet, as the wayfarer sips,  
Yet sweeter the words of that bright stranger’s lips.”

This simple testimony of the woman produced no little excitement in the city of Sychar. She preached Christ unto the people, and their hearts seemed to have been opened to receive the truth ; for they assembled in multitudes at Jacob’s well, and heard from the lips of Jesus himself the wonderful works of God ; and many believed on him, not from the saying of the woman merely, but they heard for themselves, and knew that he was indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.

From this instructive narrative some important lessons may be learned.

We see manifested the two natures of Jesus of Nazareth. He appeared, as he sat weary upon the well, as a man. As such, he was subject to human infirmities. He wearied as a man ; he thirsted as a man ; he hungered as a man, “ for his disciples were gone away into the city to buy meat ;” he possessed social sympathies as a man. If we pass beyond the simple record of the narrative, we find the proofs of his humanity scattered all along his



history, from his birth to his death. He increased in knowledge and wisdom and stature as a man; he toiled, and was tempted, and suffered and died as a man. But he was not *merely* a man. He was "God manifest in the flesh." He knew the character of the woman of Samaria, as God; he knew the thoughts of men, as God; he cast out devils, he healed the sick, and raised the dead, as a Divine Being. He confidently pointed to his works, and said to his accusers, "These are my witnesses," and they bore ample proof of the divinity of his mission. And when the woman of Samaria expressed her belief in a coming Messiah, he positively declared, "I that speak unto thee am he." Could he have been mistaken? Did he not know his own nature, offices, and work? He, then, who sat on the well, and talked thus with the woman, was *God-man*—"the Christ, the Saviour of the world."

We see the nature of true religion. It is not a mere form, or outward ceremony. It is represented under the figure of water—"a well of water, springing up into everlasting life." It is a *purifying principle*—it makes men better, holier, cleansing them of the impurities of an unholy life. It is an open and ample fountain, in which all may wash



and be clean. It is a *satisfying principle*—"Who-soever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall *never* thirst." Men drink at other fountains—the fountain of sensual pleasure—the fountain of earthly abundance and popular applause—and thirst again. They are not satisfied with temporal good; it does not make them happy. Give them all that their greedy imaginations may have coveted—wealth, fame, and sensual gratification—and they are continually thirsting for more. Nothing short of true religion can meet the deep, strong, earnest desires of the human soul. This, too, is an *active principle*; this well of water is continually "springing up into everlasting life." The water never becomes stagnant and still, and consequently impure and unhealthy. It is a *living* fountain—making verdant and fruitful every thing around it.













G. Staal

J. Bannister

MARTHA: ... was born ...

... entered there ...

... chief interest ...

The obscure ...



## M A R T H A .

**T**HE mention of places hallowed in Scripture by the miracles or presence of the Son of God, calls up a rush of old and pleasant memories. The little town of Bethlehem, the brook Kedron, the waters of the Jordan, the Lake of Gennesaret, the Mount of Olives, the Garden of Gethsemane, the hill of Calvary, can never fade from the memory of man ; and many a pilgrim will visit these places, not because they are the home of genius and art, not that they surpass all others in beauty of scenery, but that his affections may be softened and hallowed by the associations of the past. Jesus was born there, lived there, prayed there, suffered there, *died* there. This gives them their chief interest and importance.

The obscure town of Bethany has been rescued



from oblivion, because it is associated with the social kindness of Jesus, with one of his most stupendous miracles, and with his ascent to glory. It was situated on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives, about two miles from the city of Jerusalem, and was the home of Martha, Mary, and Lazarus. It was a beautiful and retired spot, to which the Saviour, in the pauses of labor and oppressed with fatigue, was wont to repair. Here his wearied human nature sought repose; here his social feelings met a kindly response; here he found the home and the heart of friendship—a green spot recovered from the selfishness of the great, wide world. Grieved, as he often must have been, at the stern opposition of the men he came to save—worn with the toils and fatigues of his arduous mission—wearied with the sights and sounds of a pleasure-loving city, it is no wonder that, at nightfall, he sought rest amid the more rural scenes and social sympathies of Bethany. Here he always found a welcome, and, if any where on earth he may be said to have had a home, it was in the family of Martha, Mary, and Lazarus. These three constituted the family group. They had tasted of sorrow—they had mourned over



the grave of the loved and the lost; *they were orphans*; and now their hearts were linked to each other in beautiful sympathy and affection. Though Jews by birth and education, and strongly attached to Moses and the prophets, their hearts had been opened to "the truth as it is in Jesus." They saw that the dispensation of rites and ceremonies was to give way to a sublimer dispensation; that Moses was to be superseded by Jesus—that the type was realized in the presence of the great and blessed Antitype. It was therefore a pious family in full sympathy with the mission of Jesus. The whole history, as recorded by the different Evangelists, is full proof of this. Many and touching are the incidents illustrative of their love for the Son of God.

Mary anointed his head with precious ointment, bathed his feet with her tears, and listened, with meekness and docility, to his instructions. Martha remembered his wants, as a man, and honored him by more active and wearisome service. Lazarus was midway between the two—the conservative party; he both sat at the feet of Jesus, and served. He aided his sister Martha in her toils, and sympathized in the quiet love and docility of



Mary. These different developments of character were the result of naturally different temperaments, yet neither proving the lack of devoted attachment. Martha, the senior of the family, was earnest and resolute, doing with her might what her hands found to do; a careful provider, looking well to the ways of her household; sometimes chafed with cares, and "cumbered with much serving." She may not have possessed the amiable sweetness or patient meekness of her sister; but in heroic fortitude, in womanly courage, in the elements of endurance, she may have surpassed her. Mary was a gentle creature, full of love and tenderness, whose heart was unused to care, who would rather throw off the toils and responsibilities of life, and make duty consist in repose, in a quiet and meditative life. Had she lived in the days of the Church's apostacy, she would not indeed have relinquished her faith in Jesus, but she would have made a beautiful recluse—a quiet and submissive nun—charmed with the solitudes of a cloister, and absorbed in the deep meditations of a devoutly religious life. Martha would have been the true sister of charity—active in relieving the wants of the needy, preparing bread for the hungry and



clothing for the naked; *cumbered still with much serving*, but none the less a Christian. Her Christian character would have developed itself in this way, rather than in a passive sentimentalism, which is more beautiful than useful, more poetic than pious.

Piety, in its outward developments, takes its shape and stamp somewhat from the characteristics nature has given us. Sometimes it is bold and active; than again it is timid and retiring: sometimes it assumes the aggressive and reformatory aspect; then again it clings, with a loving tenacity, to the present and the past. It can not endure the conflict and commotion incident to revolution or change. It sees no good in it, but rather hazard, weariness, and unnecessary labor. These various manifestations may arise, not so much from different degrees of piety, as from a difference of original temperament.

Some men are naturally fond of stir and excitement; they desire to be in motion, and to see every thing moving around them. Monotony — quietism — is positively onerous to them. They have no patience with a drone or a dreamy sentimentalist. If such persons are converted,



they will make a stir; there is no danger of a stagnation of the waters agitated by their movements. But who will say that they are altogether indebted to religion for their zeal and activity? They may have no more moral principle than the man who cultivates more the interior life—who is meditative and modest—who *acts* less and *thinks* the more—who tills noiselessly the field, for which nature, as well as grace, has fitted him. Who will venture to say that Peter was more pious than John? yet he was more active—apparently more zealous. The fact is, they were naturally different men, and grace did not annihilate their idiosyncracies of temperament or character. Their piety may have been equal—for aught we know—but Peter, from his natural temperament, was more subject to temptation than John. It may have cost him a greater struggle, more self-denial, to be a Christian, than it did the beloved disciple. John's temperament and character more readily harmonized with the principles and spirit of the gospel. He may not have had a quick and irascible temper to be overcome, or strong passions to be subdued, or peculiar susceptibilities to which temptation might powerfully appeal; and hence his love and



gentleness may not all have been moral virtue, but an amiable goodness.

Virtue, to be known, must be tried—it must come into conflict with temptation and vice; it must enter the arena of a moral encounter before we can certainly pronounce it genuine. We can conceive that a naturally irritable and fretful man, who even at times hurts his profession by occasional ebullitions of passion, may really have more piety than one who is always meek and gentle. He may have more encounters with temptation and manifest more resistance in a single day, than another may have occasion to do in a year. There is really no virtue in being or doing that which costs us nothing. The life of a Christian is represented in Scripture as a warfare—an encounter with “principalities and powers”—an earnest wrestling with the unseen enemies that war against the soul even until the mastery is gained. He who does battle against an evil temper, and conquers it, has done a noble service. “He that is slow to anger, is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit, than he who taketh a city.” He who has no *spirit* to overcome, no violent passion to conquer—who is naturally amiable and gentle—is not as much



entitled to this high encomium as he who "finds in him a law warring against the law of his mind," and yet who keeps his body under, and suffers not his inferior nature to gain the ascendancy.

We may not be sufficiently lenient in our indiscriminate censures, or cautious in our unqualified praise, not understanding the different temperaments and ruling passions of different men. Thus we apprehend that the religious world have not been sufficiently charitable to Martha, forgetting the natural bent of her disposition; and she has been censured as worldly, selfish, and irritable. Mary, on the contrary, has been cherished as a model of perfection—the gem of that beloved family. We would be the last to detract from her excellence. She also did the Saviour honor; she exhibited the true heart of woman—her whole nature was tuned to the melodies of love; she made choice of that "good part" which shall never be taken from her. But is there any evidence that Martha had not chosen the same "good part?" There is abundant proof to the contrary. Her love and piety were manifested in receiving Jesus to her house, and in aiming to provide suitable entertainment for so distinguished a guest. It was an



exhibition of her faith and obedience in the mode most agreeable to her active and industrious temperament.

The bent of Mary's mind led her in a different direction. But had both been of the same mind, there would have been a fast in the house of Bethany, rather than a feast, and Jesus would have hungered in the family of his friends. He accepts the free-will offering of both, and it was only when Martha suffered her anxiety, for a moment, to get the better of her charity, that she erred, and received that gentle rebuke—"Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things." This does not imply any lack of confidence in Martha, any distrust of her piety. A written testimonial is given of his affection for *her*, as well as for the other members of the family: "Now Jesus loved *Martha*, and her sister, and Lazarus."

Behold again their different traits of character when sorrow enters their dwelling. Both are anxious, both watch beside the patient sufferer, and listen with troubled hope to his labored breathing. The thoughts of both are turned to Jesus; but he is away—far beyond Jerusalem. He returns not with the messenger, who had been



sent to inform him that his friend Lazarus was sick. "Why does he not come?" inquire the anxious sisters. "If he were here, our brother would not die."

The cloud deepens—the dreaded calamity hastens—the awful crisis has come—and the beloved Lazarus is dead! And will not Jesus be there to attend the rites of sepulture, and mourn with the bereaved sisters of Bethany? He is not there, and the blow has fallen, like a thunderbolt, upon their crushed hearts. Mary, that delicate and loving creature, who had sat at the feet of Jesus, is stricken, like a defenseless thing, to the earth. The blow was too much for her. She sits now in her disconsolate dwelling, like a motionless statue, *dumb with grief*. Her heart is breaking with sorrow.

Martha also is sad—feels deeply her loss; but her lofty faith is turned to Jesus, and patiently does she wait his coming. She turns her anxious eye to Jericho, and then she looks with a steadfast gaze over the Mount of Olives, that she may recognize, amid the numerous passers-by, the well-known form of Jesus. At length she beholds, through the dim and early twilight, the form of



a man. She is told that it is Jesus who is coming; and as soon as she heard that, she ran and met him—"but Mary sat still in the house." Whose heart is now responsive to the coming of her Lord, and hastens to express her sublime faith in him who is the resurrection and the life? "Lord," says she, "if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee." Jesus saith unto her—"Thy brother shall rise again." She doubts not, but says—"Yea, Lord, I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world." The intimation that her brother should rise again—that he should come back from the land of darkness and corruption, and move again in this living world—was too strange and joyful news to be kept for a moment in her own heart, and she hastens to her disconsolate sister, and says—"The Master is come, and calleth for thee." At this announcement, Mary awakes from her delirium of grief, arises quickly, and comes to Jesus. The Jews, who supposed that she was going to the grave to yield to the uncontrollable passion of grief, followed her. She falls at the feet of Jesus, and says, in the language of Martha—



“Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.” Mary, Martha, and their Jewish friends were all assembled, and weeping with inconsolable sorrow. At this sublime spectacle of mingled grief and affection, “Jesus wept,” and said—“Where have ye laid him?” He is directed to the mouth of the cave. He prays; earnest and tremulous were the tones of his voice.

“He ceased—

And for a minute’s space there was a hush,  
As if the angelic watchers of the world  
Had stayed the pulses of all breathing things,  
To listen to that prayer.”

“Take ye away the stone,” said Jesus. For a moment, doubt and faith alternate in the bosom of the anxious Martha—but faith, at length, triumphs. “And Jesus cried with a loud voice—Lazarus, come forth!”

“O God! what means that strange and sudden sound

That murmurs from the tomb—that ghastly head,

With funeral fillets bound?

It is a living form!

The loved—the lost—the *won*—

Won from the grave, corruption, and the worm!

‘And is this the Son of God?’

They whispered; while the sisters poured

Their gratitude in tears—for they had known the Lord.”



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Staal.

Bannister.

MARY MAGDALENE.

Engraved by  
J. Bannister



## MARY MAGDALENE.

“Not she with trait’rous kiss her Saviour stung;  
Not she denied him with unholy tongue:  
She, while apostles shrank, could danger brave—  
Last at his cross, and earliest at his grave.”

WOMAN has acted a very prominent part in the great drama of this world’s affairs. Given to man as his solace and the sharer of his joys, she soon proved the occasion of his ruin. But if, through her, Paradise lost the beauty of its vernal bloom, *through her* the curse shall be removed, and earth restored to the joy of its primeval state. It is written, “The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent’s head.” If she was first in transgression, she has never been last in attempting to heal the breach and remove the evil. If she has occasionally been seen like a fallen angel, despoiled of her virtue, treading the walks of pol-



lution and shame, with her crown of glory trailing in the dust, she has again risen to her proper sphere as the companion of man, the joy of his heart, and the star of his hope.

Honorable mention is made in the Old Testament of the names of Sarah, Rachel, and Rebecca; of Hannah, Esther, and Ruth; of Deborah, Abigail, and the woman of Shunem. They were the heroines of their age—the lesser lights of a dark dispensation—maintaining their faith and fealty to truth amid conflicting scenes of falsehood and error. They are an ornament to Jewish history, and their courage, fortitude, and heroic faith are enshrined in immortal memory. But woman emerges from the older dispensation, where mysterious shadows swept over the moral landscape, into a calmer and brighter region, illumined by a clearer sun—and here she appears in her true dignity, with her brow radiant with the hope of a better and a happier life. What immortal honor was put upon the virgin of Nazareth, when the startling salutation from the lips of an angel fell upon her ears, awakening all the slumbering echoes of her soul: “Hail, thou that art highly favored! the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou



among women. Behold, thou shalt conceive, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS!"

As we trace the historic record, the name of Mary, the mother of Jesus, stands first in the list of female worthies, who were distinguished for the part they acted in favoring the mission of the Son of God. They often attended him in his pilgrimages—were his companions in sorrow—were co-laborers in his toils—were witnesses of his last sufferings, and the heralds of his resurrection. They were true women, "of whom the world was not worthy"—a galaxy of stars, that shed their mild light upon *us*, even in these far ages of the church.

But of all the women of the New Testament, perhaps the history of none is more thrilling or interesting than that of Mary Magdalene. Her name is derived from Magdala, the place of her residence, a small town on the shore of the Sea of Tiberias. She is first introduced to our notice as a sinner; some have supposed a notorious and abandoned sinner, from whom was cast by our Saviour seven devils. It is inferred that a heart which was the abode of so many evil spirits, must have been notoriously corrupt, and that her life was correspondingly wicked and abandoned. The evil spirits



are made to personify and represent so many bad passions of her depraved nature, such as *lust, pride, vanity, envy, avarice, jealousy, and revenge*. Such a group of evil spirits, it is supposed, had excluded from the heart every good and generous impulse, and that she was a person who was lost to all sense of shame, and cherished no secret desires for the good and true. This *may* be, but the evidence from Scripture is not sufficiently satisfactory. We are rather inclined to the belief, that she was afflicted, as many in the days of our Saviour were, *literally* with evil spirits; that she was a *demoniac*—and more to be pitied than blamed. This does not preclude the idea that she was a sinner—for such she is positively declared to have been. Her peculiar affliction may have been a chastisement for previous sin. But our Saviour, in casting out the evil spirits, also healed her of her moral malady, and made her a new creature in Christ Jesus.

Touched with a sense of gratitude for so inestimable a blessing, she was ready, at all times, to express her affection for the Son of God. Accordingly, when he was invited by Simon, an opulent Pharisee, to dine with him, and while he sat at meat, or, rather, was reclining, after the custom of the East,



behold, Mary Magdalene is seen standing behind him, expressing her mingled emotions of penitence and gratitude, by tears falling, like rain-drops, upon the Saviour's feet.

Her beautiful offering was not yet complete, and she therefore took an alabaster box of very precious ointment, which she had previously prepared, and anointed the feet of her benefactor—swollen, perhaps, with the fatigue of going upon his frequent pilgrimages of mercy. What an exhibition of love and humility is here!

“With tears she washed his sacred feet,  
And wiped them with her flowing hair;  
And freely took the ointment sweet,  
And poured the costly fragrance there.”

This beautiful token of affection, instead of exciting the admiration of the proud Pharisee, awakened the suspicion that his distinguished guest could not be a prophet, or that he was not sufficiently cautious in his deportment. He was indignant that a woman of her reputation should have obtruded herself into his house, much more that she should have made familiar with his guest.

Though our Lord accurately marked the revolving



thoughts of the Pharisee, he did not directly charge him with the want of justice and charity, but had recourse to his usual mode of conveying instruction and reproof, by a parable of two debtors, who owed different sums to the same creditor, yet received from him an equal and ample discharge. Simon, on being asked which of these two would feel the warmest love for so generous a benefactor, readily admitted that he who had received the greatest favor was the most likely to express the strongest sense of gratitude. In making this acknowledgment, he was not aware that he condemned his own want of liberality, and gave a powerful testimony in favor of the penitent woman, who had been the object of his unjust censure. Jesus made an application of the parable to the deep mortification of the Pharisee and the approval of the conduct of Mary. “And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet; but she hath washed my feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss; but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint; but this woman



hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much; but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.”

This act of Mary in anointing the feet of Jesus, was the first public testimonial of her love—the first of a series of acts that continued until her Lord’s ascension to glory. She often attended him in his travels—administered to his earthly necessities—stood by him in the hour of peril—went with him on his last journey to Jerusalem—witnessed his arrest, his trial, his crucifixion. The apparent disgrace of Jesus—the cruel aspersions which wicked men aimed to cast upon his character—did not weaken her confidence, neither did the bristling array of Roman soldiery, or the violence of the mob, awaken her fears, and lead her to abandon her Saviour in the hour of his greatest trial. Her courage and heroism are equal to her love. She is not to be intimidated or driven from her purpose to see the end of her Saviour’s agonies; and, while stouter hearts failed and trembled with fear, Mary’s heart is steady and true as a needle to the pole.

Woman’s love! we are constrained to say, how



strong it is! "Many waters can not quench it, neither can the floods drown it."

"Oh, woman's love! at times it may  
Seem cold, or clouded, but it burns  
With true, undeviating ray,  
Nor *ever* from its idol turns."

Such was the love of Mary. She had been forgiven much, and she loved much. But the crucifixion scene has passed. The convulsions of nature have ceased to agitate the earth—the excited and angry multitude retire from the Hill of Calvary to Jerusalem, to rejoice in what had been done, and indulge in their insane and heartless revelry—the night-shadows are settling down upon the city, until all at length is hushed and still. But where is Mary? She is not unmindful of the body of her Lord, and has gone to prepare sweet spices and ointment, that she may perform the last sad offices of affection to One whom she had so tenderly loved. Having done this, she "rested on the Sabbath-day, according to the commandment."

"Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, while it was yet dark," Mary, in company with others, starts upon her mission of love. On their dark and perilous way to the



sepulcher, they said among themselves, "Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulcher?" At this suggestion, Mary Magdalene—more courageous than the rest, unprotected and alone, and regardless of the danger of meeting the Roman soldiers—presses forward and reaches the sepulcher first, and finds the stone rolled away, and the body of Jesus gone. Astonished and distressed, "she ran to Simon Peter, and that other disciple whom Jesus loved," who were on their way to the sepulcher, and said unto them, "They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulcher, and we know not where they have laid him."

Startled at this announcement, they hasten, and found as Mary had said unto them. By this time, Mary the mother of James, and Salome—the companions in Mary Magdalene's toils and trials—had reached the sepulcher, and had seen an angel, who had announced to them the fact that Jesus was not there, but had risen as he said; and they silently left the sepulcher, for they were sore afraid. The disciples also had gone again to their own homes. "But Mary stood without at the sepulcher, weeping; and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulcher, and seeth two angels in



white sitting, the one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. And they say unto the woman, Why weepest thou?" Nothing terrified by the voice or appearance of these strange celestials, and though deserted by her companions and the disciples, she replied, "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him; and when she had thus said, she turned herself back," and discovered in the haze of the morning twilight the outlines of a man, and heard a voice addressing her, "Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away."

Forgetful of self, unmindful of her unprotected condition, she seems engrossed in the one all-absorbing thought of securing the body of her Lord. It was, with her, a moment of deep perplexity and trial; and Jesus, discovering the trembling anxiety of her heart, addressed her by her own familiar name, "Mary?" She recognized the tones of that well-remembered voice, and, in an ecstasy of joy, responded, "Rabboni! which is to say, My Master."



“ Weeper! to thee how bright a morn was given  
 After thy long, long vigil of despair,  
 When that high voice which burial rocks had riven,  
 Thrilled with immortal tones the silent air!  
 Never did clarion’s royal blast declare  
 Such tale of victory to a breathless crowd,  
 As the deep sweetness of one word could bear  
 Into thy heart of hearts, O woman! bowed  
 By strong affection’s anguish! One low word—  
 ‘ Mary!’—and all the triumph wrung from death  
 Was thus revealed! and thou, that so hadst erred,  
 So wept and been forgiven, in trembling faith  
 Didst cast thee down before the all-conquering Son,  
 Awed by the mighty gift thy tears and love had won.”

Thus we see that Mary Magdalene, once a sinner, became the honored of the Saviour—to whom he first appeared after his resurrection, and who was commissioned to announce this great fact *first* to the anxious and trembling disciples. She loved much, for she had been forgiven much, and great is her reward in heaven. Reader—

“ Thou that hast slept in error’s sleep,  
 Oh! would’st *thou* wake in heaven?  
 Like Mary, kneel—like Mary, weep—  
*Love much*—and be forgiven.”







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