

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



*Buy me a coffee*

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>

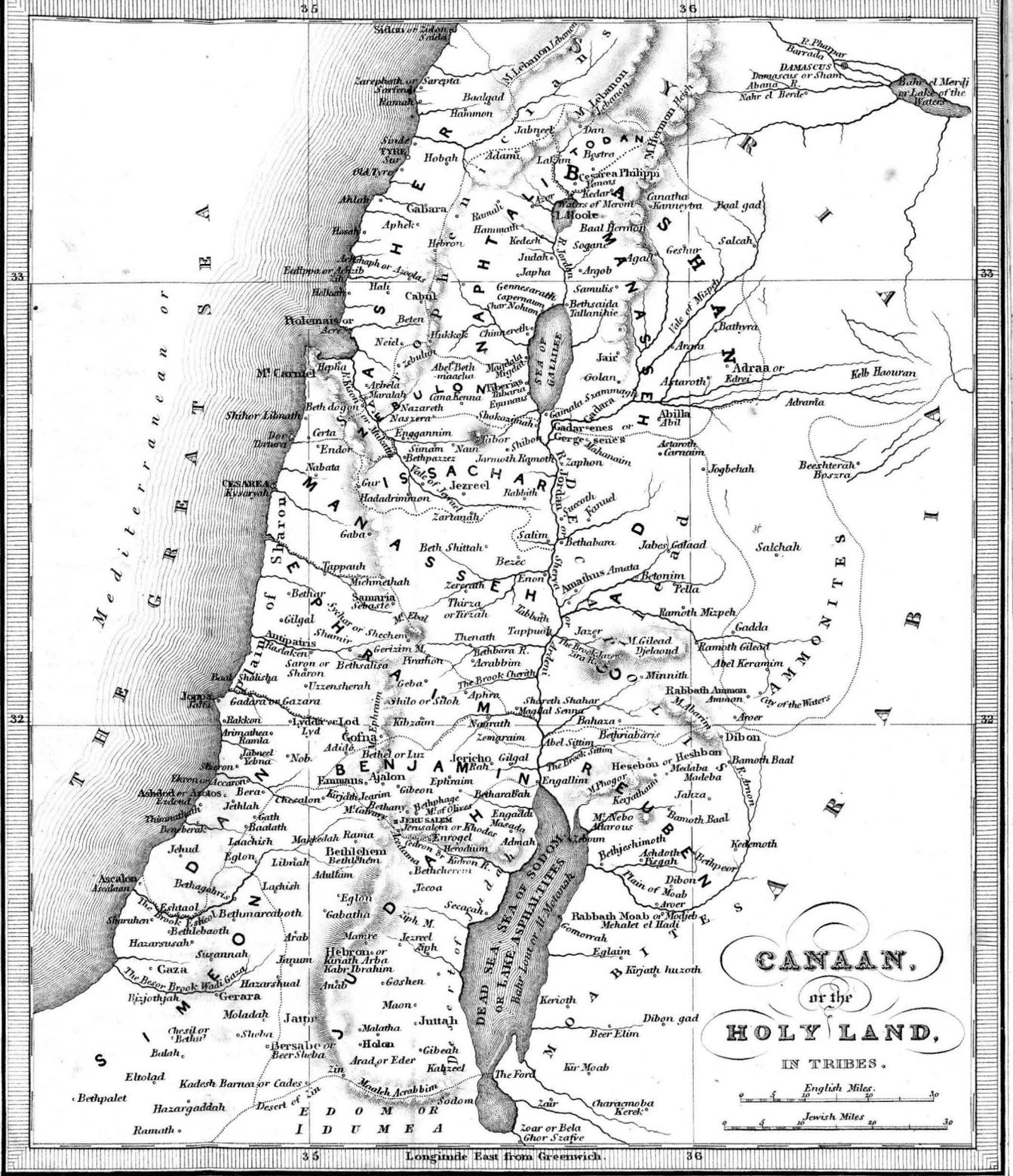


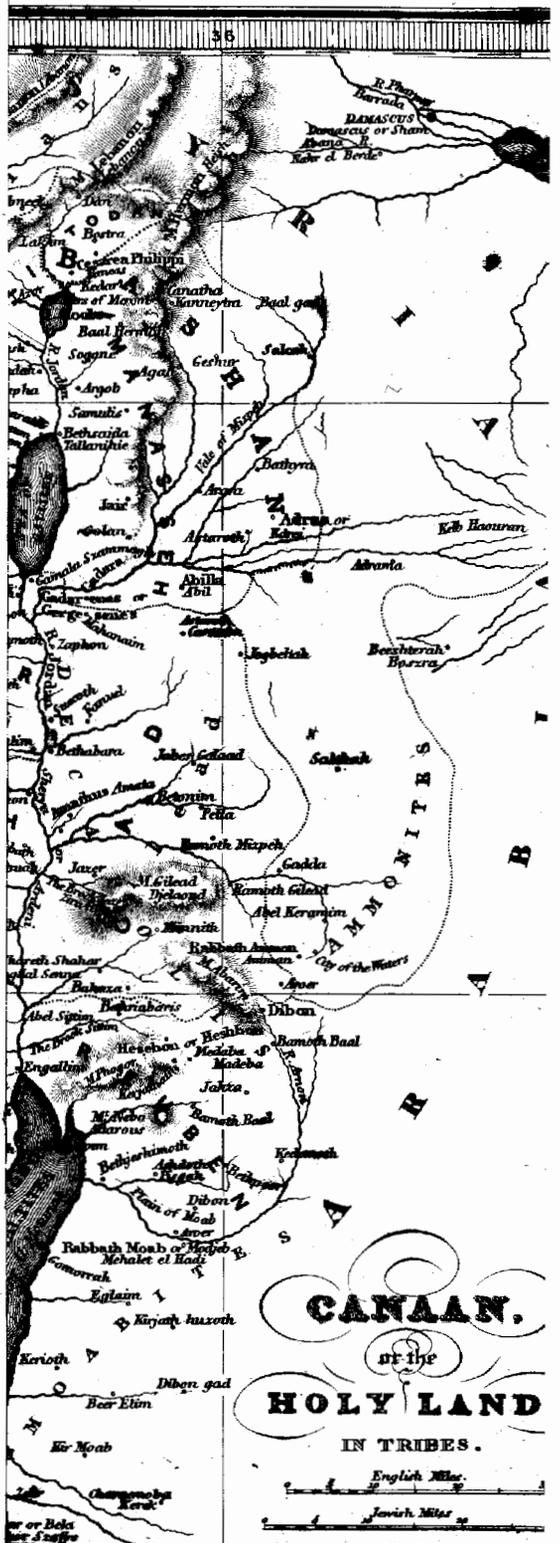
**PATREON**

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

**PayPal**

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>





**CANAAN.**  
of the  
**HOLY LAND**  
IN TRIBES.

English Miles  
Jewish Miles

NOTES,  
CRITICAL AND PRACTICAL,  
ON THE BOOKS OF  
JOSHUA AND JUDGES,

DESIGNED AS A GENERAL HELP TO  
BIBLICAL READING AND INSTRUCTION.

BY GEORGE BUSH,  
PROFESSOR OF HEBREW AND ORIENTAL LITERATURE, NEW YORK CITY UNIVERSITY.

Reprinted from the American Edition of 1838.

LONDON:  
THOMAS WARD AND CO.  
PATERNOSTER-ROW.

## P R E F A C E.

---

A VERY slight inspection of the pages of the present work will disclose to the reader its general character, and enable him to judge how far it is likely to supply an existing desideratum. Little, therefore, need be said by way of preface. My main object has been to afford facilities for the correct understanding of the sacred text—to aid the student of the Bible in ascertaining with the utmost practicable exactness the genuine sense of the original. With such an object in view it was perhaps impossible to avoid giving the work an aspect predominantly *critical*; and yet unless I have utterly missed my aim, there will be found such a union of the *critical* and the *practical*, as to adapt the volume somewhat happily to popular use. Should this prove not to be the case, I shall feel that the failure has been rather in the execution, than in the plan; for I know no reason to suppose that the two departments are intrinsically incompatible, or that the twofold function of the *exegetical* and the *ethical* expositor may not be united in the same person.

No one at all conversant with the subject of biblical annotation but must be aware, that there is a large mass of materials accumulated by the critical toil of prior commentators, and constituting a kind of common property, of which each successive labourer in the field feels at liberty to avail himself. The propriety of this is universally conceded, provided he sets up no special claim to what he finds thus made ready to his hands. Indeed it is quite obvious that the credit of *originality* in this department cannot be secur-

ed, but at the expense of the greatest measure of *utility*—an expense which I have not seen fit to incur. I have accordingly availed myself freely of all accessible sources of Scripture elucidation that could be made subservient to my plan, and have frequently interwoven with my own remarks phrases and sentences, and, in some cases, paragraphs, without the formality of express quotation. But however large may be my acknowledgment of indebtedness on this score, it is but justice to myself to say, that I have generally weighed in my own scales the evidence for or against a particular rendering or interpretation, and that after every abatement, much, very much, will be found in the present volume *not to be met with any where else*. Of the intrinsic value of these portions of the work, the estimate, of course, must be left to those for whose benefit it has been prepared.

It is my purpose, should a favourable Providence permit, to go over all the historical books of the Old Testament on the same plan. Other indispensable engagements may make the intervals of publication somewhat wide, but the matter of a similar volume to the present on the book of Genesis is already in a considerable state of forwardness, and will probably be ready for the press in the course of the ensuing year; to be followed as speedily as possible by a series of volumes on the remaining books of the Pentateuch.

G. B.

New York, June 1st, 1837.

THE  
BOOK OF JOSHUA.

---

INTRODUCTION.

I.—AUTHOR AND AGE.

THIS is the first book in the sacred canon called after the name of an individual. Of the books thus distinguished, some bear the name of their authors, as all the books of prophecy; and others, those of persons who act a conspicuous part in the transactions recorded, as Ruth, Job, and others. The present book might well be called "the Book of Joshua" on the latter ground, as it exclusively relates to the proceedings of that great leader, in fulfilment of the high commission intrusted to him, and terminates with his death. If, however, as many critics suppose, Joshua himself was the author of the book, it has a twofold claim to be distinguished by his name. But the true authorship and date of the book have never been, and probably never can be, satisfactorily ascertained; and it would be to little profit to canvass the different hypotheses which have been advanced upon the subject. The sum of the matter seems to be, (1.) That the book was either written by Joshua towards the close of his life—the five last verses being added by a properly authorised person after his death—or, (2.) That it was wholly written after his demise, from documents penned by him or under his direction. These are the substantial alternatives, and it cannot be very material which of them is adopted, as the genuineness and canonical authority of the book is in either case left entirely unaffected. If it were not written by Joshua himself, a comparison of chap. xv. 63, with 2 Sam. v. 6—8, respecting the capture of a part of Jerusalem, will make it quite evident that it must have been written before the seventh year of David's reign. But it may be safely admitted, that even on the supposition that the substance of the book was indited by Joshua, there are, in addition to the five last verses, several others interspersed which could not have been written by him, but were inserted by a later hand; and the above, for aught that appears, may have been of the number. But passages of this description are few and brief, and do not materially affect the plausibility of the

opinion which ascribes the authorship of the book to the personage whose name it bears. This opinion is confirmed, though not established, by the fact, that the general voice of Jewish tradition assigns to the book the same author.

II.—CONTENTS, SCOPE, AND DESIGN.

The book relates the history of Israel while under the command and government of Joshua; the entrance of the Hebrews into Canaan; their conquest of the greater part of the country; the division of the territory by lot among the several tribes; and the provision made for the settlement and establishment of the Jewish church in that country. The length of time embraced in this history is variously stated by chronologists, at seventeen, twenty-seven, and thirty years. Between twenty-six and twenty-seven years is the usually received and most probable period. The leading drift of the writer is to demonstrate the faithfulness of God in the perfect accomplishment of all his promises to the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, and also to Moses, that the children of Israel should obtain possession of the land of Canaan. Viewed in this light, it is an invaluable appendage to the preceding five books of Moses, and indeed bears to them very much the same relation as does the Acts of the Apostles to the Gospels of the four Evangelists. The inspired historian relates, with all the animation of one who was an actual eye-witness and participator of the scenes described, the successive miracles that favoured and secured the conquest of the country; the general zeal, activity, and obedience of Israel in prosecuting their wars, with the occasional lapses and transgressions that interrupted the career of their victories. We see the divine power and faithfulness conspicuously displayed in guiding, cherishing, and defending the chosen people amidst all the trials to which they were exposed; and while the general tenor of the narrative affords a striking emblem of the warfare of the Christian in gain-

ing possession of his heavenly inheritance, it ministers the most abundant encouragement to those who in sincerity and faith throw themselves upon the superintending care of that Being, who keepeth covenant and mercy for ever.

### III.—COMMENTATORS.

ANDRÆ MASH. *Josue Imperatoris Historia illustrata atque explicata.* Antverpiæ, 1574. Fol.

Masius, though a lawyer and a Catholic, has produced by far the most elaborate work ever published on the book of Joshua, and incomparably the most valuable commentary, with the single exception of that of Calmet, to which the Roman church can lay claim. Considering the age in which it was written, and the limited facilities which the author could have enjoyed for such a performance, it is truly a remarkable work, and it will rather enhance the reader's estimation of its merit to know, that it comes within the list of books prohibited by the Papal see—a fate which we might be certain *à priori* its excellence would secure to it. Pool, in the preface to his Synopsis, says of Masius: *Vir longiore vita et immortalis memoria dignus; interpres cui parem ingenio, judicio, rerum ac linguarum peritia, candore et modestia, haud facile reperies.*—“A man worthy of a longer life and of an undying celebrity; an interpreter, whose equal in talent, judgment, historical knowledge, skill in languages, candour and modesty, is not easily to be found.” Similar commendation is bestowed by Buddeus, Walchius and other bibliographers upon the commentary of Masius, and from having it constantly before me in the preparation of the ensuing notes, I feel no hesitation in sub-

scribing to the general justice of these encomiums. The work contains, besides the commentary, the book of Joshua in the original Hebrew, with the Greek of the Septuagint, and a three-fold Latin translation, together with a preface containing valuable readings to the Greek, from a manuscript copy in his possession, which since his death has unfortunately been lost to the learned world.

SEBAST. SCHMIDII. *Prælectiones academicae in octo priora libri Josue capita.* Hamburgi, 1693. 4to.

For the character of Schmid as a scriptural critic, see the list of commentators prefixed to the book of Judges. His Prelections on Joshua, which were arrested by the death of the author at the eighth chapter, are of similar character and value with those on the succeeding book.

VICTOR STRIGELII. *Liber Josue argumentis et scholiis illustratus.* Lips. 1570, 1576. 8vo.

DAVID CHYTRÆI. *Prælectiones in librum Josue.* Rostochii, 1577. 8vo.

NICOL. SERARII. *Commentarius in Librum Josue.* Duob. Tom. Mogunt. 1609. Paris. 1610. Fol.

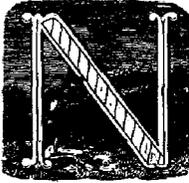
JAC. BONFRERII. *Josua, Judices, et Ruth commentario illustrati.* Paris. 1631. Fol.

H. E. G. PAULUS. *Blicke in das Buch Josua, als Vorgeschichte der Suffetin und Samuels, in auctoris Theologisch-Exegetischen Conservatorium, P. II. p. 149 et seq.* Heidelberg. 1822.

F. J. V. D. MAURER. *Commentar uber das Buch Josua.* Stuttgart, 1831. 8vo.

THE  
BOOK OF JOSHUA.

CHAPTER I.



OW after the death of Moses, the servant of the Lord, it came to pass, that the Lord spake unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying,  
a Ex. xxiv. 13. Deut. i. 38.

*Now after the death of Moses.*—Heb. "And after," &c. The use of the copulative "and" brings this book into immediate connexion with the foregoing—the last chapter of which is supposed also to have been written by Joshua—and so makes it a regular continuation of the sacred narrative begun and carried on by Moses through the five preceding books. The ancient division of the Scriptures into sections and books was less clearly marked than at present, as in those early ages several books were connected together and followed each other on the same roll, so that it might not always be perfectly easy to tell where one ended, and the other began.—The time referred to at the opening of this book, was probably at the conclusion of the thirty days' mourning for Moses, spoken of Deut. xxxiv. 8; or it might have been during that period; in which time also it is the opinion of some commentators, that the spies (chap. ii. 1,) were sent out. *The Lord spake unto Joshua.*—Of the manner of this communication we are not expressly informed. From the fact that Moses and Joshua, just before the death of the former, were summoned together into the "tabernacle of the congregation," Deut. xxxi. 14, that the dying charge of Moses might be given to his successor, it seems highly probable that the instructions and encouragements imparted on this occasion were delivered from the same place. *The servant of the Lord*—A high and honourable title, applied to Moses, not merely in the sense in which it is applied to pious and good men generally, who may justly be styled servants of the Most High, inasmuch as it is the grand aim of their lives to serve and obey him; but in this connexion carrying with it a reference to the peculiar nature of the service in which Moses was employed, viz. that of a minister, mediator, deputy, or vicegerent of God, the honoured organ through whom he communicated his will to his chosen people and managed all their varied interests. It is in this character that he stands so highly commended in the sacred

volume, having received the divine testimony to his being "found faithful in all God's house as a servant," and being expressly distinguished by this title, not only here, where God himself is pleased so to denominate him, ver. 2, but also in Rev. xv. 3, where it is said of the company standing upon the sea of glass, that they "sing the song of Moses, the servant of God." On the sense of ministerial ruling oftentimes involved in the term servant, see note Gen. xxiv. 2. *Moses' minister.*—That is, his immediate attendant, one who waited upon his person, and assisted him in business; one of whose services he availed himself in a variety of ways, as Elisha of those of Gehazi. The word is rendered in some copies of the Greek, *υπαργος*, "an under workman," in others, *θεραπευων*, "one that waits, attends upon, ministers to." Previous to the death of Moses, Joshua had been specially designated to one office which he is now called to assume, Deut. i. 38; xxxi. 3, 6—8; and for which he was peculiarly qualified by his long familiarity with Moses, and by the training which he would naturally receive in the station occupied under him. An humble and devoted spirit, a willingness to serve God in the meanest employments, is the best preparative, and often the surest precursor to posts of honour and dignity in the church. Wherever this is the case, no previous lowness or obscurity of origin is, in God's sight, an obstacle to advancement. Persons of this character are often surprised to look back and see from what small beginnings they have been raised step by step, under the guidance of Providence, to stations of the most extensive influence and usefulness.

VER. 2. *Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel.*

b Deut. xxxiv. 5.

*Moses my servant is dead.*—As Joshua was of course aware of the fact of Moses' decease, these words could not be intended merely to announce to him that event. They are equivalent to saying, "The death of my servant Moses has left the people without a leader and a head to conduct them into the promised land. It is necessary that his place should be immediately filled. Thou hast been selected for that office, and the time has now come for thee to enter upon the active discharge of its duties. Arise, therefore, and go at once about the work of thy high call-

ing." Probably Joshua's deep sense of his own insufficiency and unworthiness, and of the many dangers and difficulties which encompassed his path, had caused him somewhat to despond and waver in spirit, and rendered necessary this direct and rousing summons, which for the same reason, God was pleased to accompany with so many encouraging promises. When it is considered that Joshua was now ninety-three years of age, that he had to govern a very perverse and rebellious people, and was going to contend with a warlike and formidable enemy, it will perhaps appear, that nothing short of the divine assurance he now received, could have sustained his courage in such an arduous station. *Go over this Jordan.*—This river, which you now have in full view before you, and on the banks of which you are encamped. For a description of the Jordan, see "Illustrations of the Scriptures," p. 20. It was doubtless a severe trial to Joshua's faith, to be thus called upon to make immediate preparation for crossing a river which was now overflowing its banks, chap. iii. 15, and for getting over which he was totally unprovided with the ordinary means, whether of boats or bridges. But as God had given the command, he must not doubt that he would open a way for his people, though it should be by cleaving the waters and repeating the miracle witnessed at the Red Sea. It was as certain that they should be conducted over the Jordan, as it was that they should be led into Canaan, and to this the Most High had pledged himself by the most solemn promises, renewed from age to age, from the time of Abraham down to that of Moses. With a "Thus saith the Lord" for our warrant, we may boldly go forth in the face of obstacles that are absolutely insuperable to human power. *Unto the land which I do give to them.*—Heb. "am giving." That is, the land of which I have long promised them the inheritance, and of which I am now in the very act of putting them in possession. Though the promises of God may be slow in fulfilling, yet the accomplishment will come at last; not one jot or tittle shall fail. Though "the vision be for an appointed time, yet at the end it shall speak, it shall not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry."

VER. 3. "Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses.

c Deut. xi. 24; xiv. 9.

*Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon.*—That is, every place within the limits specified in the ensuing verse. The expression in this, as in innumerable other cases, must be qualified by the connexion. It was not intended to be a grant of universal dominion. *As I said unto Moses.*—The words here used are a literal repetition of the promise made Deut. xi. 24. Indeed nearly every sentence in this address to Joshua, occurs somewhere in the course of the foregoing history, especially in the book of Deuteronomy.

VER. 4. "From the wilderness and this Lebanon even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great

sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your coast.

d Gen. xv. 18. Ex. xxiii. 31. Num. xxxiv. 3—12.

*From the wilderness, &c.*—God here proceeds, in very brief terms, to mark out and define the boundaries of the land of promise. Its utmost limits should be from the wilderness of Sin, or the desert of Arabia Petrea on the south, to Lebanon on the north; and from the Euphrates on the east, to the great sea, or the Mediterranean, on the west. The Israelites did not, indeed, possess the full extent of this grant till the time of David, but their failure to do so was owing entirely to their own remissness, unbelief, and disobedience, as was every reverse with which they met during the whole period of their history. They were not straitened in God, but in themselves; and the same remark holds good with regard to his people in all ages. *This Lebanon.*—Particularised in this manner because it could doubtless be seen from the spot where Joshua now stood, rearing its lofty summits towards the clouds in the northern extremity of Canaan. For an account of this well-known range of mountains any of the various works in sacred geography may be consulted. See also "Illustrations of the Scriptures," p. 103. The name "Lebanon" comes from the Heb. root לבן "Laban, white," from its summits being so constantly covered with snow. *All the land of the Hittites.*—This is not the name of a region lying without the limits above specified, or of a country promised in addition to that which had been so long assigned, in the Divine purpose, to Israel, but it was one of the seven nations of Canaan, so often alluded to in the books of Moses, and here probably mentioned by synecdoche, a figure of speech by which a part is put for the whole. In like manner, in other instances, the nation of the Amorites stands for the whole of the Canaanitish people. As a reason for the particular mention of the Hittites here, rather than any other of the devoted nations, it may be remarked that it appears from the transactions of Abraham with the sons of Heth, or the Hittites, (Gen. xxiii.) that they inhabited the southern borders of the land about the region of Beersheba and Hebron, where subsequently the spies saw the gigantic Anakims, who inspired them with so much terror. It was natural, therefore, that they should regard these people as the most formidable enemies whom they would be likely to encounter, and equally natural that God, in assuring them of the complete conquest of all these nations, should specify that one which more than all others they dreaded. He would thus banish their fears where they would be most certain to rise, and by promising them a victory, where they might apprehend a defeat, inspire them with unwavering confidence of success in contending with all the rest of their enemies. If the Goliath of the Philistines' camp be overcome, the routing of the whole host beside would give comparatively little trouble. *The great sea.*—The Mediterranean, so called as being the greatest in the vicinity of the land of promise, the greatest with which the Israelites were acquainted, and especially so termed in respect to the smaller seas in Judea, such as the sea of Genesaret or

Tiberias, and the Dead Sea, which were comparatively mere lakes. The Hebrews, however, were accustomed to give the name of יָם "sea," to every large collection of waters. *Shall be your coast.*—Your border, your boundary, your limits. Such is the import of the word coast, as used by some of the early English writers.

VER. 5. \* There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: † as I was with Moses, so ‡ I will be with thee: § I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.

\* Deut. vii. 24. † Ex. iii. 12. ‡ Deut. xxxi. 8, 23. Ver. 9, 17; iii. 7; vi. 27. Isa. xliii. 2, 5. § Deut. xxxi. 6, 8. Heb. xlii. 5.

*Able to stand before thee.*—Able to resist thee, to maintain his ground before thee, to throw any effectual bar in the way of thy success. He is, however, admonished that his sufficiency was not of himself. It was solely in consequence of God's being with him, upholding and prospering him, as he did Moses, that he was thus to be rendered invincible. Those that contended with him were contending with Omnipotence, and in this unequal contest they must necessarily be worsted. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" What Joshua had himself, on another occasion, said to encourage the people, (Numb. xiv. 9,) God now says to him. This signal success, moreover, was not only to mark the commencement of his enterprises, but to attend him throughout his whole career. However it might be with Israel when he was gone, yet, during his lifetime he should be favoured with a constant tide of triumphs. If it be asked how this assurance consists with the fact that he met with such a serious repulse in one of his earliest expeditions, and that so many thousands of Israel were smitten and turned their backs before the men of Ai, the answer is—that they failed in the conditions on which the promises of victory were suspended. These promises were not absolute. They were made with a proviso. They were to be fulfilled on condition of the implicit faith and obedience of the people, with the perfect understanding, at the same time, that God's grace was sufficient for them, and that if they sought him sincerely they should never fail to receive an adequate measure of ability to enable them to comply with these conditions. On the occasion alluded to they had grossly failed in duty, they had sinned and transgressed the covenant, and were therefore smitten before the enemy, "because they were accursed," i. e. labouring under the Divine displeasure. (Josh. vii. 12.) *I will not fail thee nor forsake thee.*—The Hebrew term for "fail" properly signifies to let sink, to let grow slack and fall down, being generally spoken of the hands, and implying a loosing or relaxing of one's grasp, and the consequent falling down of the hands, as in Josh. x. 6, "Slack not thy hands from thy servants." It has a meaning directly opposite to that of the word for laying a firm hold, taking a vigorous grasp of any thing. The other is the usual word for leave, forsake, abandon. The sense clearly is, that God would keep firm hold of his servant, would not let go of him, would not resign him up to the power of his enemies. Moses had be-

fore given to Joshua the same assurance, couched almost in the express words of this passage; (Deut. xxxi. 6—8;) and here God is pleased, in accordance with the character which he elsewhere gives of himself, (Isa. xlv. 26,) to "confirm the word of his servant," and engages never to leave or be wanting to Joshua.

VER. 6. † Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I swore unto their fathers to give them.

† Deut. xxxi. 7, 23.

*Be strong and of a good courage.*—These terms, though nearly related, are not precisely synonymous with each other. They both occur, though under slightly different forms, Isa. xxxv. 3, "Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees;" from which, and from other passages, it is inferred that the first, "be strong," properly implies that strength which is in the hands for grasping and holding firmly any thing, while the latter points primarily to the strength of the knees in stedfastly maintaining one's position, and withstanding every aggressive assault of the enemy. From this view of the primary and literal acceptation of the words, we obtain a better idea of their import when applied metaphorically, as here, to the acts of the mind. *Unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land.*—Heb. "Thou shalt cause this people to inherit the land." Which supposes the previous entire conquest of the land; and in this respect a higher degree of honour was vouchsafed to Joshua than to Moses, for he was only permitted to conduct Israel through the wilderness, and bring them to the borders of the promised land, while Joshua had the glory of actually taking possession of, and distributing the land to his people as an inheritance. God is pleased, therefore, to make known to him his purposes concerning him, as a reason for his assuming all that strength and courage which he now enjoins upon him.

VER. 7. Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law † which Moses my servant commanded thee: ‡ turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest.

† Num. xxvii. 23. Deut. xxxi. 7. ch. xi. 15. ‡ Deut. v. 32, & xxviii. 14.

*Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do, &c.*—As Joshua was now upon the point of invading a country filled with formidable enemies, "nations greater and mightier than he," we might well expect him to receive a charge to "be strong and very courageous," as it respected the adversaries whom he was about to encounter. But it is remarkable that his enemies are here left comparatively out of sight, and the way in which his courage and fortitude are mainly to be exercised, is, in adhering with inflexible firmness to the law of God. As all his success, however, depended entirely upon God, it was indispensably requisite that he

should secure the divine favour. This he could only do by a rigid obedience to God's commands; and such an obedience would require a stronger principle of courage than the most formidable enemies would give occasion for. From which we may learn, that in nothing is there more scope for the display of the highest moral heroism, than in daring, in all circumstances, to cleave stedfastly to the word of God as the rule of our conduct. It is in this way chiefly that the fortitude of a Christian soldier is to evince itself. He is to contend with the enemies of his salvation, in obedience to the laws of God. As the soldier of an earthly leader is to act in all things according to certain rules, laid down in a code drawn up for the purpose, so the Christian soldier has his code drawn up for him by God himself, and revealed to him in the oracles of truth. This code he is to study with all diligence, and meditate on it day and night, that he may conform himself to it in every particular, and never turn aside to the right hand or the left. However difficult or self-denying its injunctions, he must obey it; and so sacred must it be in his eyes, that he will rather die than depart from it. This will require all the courage that any man can possess. *Which Moses my servant commanded thee.*—The particular commands of Moses here referred to, are to be found in Dent. v. 32, xxviii. 14, and xxxi. 7, 8; and though originally delivered to all the congregation, yet here they are especially applied to Joshua, who, as leader, stood as the representative of the whole collective body of the people. *Turn not from it, to the right hand or to the left.*—Heb., "Turn not from him," i. e. from Moses; where his person stands for his writings. So our Saviour says, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets," i. e. the words of Moses. The metaphor is taken from a man's pursuing a journey, who goes straight forward in the direct road, if he knows it, without turning aside into by-paths that lead he knows not whither. *That thou mayest prosper.*—Or, Heb., "mayest do wisely, mayest deal or behave understandingly." The primary and most usual sense of the original is, "to direct one's self wisely, to act with prudence and discretion, to be wise, intelligent," and thence secondarily, "to prosper, to have good success." These two senses of the word are so intimately connected, that it is often difficult to determine precisely which of them is intended in a given passage. This very uncertainty, however, proves it to be clearly intimated, in the native import of the term, that real prosperity and success in the affairs of life, is the result of a wise, discreet, and prudent course of conduct, and inseparable from it, and that it is vain to look for it from any other source. Those only can reasonably expect the blessing of God upon their temporal affairs, who make his word their rule, and conscientiously walk by it in all circumstances; and this is the way of true wisdom.

VER. 8. "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for

then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.

m Dent. xvii. 18, 19. n Psa. i. 2.

*This book of the law.*—That is by way of emphasis "the book of the law," the law of Moses, to which, as he well knew, God attached the utmost importance, and of which he speaks as if it were at that moment in Joshua's hand, or at his side, as it continually ought to be. *Shall not depart out of thy mouth.*—Thou shalt constantly read and ponder it, it shall incessantly employ thy lips, thou shalt have thy heart so constantly imbued with its letter and spirit, that thy mouth shall, as it were, overflow with its rich contents, as "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." The same phrase occurs but once elsewhere in the Scriptures, Isa. lix. 21, "As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord. My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever;" where it is implied that the covenant promise should be deemed so precious, that it should be a perpetual theme of meditation and discourse, that it should constantly dwell on the tongues of those interested in it. It is moreover implied, in this charge to Joshua, that he was not only to make the book of the law the subject of assiduous study for his own personal benefit, but also to make it the sole rule and standard of his public and official proceedings; he was to issue orders and pronounce judgments according to its precepts, and that too without exception or reserve—he must "do according to all that is written therein." Though appointed to the rank of supreme head and magistrate of the nation, he was not to consider himself elevated in the slightest degree above the authority of the divine law, or the necessity of consulting it; nor should any Christian magistrate at this day consider himself at liberty to dispense with the light which beams from the word of God, in regard to the great matters of his duty. The higher any man is raised in office, the more need has he of an acquaintance with the sacred oracles, and the better will he be qualified, by the study of them, for the discharge of his arduous duties. *Thou shalt meditate therein day and night.*—This is the character of the good man, as described by the Psalmist, Psa. i. 2, in words which are almost an exact transcript of those here employed. The Heb. term for "meditate," implies that kind of mental rumination which is apt to vent itself in an audible sound of the voice. See Comment on Psa. i. 2. *Make thy way prosperous—have good success.*—Two different words are here employed, the latter of which is the same with that remarked upon above, ver. 7, and which should probably be rendered here also, "do wisely," "conduct understandingly," as otherwise it is little, if any thing, more than a bare repetition of the preceding phrase.

VER. 9. "Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither

be thou dismayed; for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.

Deut. xxxi. 7, 8, 23. p Ps. xxvii. 1. Jer. i. 8.

*Have not I commanded thee?*—I whose authority is paramount, whose power is infinite, who am able to carry thee through all difficulties and dangers, and whom thou art bound implicitly to obey. So in the Christian warfare, it is the God of heaven whose battles we fight, and in whose service we are engaged. Were it only an earthly monarch to whom we had devoted ourselves, we ought to serve him with all fidelity: what then should we not do for the King of kings, who has not only chosen us to be his soldiers, but has himself taken the field for our sakes, to subdue our enemies, and to deliver us from their assaults?—It should be remarked, that the interrogative form of speech is often used, not as implying any thing doubtful, but as the most emphatic mode of expressing either a negative or affirmation, particularly when the speaker wishes to rouse and excite strongly the attention of the hearer. Instances are innumerable. *The Lord thy God is with thee.*—Here is somewhat of a remarkable change in the persons, from the first to the third, but whether with any peculiar significancy it is not easy to determine. The Chaldee renders it in reference to the Son, "The word of the Lord thy God shall be with thee." Considered as a pledge of the presence and support of the God of heaven with all his faithful people, in their trials and conflicts, the promise is full of precious meaning. He says to us, in effect, what he says to Joshua; and what encouragement can we desire more? Imagine a soldier with his commander in chief always at his side, cheering and encouraging him, and how naturally would he thereby be stirred up to deeds of valour which he would not otherwise be able to exhibit? Let us know then as believers that God is ever with us, and with us, not only as a witness, but as a helper, to strengthen us, to uphold us, and to fight our battles for us. If, however, we would secure this blessing, let us give heed that our courage and fortitude be of the right kind. There is an unhallowed boldness which savours of pride and vain-glory. Against this we cannot be too much on our guard. In doing valiantly for God, we must not forget the laws of meekness. But if we fight in dependence on the Lord's strength, and in conformity to his commands, we need not doubt of final victory.

VER. 10. Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying,

*Commanded the officers of the people.*—Heb. שוטרים "shoterim." These were under-officers, subordinate to the שופטים "shophetim" or "judges," whose duty it was to see to the execution of the orders of the heads of the people, whether Moses, Joshua, or his successors the Judges. Deut. xvi. 18; xx. 5—9. The original is usually rendered γραμματεῖς, "scribes," in the Greek version.

VER. 11. Pass through the host, and command the people, saying, Prepare you victuals; for within three days ye shall pass over this Jor-

dan, to go in to possess the land which the Lord your God giveth you to possess it.

q ch. iii. 2. See Deut. ix. 1; xi. 31.

*Prepare you victuals.*—Heb. צעדח "Tsedah, prey," including perhaps manna, but implying more particularly such other kinds of provisions as they had obtained in the conquered countries, as corn, oxen, sheep, &c., as the word properly signifies what is taken in hunting. Although the manna was their main dependence during their sojourn in the wilderness, yet they do not appear to have been forbidden to supply themselves with other kinds of food when they had an opportunity, Deut. ii. 6, 28; and at this time when they had come into a land inhabited, where they could procure such provisions, it is probable that the manna did not fall so plentifully, or they did not gather so much as previously, so that they were now commanded to lay in a store of other eatables to supply the deficiency. Certain it is, however, that the manna did not entirely cease falling till they had entered the land of Canaan, and eaten of the old corn of the land, chap. v. 12. *Within three days.*—Or, Heb. "for yet three days." The probability is, that the passage over the Jordan was not made till after the lapse of three days, and that it took place on the fourth: the three days, therefore, here mentioned, are to be reckoned exclusive of that on which the proclamation was made, chap. ii. 22; iii. 1. Or as the original for "shall pass," is literally "shall be passing," it may mean simply, that within the space of three days they should have broken up from their present encampment, and commenced their march, although the actual passage of the Jordan may not have occurred till a day or two afterwards. The confidence with which Joshua speaks of the event, shows the undoubting character of his own faith in the promise of God. *Which the Lord your God giveth you.*—Heb. "is giving," i. e. is even now in the act of giving. It would tend greatly to animate the faith and zeal of the people, and to secure their vigorous co-operation, to see God, as it were, girding himself to the work, and actually putting forth his power in the execution of his promises. It would not do for them to be remiss when Omnipotence was visibly engaged in their behalf. This language would teach them too that the result was not to be brought about by their own strength, and consequently that they could not take the glory of it to themselves. *To possess it.*—Heb. "to inherit it," i. e. not merely to occupy it, but so to hold it that it should be transmitted down as a hereditary possession to their children after them.

VER. 12. And to the Reubenites, and to the Gadites, and to half the tribe of Manasse, spake Joshua, saying,

*To the Reubenites and to the Gadites.* Heb. "to the Reubenite and to the Gadite," the collective singular for the plural, a very common idiom of the original, particularly in speaking of tribes and nations; as if the whole body, from their intimate union, were regarded as one person.

VER. 13.—Remember the word which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, saying, The LORD your God hath given you rest, and hath given you this land.

r Num. xxxii. 20—28; xxii. 2—4.

*Remember the word which Moses, &c.*—This engagement on the part of the two tribes and a half is detailed with all the circumstances attending it, Numb. xxxii. 1—42; and it was proper here to remind them of it, as, otherwise, having arrived at the place of their settlement, they might be induced to seek their own ease, by remaining with their wives and families in the rich and fertile region of which they had come into possession. *The Lord your God hath given you rest.*—Rather, according to the Hebrew, “The Lord is giving you rest, and hath given you this land.” These precise words do not occur in the address of Moses to the two tribes and a half, but the sense of them does, and Joshua intended, doubtless, merely to quote the substance of what Moses said. The phrase, “giving you rest,” perhaps merely implies that they were now brought to a place of rest, rather than a positive state of rest, which they could hardly be said to enjoy till they had subdued their enemies. They were at rest, however, in contradistinction from journeying, and in this sense the original word is often employed.

VER. 14. Your wives, your little ones, and your cattle, shall remain in the land which Moses gave you on this side Jordan; but ye shall pass before your brethren armed, all the mighty men of valour, and help them;

*Ye shall pass before your brethren.*—That is, as the original implies, ye shall pass or cross over before, or in the presence of, your brethren. It does not appear to signify that they should take the front rank or lead the van, for such an intimation respecting them is no where else clearly given; but simply that they should not absent themselves, that they should be present with their brethren, united with them in the expedition. The Hebrew phrase is often used in this sense. *Armed.*—Heb. “marshalled by five.” Of the import of this expression, see note on Exod. xiii. 18, where it is rendered harnessed. *All the mighty men of valour.*—Not absolutely all the fighting men of these tribes, but the choice of them—the most active, bold, and energetic; for as there were only forty thousand of them that passed over, (chap. iv. 13,) while the whole number of warriors was far greater, (Numb. xxvi.) it is evident that a large body of them must have remained on the other side of the Jordan, to take care of the women, children, and flocks. Probably as many at least as seventy thousand, as the sum total of the men in those tribes able to bear arms was upwards of one hundred and ten thousand. (See Numb. xxvi. 7, 18, 37.)

VER. 15. Until the LORD have given your brethren rest, as he hath given you, and they also have possessed the land which the LORD your God giveth them: then ye shall return unto

the land of your possession, and enjoy it, which Moses the LORD's servant gave you on this side Jordan toward the sun-rising.

r Chap. xxii. 4, &c.

*Until the Lord have given your brethren rest, as he hath given you.*—That is, until he hath brought them to their place of rest; for it could not strictly be said of either company, that the LORD had given them rest, until they had so far conquered their enemies as to be in no danger of being henceforth seriously molested by them. But that was, at this time, by no means the case with the two tribes and a half, nor have we reason to suppose, in respect to the others, that the mere putting them in possession of the promised territory would be “giving them rest,” as long as their enemies remained in great numbers unsubdued. We are led, therefore, to understand from this expression, simply the bringing them to, or planting them in, a place of rest. The actual enjoyment of the rest was a matter of subsequent favour. *Toward the sun-rising.*—That is, the east, as “toward the going down of the sun” signifies the west.

VER. 16. And they answered Joshua, saying, All that thou commandest us, we will do, and whithersoever thou sendest us, we will go.

*And they answered Joshua.*—This, as some conceive, was not the answer of the two tribes and a half only, but the response of the whole host, who thus concurred heartily with them in their solemn engagements. It is not unlikely that such were the real sentiments of the entire congregation; but it seems more natural, from the connexion, to understand it of those who were directly addressed. They afterwards received the testimony of Joshua, as having fully complied with all their stipulations, (chap. xxii. 2—4.) *All that thou commandest us, we will do, &c.*—Thus are we required to swear allegiance to Christ, the Captain of our salvation, the Christian's Joshua, and to bind ourselves to do what he commands us by his word, and to go whithersoever he sends us by his providence.

VER. 17. According as we hearkened unto Moses in all things, so will we hearken unto thee: only the LORD thy God be with thee, as he was with Moses.

r Ver. 5. 1 Sam. xx. 13. 1 Kings i. 37.

*According as we hearkened unto Moses, &c.*—As we obeyed Moses. Nothing is more common than this sense of the word “hearken” in the sacred writers. If it be asked how this language is to be reconciled with the declaration of Moses himself in regard to their conduct under him, (Deut. ix. 24,) “Ye have been rebellious against the LORD from the day that I knew you,” we answer, that neither the words of Moses, nor of the people, are to be understood as holding good universally, and without any exception. They were sometimes rebellious, and sometimes obedient. What they mean is,—that they would be as obedient to Joshua as they ever were to Moses, when they did obey him, when they were in their

best moods; as obedient, in fact, as they should have been to Moses, and as many of them generally were. The literal rendering of the original is, "According to all (in) which we hearkened to, Moses, so will we hearken to thee." This perhaps limits the point of comparison to those cases in which they were actually obedient, and excludes those in which they rebelled. *Only the Lord thy God be with thee, &c.*—This is not to be understood as a condition or limitation of their promised obedience, as if they should say, "We will obey thee as far as we perceive the Lord is with thee, but no farther;" but rather as an earnest prayer in behalf of Joshua, that he might constantly enjoy the Divine guidance, protection, blessing; *q. d.* "Do not fear us. Be assured of our constant obedience. Be solicitous mainly for thyself. This is the matter of our anxiety, that the Lord would be with thee, and prosper thee in all things." To pray fervently for those in authority over us, is the surest way to render them blessings to us and to the communities in which we live.

VER. 18. Whosoever *he be* that doth rebel against thy commandment, and will not hearken unto thy words in all that thou commandest him, he shall be put to death: only be strong and of a good courage.

*Rebel against thy commandment.*—Heb. "rebel (against) thy mouth," i. e. the word or commandment of thy mouth. Perhaps in this they had an eye to what Moses had said respecting the Lord's raising up a prophet like unto himself, and to whose words they were to hearken under the severest penalty. (Deut. xviii. 18, 19.) They might have supposed this prediction to be fulfilled in the appointment of Joshua as Moses's successor, without knowing, at the same time, but that it might still have an ulterior fulfilment at some subsequent period in a yet more illustrious personage.

## CHAPTER II.

VER. 1. AND Joshua the son of Nun sent <sup>a</sup>out of Shittim two men to spy secretly, saying, Go view the land, even Jericho. And they went, and <sup>b</sup>came into a harlot's house, named <sup>c</sup>Rahab, and lodged there.

*a* Num. xxv. 1. *b* Heb. xi. 31. *Jas.* ii. 25. *c* Matt. i. 5. *Joshua sent two men to spy secretly.*—Or, Heb. "had sent." This sending forth of the spies had very probably taken place some time previous to the order mentioned above, ch. i. 10, at which time it is not unlikely they had returned and made their report to Joshua. The order of events in the sacred history cannot always be determined by the order of narration. Continual transpositions of this kind are to be met with in every part of the Scriptures.—Moses sent out twelve spies, because the whole land of Canaan was to be explored; Joshua dispatched but two, as he only sought for information respecting the posture of the city of Jericho and its immediate vicinity.—Although an express assurance had

been given to Joshua, that every place on which the sole of his foot should tread should come into his possession, and that no man should be able to stand before him, yet as every prudent general endeavours to obtain information respecting the state of any fortified city which he is about to besiege, before he proceeds actually to invest it; so he felt it his duty to send spies to ascertain the state of Jericho, before he passed over Jordan to attack it. God is pleased to accomplish his promises by the use of means; to neglect the means, therefore, is to tempt him rather than to trust in him; and to expect the end without using the means, is not faith, but presumption. *Out of Shittim.*—Called elsewhere Abel-Shittim, unless the latter were the name of the adjoining valley. The city of Shittim was situated from eight to eleven miles east of the Jordan, in the plains of Moab, and within the boundaries assigned to the tribe of Reuben. It is supposed to have been so named from the great quantity of trees, called Shittim-wood, which grew in its vicinity. *To spy secretly.*—Heb. "silently." But whether this word has reference to the manner of their being sent, viz. in a secret, silent way, without the privy of the people, or to the mode of discharging their duty, noiselessly, stealthily, it is difficult to determine. From the relative position of the words, the latter seems the most probable. *View the land, even Jericho.*—Explore the land or country about Jericho, but more especially the city itself. They were to observe its site, its various localities, its avenues of approach, its fortifications, the state of its population,—every thing, in fine, which would be of service to them in concerting the best mode of attack. The city is supposed to have derived its name either from the form of the plain on which it stood, resembling a new moon, or from the sweet smell of the balsam or palm trees which abounded there in great profusion. (Deut. xxxiv. 3. Judg. i. 16.) It seems not to have been situated immediately upon the river, but at the distance of six or eight miles. The modern Jericho, now called Rihhah, is a miserable village of about fifty dwellings; but, according to Buckingham, it does not occupy the site of the ancient city. The latter, according to him, was situated four miles nearer Jerusalem, at the very foot of the mountains, where he noticed the ruins of a place of consequence. The plain of Jericho extends from the mountains, where the ruins of the old city are to be found, eastward towards Jordan, and is nearly inclosed on all sides by these or similar mountains. *And came into a harlot's house.*—The character of this woman has been a much disputed point among commentators. As she is commended by the apostle for her faith, Heb. xi. 31, and by her marriage with Salmon, Matt. i. 5, subsequently came into the line of our Lord's progenitors, great anxiety has been evinced to clear her reputation, if possible, from the reproach of an infamous course of life. On this account, great pains have been taken to show that the original term may be properly rendered "hostess," and so does not necessarily convey the idea attached to the English word "harlot." But it is beyond all question, that the legitimate and uniform signification of the Heb. term is that

of "a harlot," either literal or spiritual. (Judg. xi. 1. 1 Kings iii. 16. Ezek. xxiii. 44.) So also the word is rendered in the Septuagint, and this rendering is adopted by two apostles, (Heb. xi. 31. James ii. 25;) though we do not consider the latter circumstance by any means decisive as to the genuine import of the original; for as the Septuagint was the translation at this time in common use, they adopted the expression as they found it, without claiming thereby to settle its propriety as a version of the original. It is moreover to be remembered, that Rahab lived in the midst of a people, corrupt, abandoned, and profligate to the last degree. Vices of the most enormous and debasing character were practised without reserve, and received the sanction of every class of people. From repeated intimations in regard to the devoted nations, it appears that the divine judgments were kindled against them more on account of the abominations of their lewdness than any thing else, as had been the case with Sodom and Gomorrah of old. As these sins pervaded all ranks, they would cease to be regarded as infamous, and the term applied to Rahab does not perhaps indicate a character degraded much below the ordinary standard. Suppose her, however, to have been a harlot in the worst sense of the word, the licentiousness of her life, besides being the natural product of the universal laxity of moral sentiment on the subject, may have been promoted by the false religion in which she was educated. All this is said, not to excuse or justify her iniquitous conduct, but to make it less surprising that the spies should have fallen in with a person of her character, and been entertained by her. As to her being a hostess, or keeping an inn, there is not a particle of evidence from the original that such was the case, nor have we any reason to suppose, from the known customs of oriental nations, that any such establishments as houses of public entertainment, in our acceptance of the phrase, existed among them. Caravanserais or khans are indeed found in most parts of the East, but they are very different from public-houses, taverns, or hotels with us. These are the result of a much more advanced state of society than has ever prevailed in the East. The following description from Volney will give the reader somewhat of a correct idea of oriental accommodations of this nature. "There are no inns any where; but the cities, and commonly the villages, have a large building, called a khan or caravanserai, which serves as an asylum for all travellers. These houses of reception are always built without the precincts of towns, and consist of four wings round a square court, which serves by way of inclosure for the beasts of burden. The lodgings are cells, where you find nothing but bare walls, dust, and sometimes scorpions. The keeper of this khan gives the traveller the key and a mat; and he provides himself the rest. He must therefore carry with him his bed, his kitchen utensils, and even his provisions; for frequently not even bread is to be found in the villages." That Rahab had charge of such an establishment is in the highest degree improbable. Far more likely is it that she was, or had been, a woman of loose morals, living in a pri-

vate station, and that the spies came to her house, moved doubtless by a secret impulse from above, because from its appearance, locality, or other causes, which we cannot now ascertain, it seemed to them a stopping-place best suited to the purpose in which they were now engaged; and in countries but little civilized, there is never much ceremony among travellers in applying for a night's lodging. Hospitality is almost a universal characteristic of such a state of society. But whatever may have been Rahab's character previous to the destruction of Jericho, there is no reason to suppose that, after that event, it was other than pious and exemplary, and such as became a true penitent. The opprobrious appellation, it is true, remained, and it was not unfitting that her name, in the providence of God, should descend to posterity with something of a stigma attached to it, especially as it is according to scriptural usage, that a person should be called by a former denomination, even after the grounds of it have ceased. Thus Matthew is called "Matthew the publican," (Matt. x. 3, ix. 9,) after he had been chosen an apostle; and Simon is called "Simon the leper," (Matt. xxvi. 6,) though cleansed from his leprosy. But if she had truly repented and reformed, there is no more justice in charging the sins of her former life upon her, than in reproaching Abraham with the sin of idolatry, of which he was doubtless guilty before his call. *And lodged there.*—Heb. "and lay down there." That is, they went in with the design of lodging there, and probably had actually lain down and composed themselves to rest, when the arrival of the king's messengers defeated their purpose, interrupted their repose, and made it necessary for them to save themselves by flight. Thus Gen. xxxvii. 21, "And Reuben heard it, and he delivered him out of their hands," *i. e.* he purposed to deliver him.

VER. 2. And <sup>d</sup> it was told the king of Jericho, saying, Behold, there came men in hither to-night of the children of Israel, to search out the country.

*d* Psa. cxxvii. 1. Prov. xxi. 30.

*Behold, there came men—to search out the country.*—This could have been only a conjecture, yet they affirm it as a matter of absolute certainty. As they could conceive of no other motive for which they had come, it was perhaps natural that they should confidently assign this as the true one.

VER. 3. And the king of Jericho sent unto Rahab, saying, Bring forth the men that are come to thee, which are entered into thy house: for they be come to search out all the country.

*For they be come, &c.*—This seems to have been said by way of answer to anticipated objections on her part, as if it were the height of treachery to her guests thus to deal with them. "But no, you need have no scruples on this score, for the men are not good men, as you may have supposed; they have come hither as enemies and spies, whom it will be no breach of the laws of hospitality to deliver up to justice.

**VER. 4.** "And the woman took the two men, and hid them, and said thus, There came men unto me, but I wist not whence they were :

*e* See 2 Sam. xvii. 19, 20.

*And the woman took the two men, and hid them.*—Heb. "hid him," *i. e.* each one of them; implying probably that she hid them separately, at some distance from each other. The original for "took," should probably be rendered "had taken," and the whole clause inclosed in a parenthesis. She had, in all likelihood, learned soon after their arrival the object of their errand, and aware of the danger to which they would be exposed if discovered, she had, at an early hour, conveyed them to a place of concealment; not, however, before rumours of their presence began to circulate about the city. This is justly celebrated by the apostle as an instance of high and heroic faith, Heb. xi. 31. So strong was her persuasion of the truth of what had been announced to her; so fully was she convinced, from what she had heard of the wonders wrought for Israel, that their God was the only true God, and consequently that his declared purpose in regard to Canaan would surely come to pass, that she ventures her life upon her faith. She knew that harbouring them was exposing herself to the death of a traitor to her country, and yet she runs the risk. "She contemns her life for the present, that she may save it for the future; neglecting her own king and country, for strangers which she never saw; and more feared the destruction of that city before it knew that it had an enemy, than the displeasure and mortal revenge of her king." *Bp. Hall.* It was thus that her faith justified itself by works. Had she merely assured the spies, that though she believed that both Jericho and Canaan would fall into their hands, yet in her circumstances she could show them no kindness, her faith would have been dead and inactive, and would not have justified her. (James ii. 25.) But her conduct showed that it was active and lively, and the event proved that it was efficacious to her salvation. So unless our faith leads us to incur hazards and make sacrifices for God, it is to be accounted of no avail. *There came men unto me, but I wist not whence they were.*—Thus far, perhaps, her answer contains no violation of truth. She admits that two men came to her house, but at the time of their coming, she knew not whence they were. The verb in the original is in the past tense, and should be so rendered—"I knew not."

**VER. 5.** And it came to pass *about the time of* shutting of the gate, when it was dark, that the men went out: whither the men went I wot not: pursue after them quickly; for ye shall overtake them.

*About the time of shutting of the gate.*—The gate of the city. *The men went out, &c.*—This is the part of Rahab's conduct most difficult to be accounted for, consistently with the commendations elsewhere bestowed upon her by the sacred writers. That she deceived the messengers by a falsehood is indubitable. She said the spies

had left her house, when they were still in it. How is this to be reconciled with the workings of a heart made right in the sight of God? The question is certainly one of no easy solution; but in forming a judgment of her conduct, it is fair that Rahab should have the benefit of every extenuating circumstance that can be adduced in her favour; and such are the following. (1.) Having been born and brought up among the depraved Canaanites, she had probably never been taught the evil of lying, and least of all where an apparently good end was to be answered by it. From the uniform testimony of travellers and missionaries, it is evident that among all heathen nations, particularly those of the East, lying ever has been, and still is, a practice of universal prevalence, and of the criminality of which they have scarcely any sense. So weak is the feeling of obligation, as to the observance of strict veracity, that even apparently sincere converts have the greatest difficulty in freeing themselves from the habit of equivocation, and need to be perpetually admonished on that score. (See Read's "Christian Brahmun.") What wonder then that Rahab, a poor, ignorant, heathen woman, upon whose mind the light of a saving knowledge had just begun to dawn, should have prevaricated in the trying circumstances in which she was placed? How much allowance precisely is to be made for her on this ground we may not know, but God does. To him we may leave it. That it should go somewhat in abatement of her guilt, if guilty she were, we have no doubt. (2.) Apart from the above-mentioned consideration, it was truly a difficult problem to be solved, how she should under the circumstances, act according to her faith. She fully believed that what the spies had told her was true. She says not, "I fear," or "I believe," but "I know that the Lord hath given you the land." She was satisfied that it was in vain to fight against God, and what could she do? If she had either told the truth or remained silent, she had betrayed the spies; but if she believed them sent of God, could she have done this without sin? She knew moreover, very well, that if these two spies were put to death, it would make no difference whatever as to the issue of the contest. The whole city and its inhabitants would at any rate be destroyed. To what purpose then would it be to deliver up the spies? It would not save one single life; it would only be to continue fighting against God, and to bring on herself and her family that destruction which it was now in her power to avert. By concealing the spies she could in fact injure nobody, whereas by giving them up, she would sacrifice not them only, but also herself and her family. Was there then any other conceivable mode by which she could act according to her faith, than by practising an imposition upon the king's officers? (3.) By the very fact of her exercising a firm faith in the divine testimony, she did virtually throw herself upon the side of Israel, and unite her interests with theirs. Henceforth their enemies were hers. If the Canaanites had no right to demand the truth of Israel, they had no right to demand it of her. If it would have been right for the Israelites to have recourse to a stratagem to mislead an enemy

in arms, we see not why it was not equally right for her. But that the Israelites often did resort to such expedients in carrying on their wars is beyond question, nor do the Scriptures absolutely condemn them. They are certainly as lawful as war itself is. No one probably doubts that Elisha was justified in deceiving the Syrian army, and leading them blinded from Dotham, whither they had come to destroy him, to Samaria, where they were brought into the power of the king of Israel. Considering Rahab then as really leagued with Israel against her countrymen, why is she not equally to be justified with Elisha in imposing upon her enemies? If they will suffer themselves to be deceived by her direction to pursue the spies another way, let them be deceived. The fidelity that she owed to God was entirely paramount to that which she owed her country, and she was bound to act accordingly. But whether we justify or condemn her conduct, it can afford no precedent to us. Before we can plead her example in justification of treachery or falsehood, we must be circumstanced as she was. But this it is nearly impossible we ever should be.

VER. 6. But *she* had brought them up to the roof of the house, and hid them with the stalks of flax, which she had laid in order upon the roof.  
f See Ex. i. 17. 2 Sam. xvii. 19.

*She had brought them up to the roof of the house.*—This verse is also parenthetical, and designed to explain more particularly the circumstances of the concealment mentioned ver. 4. The roofs of houses were then, as they still are in that country, flat, and being furnished with such battlements or parapets, as were commanded to the Jews, Deut. xxii. 8, were made use of for walking or sleeping upon, or for depositing any kind of goods or chattels which could not be conveniently be stowed elsewhere. See "Illustrations of the Scriptures," p. 159, 414, 461. *hid them with the stalks of flax, &c.*—This was probably laid upon the roof, in order to dry in the sun, preparatory to beating and dressing it for the wheel on which it was to be spun. Had she kept a public-house as some have supposed, she would have been less likely to have had her roof spread over with such an article. The original is explicit in saying that the flax had been spread out or laid in order "for herself," as if for her own use; from which the inference is, we think, not inaptly drawn, that she possessed one at least of the characters of the virtuous woman, viz. that "she sought wool and flax, and wrought willingly with her hands," (Prov. xxxi. 13,) and perhaps, at this time, supported herself in a way of honest industry.

VER. 7. And the men pursued after them the way to Jordan unto the fords: and as soon as they which pursued after them were gone out, they shut the gate.

*Unto the fords.*—Or Heb. "passages, crossing-places," whether by boats, bridges, or fording. Probably there were several such places, and the pursuers may have divided themselves into different companies, and directed their course to

each of them. *Shut the gate.*—Doubtless with especial care, and perhaps setting an extra guard, both to bar out enemies that might be lurking in the neighbourhood, and to prevent the escape of the spies, if perchance they still remained in the city.

VER. 8. And before they were laid down, she came up unto them upon the roof;

VER. 9. And she said unto the men, I know 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.

g Gen. xxxv. 5. Ex. xxiii. 27. Deut. ii. 25; xi. 25.

*I know that the Lord hath given, &c.*—I know and am assured; I am perfectly satisfied; I have not a doubt. An emphatic declaration implying much more than a shrewd conjecture or strong suspicion from existing circumstances that such would be the result. The words are expressive of the strength of her faith. *Your terror.*—The dread of you. (See Exod. xxiii. 27; xxxiv. 24. Deut. xi. 25; xxviii. 7.) *All the inhabitants of the land faint.*—Heb. "are melted, dissolved, liquefied." Precisely the same expression is used, Exod. xv. 15, in reference to this very event: "all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away." It expresses, in the strongest manner, the effect of the general consternation which had seized upon the devoted nations, in view of contending with such a powerful foe—one which was under the special conduct and protection of an almighty arm. Their very hearts quailed before the approach of Israel, in a certain fearful looking for of judgment and vengeance at their hands. It was probably something more than a mere natural dread of a formidable enemy; it was a supernatural panic sent upon their spirits by the immediate power of God, a fearful presage of the destruction that awaited them.

VER. 10. For we have heard how the LORD <sup>d</sup>dried up the water of the Red Sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and <sup>w</sup>what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites that *were* on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed.

<sup>h</sup> Ex. xiv. 21; ch. iv. 23. <sup>i</sup> Num. xxi. 24, 34, 35.

*For we have heard, &c.*—The first of these events, the drying up of the Red Sea, had happened forty years before, and though it had produced a deep impression at the time, on all the surrounding nations, yet in the lapse of that long interval, which was a season granted them for repentance, it is not unlikely that their alarm had in a great measure died away, till now it was revived again by their nearer approach, and by the recent overthrow of the two Amoritish kings. The convictions of sinners are apt to come and go with the alarming or afflictive dispensations of God's providence. So it is said of Israel of old, Psal. lxxviii. 34—37, "when he slew them, then they sought him: and they returned (changed their mind) and inquired early after God. Nevertheless they did flatter him

with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues; for their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant."

VER. 11. And as soon as we had <sup>b</sup>heard these things, <sup>c</sup>our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: for <sup>d</sup>the LORD your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath.

<sup>k</sup> Ex. xv. 14, 15. <sup>l</sup> Chap. v. 1; vii. 5. Isa. xiii. 7. <sup>m</sup> Deut. iv. 39.

11. *And as soon as we had heard our hearts did melt.*—Heb. "and we heard, and our heart did melt," spoken as if the whole nation were one person, having one heart. The original word for "melt," though not precisely the same with that in ver. 9, is yet of kindred import, the metaphor being taken from the melting of metals before the fire. *Neither did there remain any more courage in any man.*—Heb. "neither any more stood there up spirit in any man," i. e. no man's spirit was erect within him; every one's courage failed, and he became cowering and faint-hearted. *Because of your presence. He is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath.*—As much as to say, "The Lord your God is both omnipotent and omnipresent;" a remarkable confession, considering the previous ignorance and darkness of her mind. It was at once an acknowledgment of the true God, and a condemnation of the false gods and idolatrous worship of her countrymen, and showed a supernatural influence of God upon her soul. He can cause the rays of truth to penetrate the thickest shades of that moral midnight which broods over the minds of the unenlightened heathen, though we have no evidence that he ever does this except in connexion with some kind of external instrumentality.

VER. 12. Now therefore, I pray you, <sup>a</sup>swear unto me by the LORD, since I have showed you kindness, that ye will also show kindness unto <sup>b</sup>my father's house, and <sup>c</sup>give me a true token:

<sup>n</sup> See 1 Sam. xx. 14, 15, 17. <sup>o</sup> See 1 Tim. v. 8. <sup>p</sup> ver. 18.

*Swear unto me by the Lord.*—This proposal still further displays the sincerity and the strength of her faith. While the people of Israel, with the miracles of the divine power constantly before their eyes, were incessantly prone to stagger at the promises and give way to unbelief, she, upon the mere hearsay report of these wonders, is so firmly persuaded of their truth, that she desires to enter into covenant with the spies for her own preservation and that of her family. Though they were now in perilous circumstances, shut up within the walls of Jericho, and surrounded by enemies, yet she treats with them as if they had already stormed the city, and had the power of life and death in their hands. So earnest is she in this matter, that she would have them ratify by an oath their agreement to save her. In like manner a deep-rooted conviction of the danger hanging over the head of the sinner from the curse of a violated law, will prompt him to give all diligence to flee from the wrath to come, and

lay hold on eternal life, by joining himself to God and his people. *Showed you kindness.*—Heb. "done you kindness." *Give me a true token.*—Heb. "a token, a sign of truth, or certainty." That is, a token which shall not deceive me; one which I may produce as a witness of this agreement; one on the sight of which the Israelites shall forbear to hurt either me or mine.

VER. 13. And that ye will save alive my father, and my mother, and my brethren, and my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death.

*That ye will save alive my father and my mother, &c.*—The same feelings which warn us to flee the coming wrath and make our own peace with God, will also incite us to do all in our power to promote the salvation of our families and kindred, by bringing them also within the bonds of the covenant. We shall feel that our work is but half done when our own souls are safe.

VER. 14. And the men answered her, Our life for yours, if ye utter not this our business. And it shall be, when the LORD hath given us the land, that we will deal kindly and truly with thee.

<sup>q</sup> Judg. i. 24. Matt. v. 7.

*Our life for yours.*—That is, we pawn and pledge our lives for the security of yours: may our lives be destroyed, if we suffer yours to be injured. The exact rendering of the Hebrew is, "Let our soul be to die instead of you." *If ye utter not this our business.*—That is, if neither thou nor any of thy kindred ("ye") betray us when we are gone, or divulge this agreement, so that others may avail themselves of its conditions. "They that will be conscientious in keeping their promises will be cautious in making them, and may perhaps insert conditions which others will think frivolous."—Henry. *And it shall be, &c.*—Rather, "that it shall be." The words should be read in immediate connexion with the foregoing, of which they are a continuation, containing the promise which they make provided she will adhere to the conditions above stated. The present mode of punctuation gives a wrong, or at least an inadequate, view of the precise scope of the passage.

VER. 15. Then she <sup>a</sup>let them down by a cord through the window: for her house <sup>b</sup>was upon the town wall, and she dwelt upon the wall.

<sup>r</sup> Acts ix. 25.

*Then she let them down, &c.*—That is, by the help of her friends or domestics. In like manner Paul made his escape from Damascus. (2 Cor. xi. 33.) The conversation mentioned in the succeeding verses appears to have taken place previous to their being let down from the window; for which reason Adam Clarke remarks, that the natural place of this verse is immediately after the first clause of ver. 21. It is very unlikely that she would dismiss them before the above-mentioned conditions were agreed upon; or that she would discourse with them of matters of so

much moment after they were let down, and were standing under the window, where others might overhear them; or that she would commence speaking to them in her chamber, and not finish till they had left the house.

VER. 16. And she said unto them, Get you to the mountain, lest the pursuers meet you; and hide yourselves there three days, until the pursuers be returned: and afterward may ye go your way.

*Get you to the mountain.*—That is, to the mountainous region in the vicinity; not to any particular mountain. Jericho, as we have seen, was encompassed by a range of high hills. In some of the caves of these they might conceal themselves for the time specified.

VER. 17. And the men said unto her, We will be blameless of this thine oath which thou hast made us swear.

s Ex. xx. 7.

*We will be blameless of this thine oath.*—It shall not be our fault if the said oath be not kept, provided the annexed conditions be punctually observed on thy part. We will be free from the reproach of being unfaithful to our engagements. These conditions they go on to state in the next verse.

VER. 18. Behold, when we come into the land, thou shalt bind this line of scarlet thread in the window which thou didst let us down by: and thou shalt bring thy father and thy mother, and thy brethren, and all thy father's household, home unto thee.

z Ver. 12. u Chap. vi. 23.

*This line of scarlet thread.*—Rather, "this cord," i. e. a line or cord, consisting of such a number of threads or braids, that when twisted together, they should be capable of sustaining the weight of a man's body; for it seems to have been the very same cord with which they were let down from the window. This was to be a mark upon the house, of which the spies would inform the camp of Israel, so that no soldier, however fierce and eager he might be in the work of destruction, should offer any violence to the place thus distinguished. It answered, therefore, the same purpose with the blood sprinkled upon the door-posts in Egypt, which secured the first-born from the destroying angel. *Thou shalt bring thy father and thy mother, &c.*—Heb. "shalt gather." In no other way could Rahab's kindred be distinguished from those who were to be devoted to the sword. If they would not "perish with them that believed not," they must convey themselves to the only place of safety. If any of them had been met in the streets by the slaughtering Israelites, it would have availed them nothing to say, "We belong to the house of Rahab." The answer would be, "If you belong to the house, why are you not in the house? We know you not." So those who professedly belong to the church of Christ, if they would be

saved, must keep close to the society of the faithful. If they are found mingled with the world in spirit and pursuit, they have reason to fear being overwhelmed in its destruction.

VER. 19. And it shall be, that whosoever shall go out of the doors of thy house into the street, his blood shall be upon his head, and we will be guiltless: and whosoever shall be with thee in the house, his blood shall be on our head, if any hand be upon him.

x Matt. xxvii. 25.

*His blood shall be upon his head.*—The guilt of his blood-shedding shall rest wholly upon himself. He shall have no one else to blame. He has failed to perform the conditions of the covenant, and so must suffer for it. *If any hand be upon him.*—That is, so as to slay him. See a like phraseology, Deut. xvii. 7. Est. vi. 2. Job i. 12.

VER. 20. And if thou utter this our business, then we will be quit of thine oath which thou hast made us to swear.

VER. 21. And she said, According unto your words, so be it. And she sent them away, and they departed: and she bound the scarlet line in the window.

*According to your words so be it.*—I readily agree to the terms; they are reasonable, and I have nothing to say against them. *And she bound the scarlet line in the window.*—Probably not immediately, for fear of exciting suspicion, but in season, to avail herself of the benefit of it.

VER. 22. And they went, and came unto the mountain, and abode there three days, until the pursuers were returned: and the pursuers sought them throughout all the way, but found them not.

*Abode there three days.*—Not three entire days, but one whole day and part of two others. They were sent out on the sixth day of the month Nisan, and escaped from Jericho the same night. The seventh day they spent in the mountains. On the eighth day they returned to the camp. These three days are reckoned in the same manner as the three days of our Lord's burial. (Matt. xxvii. 64.)

VER. 23. So the two men returned, and descended from the mountain, and passed over, and came to Joshua the son of Nun, and told him all things that befel them:

*Passed over.*—Over Jordan. *Told him all things that befel them.*—Heb. "all things that found them." They probably made their report to Joshua alone, or to him in company with the elders, without whose concurrence no matter of importance seems to have been concerted or undertaken.

VER. 24. And they said unto Joshua, Truly the Lord hath delivered into our hands all the

land; for even all the inhabitants of the country do faint because of us.

*y* Ex. xxiii. 31; chap. vi. 2; xxi. 44.

*Do faint because of us.*—Heb. “are melted before our faces.” From this they drew the assured conclusion, that God was about to deliver the country into their hands. Those that were then deprived of their courage, would soon be deprived of their possessions. “Sinners’ frights are sometimes sure presages of their fall.”—*Henry*.

## CHAPTER III.

VER. 1. AND Joshua arose early in the morning; and they removed “from Shittim, and came to Jordan, he and all the children of Israel, and lodged there before they passed over.

*a* Chap. ii. 1.

*Joshua rose early in the morning.*—That is, on the morning of the third or fourth day after the proclamation mentioned chap. i. 11. Whether the spies had at this time returned or not is uncertain, though most probable that they had. *Lodged there before they passed over.*—That is, for one night. It would be more convenient for the congregation to pass over in the day-time; the miracle to be wrought would be more conspicuous; and a greater terror would be struck into the minds of the Canaanites. There is no evidence that the Israelites were informed of the manner in which they were to cross the river, yet they went forward in faith, being assured that they should pass it. (Chap. i. 11.) Duty often calls us to take one step without knowing how we shall take the next; but if brought thus far by the leadings of Providence, and while engaged in his service, we may safely leave the event to him. He will cleave the flood or the rock rather than that the way of his servants should be obstructed.

VER. 2. And it came to pass <sup>b</sup> after three days, that the officers went through the host;

*b* Chap. i. 10, 11.

VER. 3. And they commanded the people, saying, “When ye see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, “and the priests the Levites bearing it, then ye shall remove from your place, and go after it.

*c* See Num. x. 33.

*d* Deut. xxxi. 9, 25.

*It came to pass after three days.*—In exact fulfilment of Joshua’s declaration, ch. i. 10, 11.

*Commanded the people, &c.*—In the name and by the authority of Joshua, not of their own motion. *The priests the Levites bearing it.*—The priests who are Levites, who belong to the tribe of Levi. Although it was ordinarily the duty of the sons of Kohath, who were merely Levites and not priests, to bear the ark, (Num. iv. 15,) yet it appears that on solemn occasions this arrangement might be departed from, and the office performed by the priests. (Josh. vi. 6.) *Remove from your place.*—That is, break up from your encamp-

ment, leave your tents, commence your march, ver. 14. *Go after it.*—Follow it. Go in the rear of it. Hitherto, under the conduct of Moses, the ark had held a different position. It was stationed in the centre while the host was encamped, and borne in the middle of an immense procession when it set forward. But they then had the pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night to precede them. Now the cloud is removed, and the ark is transferred to the vanguard of the army, to go before.

VER. 4. “Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure: come not near unto it, that ye may know the way by which ye must go: for ye have not passed *this way* heretofore.

*e* Exod. xix. 12.

*There shall be a space—about two thousand cubits.*—Two thousand cubits amounted to about one thousand yards, or three quarters of a mile, and this space was to intervene between them and the ark, in order that they might be impressed with a becoming awe and reverence of the symbol of the divine presence. They would see too, by this means, that instead of their protecting it, they owed all their protection to it. Another reason is expressed in the words immediately following. *That ye may know the way by which ye must go.*—The ark was to be their pilot across the waters, and by being advanced so far ahead of them, would be more conspicuous than if the people had gathered and pressed close around it. As it was put at such a distance before them, they would all have the satisfaction of seeing it, and would be animated by the sight. This was the more necessary, as the passage of the Jordan was an untrudged way to them. *Ye have not passed this way heretofore.*—Heb. “Since yesterday and the third day;” *i. e.* never hitherto. The same form of expression occurs Gen. xxxi. 2. It is perhaps intimated, moreover, that they were now to cross the river, not at any usual fording-place, but at some point entirely new, by a passage which should miraculously open before them as the priests and the ark advanced.

VER. 5. And Joshua said unto the people, “Sanctify yourselves: for to-morrow the LORD will do wonders among you.

*f* Exod. xix. 10, 14, 15. Lev. xx. 7. Num. xi. 18. chap. vii. 13. 1 Sam. xvi. 5. Joel ii. 16.

*And Joshua said unto the people, Sanctify yourselves.*—Rather, “had said,” for as he speaks of “to-morrow,” the charge was probably given on the day previous to the one now current, on which they were passing over Jordan. The command now given was undoubtedly of the same import with that given by Moses, on the eve of the delivery of the law upon mount Sinai, Ex. xix. 10—14. They were to wash their persons and their garments, and to abstain from every thing that might indispose their minds to a serious and devout attention to the miracle about to be wrought in their behalf. A similar command was generally given on great and solemn occasions. (Lev. xx. 7, 8. Num. xi. 18. 1 Sam.

xvi. 5. Joel ii. 16.) The special manifestations of God's presence should be awaited by his people in a posture of deep humiliation, penitence, and prayer, and by diligent efforts to "cleanse themselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit."

VER. 6. And Joshua spake unto the priests, saying, *Take up the ark of the covenant, and pass over before the people. And they took up the ark of the covenant, and went before the people.*

*g* Num. iv. 15.

*Take up the ark of the covenant, &c.*—Joshua, in giving this command, is not to be considered as acting on his own absolute authority, for it would have been too much for him to assume the responsibility of changing the usual order of march, without a divine direction. He was merely the organ of announcing the will of God in respect to this matter. He obeyed the commands of Heaven, as the priests did his. *They took up the ark of the covenant, and went before the people.*—Heb. "borne up," *i. e.* upon their shoulders, according to the direction, Num. vii. 9. "A noble defiance of the enemies of Israel was thus given; who were challenged to attack the unarmed priests, or to attempt to seize the unattended ark."—*Scott.*

VER. 7. And the LORD said unto Joshua, This day will I begin to *magnify thee* in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, 'as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee.

*h* Ch. iv. 14. *1* Chr. xxix. 25. *2* Chr. i. 1. *i* Ch. i. 5.

*This day will I begin to magnify thee, &c.*—To make thee great, to raise thee in the estimation of thy people, to confirm thine authority, and to clothe thee with honour. God had before put distinguished honour upon Joshua on several occasions, (Exod. xxiv. 13. Deut. xxxi. 7.) but it had not been in so public and solemn a manner. Now he designs to magnify him as the successor of Moses in the government. He was to be the visible instrument of working a mighty miracle in the eyes of the nation; and from his circumstance foretelling how the waters should be cut off, as soon as the feet of the priests should touch them, (ver. 13,) it was demonstrated that the secret of the Lord was with him. True greatness belongs to those with whom God is, whom he employs in his service, and upon whom his blessing rests. The honour that comes from man may surround one with a temporary eclat, but let those that aspire to lasting and solid distinction seek it in the favour of God.

VER. 8. And thou shalt command the *k* priests that bear the ark of the covenant, saying, When ye are come to the brink of the water of Jordan, *l*ye shall stand still in Jordan.

*k* Ver. 3. *l* Ver. 17.

*Ye shall stand still in Jordan.*—They were first required to pause on the brink of the stream, till the channel was laid dry, and then they seem to have advanced and took their station in the midst of it, till all the people had passed over. As the entire bed of the river below the resting point of

the ark would become dry by the waters running off towards the Dead Sea, the congregation might pass over in that direction, having the ark on their right, and keeping at the prescribed distance of two thousand cubits.

VER. 9. And Joshua said unto the children of Israel, Come hither, and hear the words of the LORD your God.

*Come hither.*—Draw nigh towards me, as many as can come within hearing.

VER. 10. And Joshua said, Hereby ye shall know that *m*the living God is among you, and that he will without fail *n*drive out from before you the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Hivites, and the Perizzites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Jebusites.

*m* Deut. v. 26. *1* Sam. xvii. 26. *2* Kings xix. 4. *Hos.* i. 10. *Matt.* xvi. 16. *1* Thess. i. 9. *n* Exod. xxxiii. 2. *Deut.* vii. 1. *Psal.* xlv. 2.

*That the living God is among you.*—Not a dull, senseless, lifeless, inactive deity, like the gods of the heathen, but a God of life, power, and energy, able to work for you, and to put to confusion all your enemies.

VER. 11. Behold, the ark of the covenant of *o*the Lord of all the earth passeth before you into Jordan.

*o* Ver. 13. *Mic.* iv. 13. *Zech.* iv. 14, & vi. 5.

*The ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth.*—The original will admit of being rendered, "The ark of the covenant, *even* the Lord of all the earth;" and it is contended by many critics, that the ark of the covenant is called "Lord," or, "the Lord," in repeated instances, particularly Exod. xvi. 33. Num. x. 35, 36. *1* Sam. iv. 7. This would seem to be confirmed by *2* Sam. vi. 2, "And David arose and went with all the people that were with him, from Baale of Judah, to bring up from thence the ark of God, whose name is called by the name of the Lord of hosts." Such a title, however, could only be applied on the ground of its being the visible symbol of the divine presence, and of the close connexion subsisting between the sign and the thing signified.

VER. 12. Now therefore *p*take you twelve men out of the tribes of Israel, out of every tribe a man.

*p* Chap. iv. 2.

*Take ye twelve men out of the tribes of Israel.*—The object of this selection is afterwards explained, ch. iv. 4, 5. They were now to be chosen, and to stand ready, at a moment's warning, for the service to which they were set apart.

VER. 13. And it shall come to pass, *q*as soon as the soles of the feet of the priests that bear the ark of the LORD, *r*the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of Jordan, *t*that the waters of Jordan shall be cut off *from* the waters that come down from above; and they *s*shall stand upon a heap.

*q* Ver. 15, 16. *r* Ver. 11. *s* *Psal.* lxxviii. 13; & *exiv.* 3.

*The waters of Jordan shall be cut off from the waters that come down from above.*—More correctly rendered, “the waters of Jordan shall be cut off, even the waters that descend from above;” but whether he speaks in these words of the mass of waters remaining above the ark, that they were to be cut off from those below, which would be speedily drained off, and leave the channel bare; or whether the “waters that come down from above,” mean those that flowed downwards from the point where the ark stood above, while the rest stood as a heap, it is difficult to determine. Comparing this, however, with ver. 16, the first interpretation we think the most probable. This seems to have been the first intimation given to the people as to the manner in which they were to cross the river.

VER. 14. And it came to pass, when the people removed from their tents, to pass over Jordan, and the priests bearing the ‘ark of the covenant before the people;

*f* Acts vii. 45.

VER. 15. And as they that bare the ark were come unto Jordan, and “the feet of the priests that bare the ark were dipped in the brim of the water, (for ‘Jordan overfloweth all his banks all the time of harvest,)”

*n* Ver. 13. *a* 1 Chron. xii. 15. Jer. xii. 5, & xlix. 19.  
*y* Chap. iv. 18, & v. 10, 12.

*Jordan overfloweth all his banks all the time of harvest.*—That is, the barley harvest; which began in that country in our March or April. (1 Chron. xii. 15.) This inundation arose from the melting of the snows upon Mount Lebanon, in which the Jordan takes its rise. It probably took place on this occasion just before Israel was to pass over, and served to render the miracle far more stupendous and unquestionable. Indeed, we may suppose that this season was chosen expressly, in order that God might have the better opportunity to convince his people of his almighty power; that they were under his immediate care and protection; and that they might never cease to confide in him, in view of the most appalling dangers. “Though the opposition given to the salvation of God’s people have all imaginable advantages, yet God can and will conquer it.”—*Henry*.

VER. 16. That the waters which came down from above stood *and* rose up upon a heap very far from the city Adam, that is beside ‘Zaretan: and those that came down ‘toward the sea of the plain, *even* <sup>b</sup> the salt sea, failed, *and* were cut off: and the people passed over right against Jericho.

*a* 1 Kings iv. 12, & vii. 46. *a* Deut. iii. 17.  
*b* Gen. xiv. 3. Num. xxxiv. 3.

*Stood and rose up upon a heap.*—Being checked in their course, they continued to accumulate and swell higher and higher, till they filled up the channel to a great distance towards the source of the river. Probably another miracle was wrought in restraining the waters thus piled up from deluging the adjacent country. *From the city Adam*

*that is beside Zaretan.*—The position of these cities is not easily ascertained. As to the first, nothing is known; and perhaps it was even then so obscure as to be described by its nearness to Zaretan, a place of more notoriety. This, we learn from 1 Kings iv. 12, was situated below Jezreel, near Beth-shean or Scythopolis, and not far from Succoth; but Succoth, as appears from Gen. xxxiii. 17, Josh. xiii. 27, lay on the east of Jordan, not far from the lake Genesaret, and somewhere in this immediate vicinity, doubtless, was Adam situated. *Passed over right against Jericho.*—It is probable that the people crossed the river at what was afterwards called Beth-abara, or house of passage, which seems to have derived its name from this very circumstance. It was here that John baptized, (John i. 28,) and that Jesus, as well as Joshua, began to be magnified.

VER. 17. And the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan, ‘and all the Israelites passed over on dry ground, until all the people were passed clean over Jordan.

*c* See Exod. xiv. 29.

*And the priests—stood firm on the dry ground.*—Stood fixedly and immovable in the same place and posture, neither pressed upon by the waters, nor sinking in the mire, nor shifting their position. It is probable, too, that they continued bearing the ark on their shoulders during the whole time of their standing.

## CHAPTER IV.

VER. 1. And it came to pass, when all the people were clean passed ‘over Jordan, that the LORD spake unto Joshua, saying,

*a* Deut. xxvii. 2. Chap. iii. 17.

VER. 2. ‘Take you twelve men out of the people, out of every tribe a man.

*b* Chap. iii. 12.

*Take you twelve men, &c.*—Heb. “take ye for yourselves,” pl. though addressed to Joshua; an usage of speech founded upon the union between a leader or ruler, and his people. Nothing would appear from the phraseology itself to intimate that any such command had been before given, but as we know there had, chap. iii. 12, the twelve men here spoken of are to be understood of those already chosen to this service.

VER. 3. And command ye them, saying, Take you hence out of the midst of Jordan, out of the place where ‘the priests’ feet stood firm, twelve stones, and ye shall carry them over with you, and leave them in ‘the lodging-place, where ye shall lodge this night.

*c* Chap. iii. 13.

*d* Ver. 19, 20.

*Command ye them.*—Another instance of the phraseology noticed above. Joshua is addressed conjointly with the people, and required to give the annexed order. *Leave them in the lodging-place where ye shall lodge this night.*—This was

Gilgal, as appears from ver. 19, 20, a place somewhat more than six miles from the river Jordan.

VER. 4. Then Joshua called the twelve men, whom he had prepared of the children of Israel, out of every tribe a man :

*Whom he had prepared.*—Whom he had before chosen and appointed to that work, with a command that they should hold themselves in readiness for it. The stones were probably each of them as large as one man could conveniently carry.

VER. 5. And Joshua said unto them, Pass over before the ark of the LORD your God into the midst of Jordan, and take you up every man of you a stone upon his shoulder, according unto the number of the tribes of the children of Israel :

*Pass over before the ark.*—These twelve men had probably hitherto remained, from motives of reverence, somewhat behind the ark, perhaps nearer to the eastern bank of the river. They are now commanded to advance, and picking up the stones near the place where the priests stood, to “pass over before the ark,” and thus emerge from the bed of Jordan, and when arrived to deposit the stones in the place commanded. Otherwise the words must be understood to imply, that after passing over with the congregation, the twelve men were to pass back again to the place where the ark stood, and thence transport the stones ; which we cannot but regard as a violent construction.

VER. 6. That this may be a sign among you, that when your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean ye by these stones ?

*e* Ver. 21. *Ex.* xii. 26 ; xiii. 14. *Deut.* vi. 20. *Ps.* xlv. 1 ; lxxviii. 3—6.

*That this may be a sign among you.*—A sign that shall permanently remain among you ; a monument or memorial ; a conspicuous object, which shall be a standing witness of the wonderful event that has this day happened. Heaps, or pillars of stone, in commemoration of great events, such as covenants, victories, &c., have been common among all nations from the earliest ages. (See *Gen.* xxxi. 46. *Exod.* xxiv. 4.) In the present case, though there was no inscription on the stones, yet from the number of them, and from the place where they stood, it would be evident that they pointed to some memorable transaction, and of this it was to be the duty of each generation to keep its successors informed. It would likewise serve as a standing proof in corroboration of the matter of fact to those who might, in after ages, question the truth of the written history. The record of this great event might indeed be read in the sacred writings, but God, who knows the frame of his creatures, and how much they are influenced by the objects of sense, kindly ordered an expedient for keeping it in more lively remembrance from age to age. So he has provided the sacrament of the Lord's supper to aid our understandings and affect our

hearts by sensible symbols, though the same great truths which they represent are plainly delivered in words in the inspired oracles. *When your children ask.*—Heb. “when your sons ask ;” *i. e.* your descendants ; not little children merely, but your posterity of whatever age. *In time to come.*—Heb. “to-morrow ;” often used in the original to signify indefinitely all future time. (*Gen.* xxx. 33.) In like manner “yesterday,” is used in a general sense for all past time, as *Heb.* xiii. 8, “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.” *What mean ye by these stones ?*—Heb. “what these stones to you ?”

VER. 7. Then ye shall answer them, That the waters of Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD ; when it passed over Jordan, the waters of Jordan were cut off : and these stones shall be for a memorial unto the children of Israel for ever.

*f* Chap. iii. 13, 16. *g* *Ex.* xii. 14. *Num.* xvi. 40.

*Then shall ye answer them, That the waters, &c.* This clause, as appears from the original, requires to be supplied thus, “Then shall ye answer, These stones are designed to commemorate the fact that the waters,” &c. Such is undoubtedly the true grammatical dependence of the conjunction “that.” *Cut off before the ark.*—As it were at the sight of it, at its first approach. The clause respecting the cutting off of the waters of Jordan occurs again in the same words towards the end of the verse, to intimate, perhaps, the wonderful character of the miracle, and that a fact of such a stupendous nature should be repeated again and again in the hearing of those who were to be instructed. *A memorial unto the children of Israel.*—To them particularly and primarily, but not exclusively ; for the monument was calculated to be a witness and a standing reproof also to the heathen nations around. *For ever*—for an indefinite period of time ; as long as the nation should endure.

VER. 8. And the children of Israel did so as Joshua commanded, and took up twelve stones out of the midst of Jordan, as the LORD spake unto Joshua, according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel, and carried them over with them unto the place where they lodged, and laid them down there.

*The children of Israel did so.*—That is, the twelve men, who acted as the representatives of the whole body of the children of Israel, and therefore bear their name. A company or community is often said in the Scriptures to do that which is done by their constituted agents.

VER. 9. And Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of Jordan, in the place where the feet of the priests which bare the ark of the covenant stood : and they are there unto this day.

*Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of Jordan.*—Two sets of stones therefore were erected in memory of this miraculous passage, one at Gil-

gal, the other in the bed of Jordan. Should it be asked how the latter could serve as a monument, placed as they were in the middle of the stream, and liable to be concealed below the surface, we answer, that as nothing is said of their being each of them, like the others, of a size suitable for one man to carry, they might have been vastly larger, and so based upon a lower heap as to be generally visible, and thus indicate the very spot where the priests stood with the ark; for it is to be remarked, that the Jordan, at its ordinary stages, is not a deep river, and that its waters are remarkably clear and transparent, so that an object like this might probably always be seen except in the time of a high freshet. From the native force of the Heb. term for "set up," which is properly to "rear up," "to erect," *i. e.* to raise to a considerable height, it may be reasonably inferred that they were placed so as to be ordinarily visible. *In the place where the feet of the priests stood.*—Heb. "under the standing place of the feet of the priests." It was here that the heap of stones was to be erected, but from whence they were to be taken is not said. From aught that appears in the text they might have been gathered in the adjacent fields, as some commentators have imagined. *And they are there unto this day.*—Either the words of Joshua, who wrote his history near the close of his life, and about twenty years after the event occurred, or added at a subsequent period by Samuel or Ezra, or some other inspired man or men by whom the sacred canon was revised.

VER. 10. For the priests which bare the ark stood in the midst of Jordan, until every thing was finished that the LORD commanded Joshua to speak unto the people, according to all that Moses commanded Joshua: and the people hastened and passed over.

*According to all that Moses commanded Joshua.*—It does not appear that Moses any where gave Joshua a charge respecting this passage of Israel over the Jordan. The words therefore are to be understood of the general instructions given him by Moses, requiring him to follow the divine conduct in all particulars, as made known to him through the agency of Eleazar the high priest. (Numb. xxvii. 21—23.) So he did on the present occasion. *The people hastened and passed over.*—Perhaps under some apprehensions that the standing mass of waters on their right might be suffered to give way while they were crossing. Even where the general acting of faith is strong, the weakness of nature sometimes causes the spirit to waver. This passage of the Israelites through the Jordan is not improperly considered as an emblem of the Christian's transition from the dreary wilderness of this world to the Canaan that is above. When the time is arrived for passing by that unknown, untrodden path, we are apt to fear lest we should sink in the deep waters, and never attain the wished-for end. But God has promised to be with us, to make "the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over," and to bring us in safety to the land that floweth with milk and honey. The ark of his covenant

will go before, both for our guidance and protection, and under its conduct we may cheerfully bid adieu to the friends who stand weeping on the bank.

VER. 11. And it came to pass, when all the people were clean passed over, that the ark of the LORD passed over, and the priests, in the presence of the people.

*In the presence of the people.*—Who stood upon the bank, beholding with admiration and awe the last act of this great miracle.

VER. 12. <sup>a</sup>And the children of Reuben, and the children of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh, passed over armed before the children of Israel, as Moses spake unto them:

<sup>b</sup> Numb. xxxii. 20, 27, 28.

*Passed over armed before the children of Israel.*—The original phrase here is precisely the same with that rendered in the preceding verse, in "the presence of;" and, as we conceive, does not clearly intimate that they led the van, for the order of marching of the different tribes had been expressly prescribed in the wilderness, Numb. x.; and it is not probable that it was departed from on this occasion. According to this order the tribe of Judah had the precedence. What is affirmed of the two tribes and a half here, we suppose is, that in pursuance of their promises, chap. i. 16—18, they passed over "in the presence of" their brethren, who were thus all witnesses to their fidelity.

VER. 13. About forty thousand prepared for war passed over before the LORD unto battle, to the plains of Jericho.

*Passed over before the Lord.*—That is, probably, before the ark of the Lord, the symbol of the divine presence. Otherwise it may imply "as in the sight of the Lord," "religiously," "conscientiously."

VER. 14. On that day the LORD 'magnified Joshua in the sight of all Israel; and they feared him, as they feared Moses, all the days of his life.

<sup>i</sup> Chap. iii. 7.

*Magnified Joshua.*—Caused him to stand high in the esteem and respect of the people, so that they henceforth yielded to him the same reverential fear and ready obedience which they had done to Moses. God now fully confirmed his authority, and showed that he was with him. That honour is ever most to be desired which is the result of a strict, conscientious, and uniform observance of all the divine precepts.

VER. 15. And the LORD spake unto Joshua, saying,

*The Lord spake unto Joshua, saying.*—This may be rendered "had spoken," and the whole paragraph, ver. 15—19, be considered as a detailed account of what is stated more generally, ver. 11. These verses seem designed to acquaint us with the main ground or reason to which, under God,

it was owing that Joshua was so signally magnified on that occasion. "The priests did not quit their station till Joshua, who had commanded them thither, ordered them thence; nor did he thus order them, till the Lord commanded him: so obedient were all parties to the word of God." *Scott.*

VER. 16. Command the priests that bear <sup>k</sup>the ark of the testimony, that they come up out of Jordan.

<sup>k</sup> Exod. xxv. 16, 22.

VER. 17. Joshua therefore commanded the priests, saying, Come ye up out of Jordan.

VER. 18. And it came to pass, when the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord were come up out of the midst of Jordan, and the soles of the priests' feet were lifted up unto the dry land, that the waters of Jordan returned unto their place, and flowed over all his banks, as *they did* before.

<sup>l</sup> Chap. iii. 15.

*The soles of the priests' feet were lifted up unto the dry land.*—Heb. "were plucked up." As upon the entrance into the river, the stream was cut off as soon as the soles of the priests' feet touched the water, chap. iii. 15, so now as soon as they touched the dry land it again assumes its natural course. This would make it evident that the arrest of the river was the effect solely of divine power, and not owing to any secret natural cause. *Flowed over all his banks as they did before.*—Heb. "went as yesterday and the third (day) on all his banks."

VER. 19. And the people came up out of Jordan on the tenth day of the first month, and encamped <sup>m</sup>in Gilgal, in the east border of Jericho.

<sup>m</sup> Chap. v. 9.

*On the tenth day of the first month.*—That is, of the month Nisan, just forty years, lacking five days, after their departure out of Egypt. This was four days before the annual feast of the Passover, and on the very day when the paschal lamb was to be set apart for this purpose, (Ex. xii. 3;) God having so ordered it in his providence, that their entrance into the promised land should coincide with the period of that festival.

*And encamped in Gilgal.*—In the place afterwards called Gilgal, (ch. v. 9,) for here the name is given it by anticipation. It is doubtful whether there was either city or town in that place before the arrival of the Israelites.

VER. 20. And <sup>n</sup>those twelve stones, which they took out of Jordan, did Joshua pitch in Gilgal.

<sup>n</sup> Ver. 3.

*Did Joshua pitch in Gilgal.*—Heb. "erect, rear up." A foundation of stone-work or a mound of earth was probably first laid, of considerable height, and then the twelve stones placed on the top of it; for twelve such stones as a man could carry six miles on his shoulder, could

scarcely have made any observable pile or pillar of memorial; but erected on such a base as we have supposed, they would be very conspicuous, and strikingly answer the purpose for which they were designed.

VER. 21. And he spake unto the children of Israel, saying, "When your children shall ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean these stones?"

<sup>o</sup> Ver. 6.

*Shall ask—in time to come.*—Heb. "to-morrow." See vers. 6, 7. From their number, size, position, &c., and from there not being any others near them of the same kind, they would naturally excite inquiries, "How came these stones here? What is meant by them?" This would afford to parents an excellent opportunity to turn to account the inquisitiveness of their children, to make them early acquainted with the wonderful works of God, and to train them up in his fear. We should encourage young people to seek instruction, and should be glad of every thing that may afford us an occasion of making known to them the wonders of redeeming love.

VER. 22. Then ye shall let your children know, saying, "Israel came over this Jordan on dry land."

<sup>p</sup> Ch. iii. 17.

*Israel came over this Jordan on dry land.*—In commemoration of which remarkable fact, these stones are placed here.

VER. 23. For the Lord your God dried up the waters of Jordan from before you, until ye were passed over, as the Lord your God did to the Red sea, "which he dried up from before us, until we were gone over."

<sup>q</sup> Exod. xiv. 21.

*For the Lord your God dried up the waters of Jordan from before you.*—The parents are still supposed to be speaking to their children. It is remarkable that they address them as if they were living and present at the miraculous passage of the Jordan, whereas they then existed only in the loins of their fathers. But it is not uncommon for the sacred writers to speak of the nation of Israel, through every period of its existence, as if they were but of one generation, so that what really happened to those that lived at one age, is said to have happened to those that lived at another, perhaps far remote. This gives us a very impressive idea of the light in which God viewed that people, viz. as morally one, as one great collective person continually subsisting. Thus, Psal. xlv. 6, the writer speaks as if he and his contemporaries were personally present at the passage of the Red Sea, "He turned the sea into dry land: they went through the flood on foot; there did we rejoice in him," though this happened ages before their time. So also our Saviour speaks as if the Jews of his day were living in the days of Moses, (John vi. 32,) "Verily I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven." On the same principle Joshua speaks here. *The Red Sea, which he dried up from be-*

fore us.—This is another instance of the usage just adverted to. He speaks of the Red Sea's being dried up from before the people whom he then addressed, whereas none of that generation were now living, except himself and Caleb, the rest of them having perished in the wilderness through unbelief and rebellion.

VER. 24. 'That all the people of the earth might know the hand of the LORD, that it is 'mighty : that ye might 'fear the LORD your God for ever.

r 1 Kings viii. 42, 43. 2 Kings xix. 19. Ps. cvi. 8.  
s Exod. xv. 16. 1 Chron. xxix. 12. Ps. lxxxix. 13.  
t Exod. xiv. 31. Deut. vi. 2. Ps. lxxxix. 7. Jer. x. 7.

## CHAPTER V.

VER. 1. AND it came to pass, when all the kings of the Amorites, which were on the side of Jordan westward, and all the kings of the Canaanites, "which were by the sea," heard that the LORD had dried up the waters of Jordan from before the children of Israel, until we were passed over, that their heart melted, "neither was there spirit in them any more, because of the children of Israel.

a Num. xiii. 29. b Exod. xv. 14, 15. chap. ii. 9—11.  
Ps. xlviii. 6. Ezek. xxi. 7. c 1 Kings x. 5.

And it came to pass, &c.—As this verse is much more intimately related to what goes before than to what follows, it would probably have been better to have joined it to the preceding chapter. The present would then have commenced with an entirely new subject. *All the kings of the Amorites—and of the Canaanites.* As the whole land of Canaan was of comparatively small extent, the several nations, as they are called, which inhabited it, must have been mere clans or hordes, and what are termed their kings, nothing more than petty chieftains, ruling over territories scarcely larger than the counties in many of the states of the American union. The term "king;" in modern usage, conveys the idea of a power and dominion altogether more extensive than was possessed by these petty potentates. The Amorites and the Canaanites here mentioned probably stand for the whole of the devoted nations, they being specified on account of their superiority to the rest in numbers, power, and courage. The nation of the Amorites occupied both sides of the Jordan; two of their kings, Sihon and Og, had already been slain on the eastern side. (Deut. iv. 46, 47.) *Which were by the sea.*—The Mediterranean sea; along the coasts of which the Canaanitish tribes, properly so called, were spread. This region was afterwards known by the name of Phœnicia, of which Tyre and Sidon were the principal cities. On this account, the same person who is called "a woman of Canaan" by Matthew, (xv. 22.) is called by Luke, (vii. 26,) "a Syro-Phœnician." *Had dried up the waters of Jordan.*—Which they regarded as the natural bulwark of their country, one too strong for the enemy to break through,

especially during the season of its annual overflow. It should seem that the Canaanites, if they had acted according to the rules of war, would have opposed the Israelites in their passage. But the destruction of Pharaoh at the Red Sea some time before, and the recent victories over Sihon and Og, had spread such a panic through the land, that they did not dare to avail themselves of any supposed advantage, lest they should perish after their example. The event, indeed, shows how vain any attempt on their part would have been. It shows, too, that when the measure of any people's iniquities is full, they shall in no wise escape the vengeance of God. Whatever obstacles may appear to lie in the way, and whatever barrier an ungodly world may have, or think they have, for their defence, God will surely make a way for his indignation. Opposing myriads shall be only as the stubble before the fire of his wrath. *Until we were passed over.*—These words intimate the writer to have been one of the company. *Their heart melted.*—In modern language, we read of the heart melting with pity, and being dissolved with grief. The sacred writers, on this and similar occasions, apply the same metaphor, with equal truth and beauty, to the operation of fear and terror. *Neither was there spirit in them any more.*—The special providence of God is to be recognised in the panic which fell upon these nations at this particular juncture. It gave the Israelites just the opportunity they required, to administer the rite of circumcision, and to keep the Passover securely and without disturbance. Had it been otherwise, and had the Canaanites attacked them, as Simeon and Levi did the Shechemites when they were sore, they would have taken them at every disadvantage.

VER. 2. At that time the LORD said unto Joshua, Make thee 'sharp knives, and circumcise again the children of Israel the second time.

d Exod. iv. 25.

At that time.—As if in allusion to the remarkable circumstances by which they were now surrounded; encamped in the midst of an enemy's country, and yet that enemy providentially restrained from harming them, so that they were commanded, as if in their very sight and presence, to reduce themselves to a condition of comparative weakness and helplessness. "This formed a very great trial of their faith, and their prompt and universal obedience in such critical circumstances, manifested a confidence in the Lord's protection, and a submission to his will, which confirm the sentiment that this was the best of all the generations of Israel."—*Scott.* *Make thee sharp knives.*—Heb. "prepare, make ready knives of rock, stone, or flint." Of such materials were the edge-tools of all nations made before the use of iron became common. At this day, among most of the savage tribes inhabiting the islands of the sea, or other barbarous climes, the same custom prevails. Their knives, and also their arrows and spear-heads, are made of stone; and similar relics of the aborigines of our own country are often turned up by the plough. It is not probable that the Israelites were alto-

gether strangers to the use of iron, or were unfurnished with various metallic tools, as their different fabrications in the wilderness force upon us the belief that they must have employed both iron and steel; but from the case of Zipporah, (Exod. iv. 25,) it appears to have been unlawful to use any kind of metal in this religious rite, and this opinion is confirmed by the practice of a tribe in Ethiopia at this day, who, professing to follow the Mosaic institution, perform the rite of circumcision, according to Ludolph, with knives of stone. It is supposed too that such instruments were not so liable to cause inflammation, as knives or razors of metal. *And circumcise again the children of Israel the second time.*—Heb. “return (and) circumcise.” This is not to be understood as a command to repeat circumcision on those individuals who had already received it. This would have been at once unnecessary and impracticable. It merely implies that they were to renew the observance of a rite which had been neglected in their travels in the desert. The command was given now, at this early period after their entrance into the promised land, (1.) That the reproach of Egypt might be rolled away; (2.) That they might be duly prepared to celebrate the Passover, of which none might eat who were uncircumcised, (Exod. xii. 48;) and (3.) As a trial of their faith under the circumstances in which they were now placed, surrounded by enemies intent upon their destruction, and who could desire no greater advantage than such a crippled state of their invaders would give them. “There is a general circumcision now of the people, as there had been at their coming out of Egypt; and as God then enclosed the Egyptians in three days’ darkness that they could not stir, so now he striketh the Canaanites with terror, that they dare not stir to hurt the people while they were sore. Circumcision sealed the lease of the land of Canaan; and therefore as soon as they set foot on it they must be circumcised.”—*Lightfoot.* Had Joshua acted on the principles common to all other generals, when invading an enemy’s country, he would either have prosecuted his advantages instantly, while his enemies were filled with terror, and crushed them before they had time to prepare for their defence; or he would have fortified his own camp to prevent surprise, and to be in constant readiness for any emergency that might arise. But instead of adopting any military plans whatever, the very day after he had invaded the country, without waiting to know what effect the invasion would have, he appoints nearly every male in the congregation to be circumcised! Thus by one act disabling the greater part of his whole army from even standing in their own defence! What but a principle of the most triumphant faith could have brought them to submit to such an injunction as this?

VER. 3. And Joshua made him sharp knives, and circumcised the children of Israel at the hill of the foreskins.

*And Joshua made him sharp knives.*—That is, he caused them to be made, they were made by his order. *Circumcised the children of Israel.*—Meaning those of them who had not been already circumcised, those who had been born in the

wilderness, and were under forty years of age. This he did by means of his agents. As the number to whom the rite was to be administered was immensely large, and the time allotted for it short, a great many hands must necessarily have been engaged in it. Probably any one who was himself circumcised, was authorized to perform it. In ordinary circumstances it is proper to stand upon instituted observances with great exactness, and to have religious rites performed by appropriate officers, but when peculiar emergencies arise, such scrupulousness must sometimes be waived, and rituals give way to essentials. God will have mercy rather than sacrifice, when only one can be rendered him. *At the hill of the foreskins.*—So called from the hillock of foreskins, the result of the transaction.

VER. 4. And this is the cause why Joshua did circumcise: “All the people that came out of Egypt, *that were* males, *even* all the men of war, died in the wilderness by the way, after they came out of Egypt.

*e* Num. xiv. 29, & xxvi. 64, 65. Deut. ii. 16.

*And this is the cause, &c.*—The omission in this case was probably with the divine connivance, as the people knew not the precise times when they were to march, and a removal immediately after the operation might have been dangerous to tender infants. Moreover, as one design of this rite was to distinguish the Israelites from all other people, it was not so necessary to be administered while they were secluded from the world, for forty years in the wilderness. This instance, however, is not to be pleaded as authorising the neglect or postponement of any divine ordinance in common circumstances.

VER. 5. Now all the people that came out were circumcised; but all the people *that were* born in the wilderness by the way as they came forth out of Egypt, *them* they had not circumcised.

VER. 6. For the children of Israel walked *f* forty years in the wilderness, till all the people *that were* men of war which came out of Egypt were consumed, because they obeyed not the voice of the LORD: unto whom the LORD swore that *s* he would not show them the land which the LORD swore unto their fathers, that he would give us, *a* land that floweth with milk and honey.

*f* Num. xiv. 33. Deut. i. 3; ii. 7, 14. Ps. xciv. 10.

*g* Num. xiv. 23. Ps. xciv. 11. Heb. iii. 11.

*h* Ex. iii. 8.

*Walked forty years.*—Led for that time a wandering, unsettled life. *Would not show them.*—Heb. “cause to see,” *i. e.* would not permit them to enjoy. Thus Eccles. ii. 24, “There is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy (Heb. cause his soul to see) good in his labour.” (Psal. iv. 6,) “Who will show us any good?” (Heb. who will cause us to see, *i. e.* to enjoy, to have the fruition of.)

VER. 7. And 'their children, *whom* he raised up in their stead, them Joshua circumcised: for they were uncircumcised, because they had not circumcised them by the way.

‡ Num. xiv. 31. Deut. i. 39.

*Their children whom he raised up in their stead.*—Or, Heb. "caused to stand, made to survive, preserved." The writer's design seems to be, to state a contrast in the lot of the fathers and the children, using the term "raised up," in opposition to "consumed" in the preceding verse. The one he destroyed for their rebellion, the other he graciously preserved alive, established, caused to subsist. See note on Ex. ix. 16, where this sense of the term is amply confirmed. The words contain a fulfilment of the promise given in connection with the threatening, Num. xiv. 29—31.

VER. 8. And it came to pass when they had done circumcising all the people, that they abode in their places in the camp, <sup>h</sup>till they were whole.

‡ See Gen. xxxiv. 25.

*Till they were whole.*—Till they were healed. Heb. "until they lived." The original is, in repeated instances, used to signify being restored to health. Thus Numb. xxi. 8, "Every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live," *i. e.* he recovered. 2 Kings viii. 8, "Shall I recover of this disease?" Heb. "shall I live." Isa. xxxviii. 21, "Lay it for a plaister on the boil, and he shall recover;" Heb. "shall live." The particle "till" does not imply that they abode in their tents no longer than during the time of their recovery; for they remained there while keeping the passover. The same remark is to be made of the import of this word in numerous other instances.

VER. 9. And the LORD said unto Joshua, This day have I rolled away 'the reproach of Egypt from off you: Wherefore the name of the place is called "Gilgal unto this day.

‡ Gen. xxxiv. 14. † Sam. xiv. 6. See Lev. xviii. 3. chap. xxiv. 14. Ezek. xx. 7; xxiii. 3, 8.

<sup>m</sup> Chap. iv. 19.

*This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt.*—It has been much disputed by commentators what is meant by the "reproach of Egypt." We take the expression, in a very full sense, to mean the reproach connected with Egypt, in whatever way, whether actively or passively. (1.) Actively; inasmuch as the Israelites themselves, while in the wilderness, did virtually reproach the Most High in respect to the land of Egypt, grieving that they had left it, wishing that they had died there, charging him with leading them out thence to slay them in the desert, and proposing to appoint a leader and to return thither. The 14th chapter of Numbers details these murmuring complaints, and shows that God was exceedingly angry with the people on this account, and would have destroyed them but for the intercession of Moses. But now the guilt of that conduct was to be rolled away or pardoned; they were no longer on account of it to be kept out of possession of the promised land; and not only so, they should never have any more the

least occasion or inducement to vent such groundless reproaches. By being brought into Canaan in so gracious and glorious a manner, and having every promise fulfilled to them, all occasion of complaint was for ever cut off. (2.) Passively; their bondage in Egypt was, in a sense, a reproach and a disgrace to them; it would be so accounted by other nations while it continued, and they would be disparaged by reason of it. It is probable also that the Egyptians themselves, seeing them wander so long in the wilderness, reproached and taunted them, as if brought there to be destroyed; but now, having entered Canaan in triumph, and being put in possession of all the covenanted blessings promised to the seed of Abraham, of which circumcision was the seal, this reproach was henceforth done away. Both the disgrace of their bondage, and the contemptuous aspersions of their oppressors, should cease from this time forward forever.

*Wherefore the name of the place is called Gilgal unto this day.*—That is, "rolling," "rolling away." Gilgal was situated between Jericho and the river Jordan, about one mile and a half, or two miles, from the former, and six from the latter. Nothing of this city now remains, but travellers are shown a pile of stones denominated Galgala, which, though at a considerable distance from the site of the ancient Gilgal, is supposed by some to be the monument erected by Joshua. The clause "unto this day," sufficiently indicates that the events related in the book of Joshua, or at least in this part of it, were not consigned to writing immediately upon their occurrence, but after the lapse of some considerable time.

VER. 10. And the children of Israel encamped in Gilgal, and kept the passover "on the fourteenth day of the month at even, in the plains of Jericho.

‡ Ex. xii. 6. Numb. ix. 5.

*And kept the passover.*—Heb. "and made the passover." The third from its institution. The first was observed in Egypt on the eve of their departure; the second at Sinai, on the following year, (Numb. ix. 1, 2;) while during the long interval down to the present time it had been wholly suspended. (Amos v. 25.) *On the fourteenth day of the month.*—That is, the fourteenth day of the first month, or Nisan. From this remarkable portion of the sacred narrative we may learn, (1.) That in whatever circumstances we are placed, religion should be our first concern. If ever there were circumstances which would seem to justify the postponement of religious duties, one would think they were those of Joshua on this occasion, when he had but just set foot on the land where great and powerful nations were prepared to combat for their very existence. We know how common it is for military and naval commanders to act as if they thought they had a dispensation to neglect the ordinances of religion, on account of the urgency and importance of their occupations. And the same idea prevails throughout almost all orders of society. Every one is ready to plead his temporal engagements as an excuse for neglecting the concerns of his soul. The statesman is too much engaged in

politics, the merchant in his business, the philosopher in his researches, the student in his books, and the professional man in the duties of his calling, to find time for the one thing needful. But if Joshua, under his peculiar circumstances, sought first to serve and honour God, who then can plead an exemption? Compared with the divine favour, is there an object under heaven worthy of a thought? (2.) That in whatever circumstances we are placed, we should place the most implicit confidence in God. Suppose we were in the presence of Joshua while these religious ceremonies were going on, we might be disposed to ask, "Are you not in an enemy's land? and have you not many conflicts to maintain ere you can get a quiet possession of it? yet you seem as much at your ease as if the whole land were already subdued before you." What reply may we suppose Joshua would make to observations like these? "True," he would say, "you behold me in a state of as much quietness and confidence as if I had not an enemy to contend with. But whose battles am I fighting? In whose service am I engaged? Is there any device or power that can succeed against God? In him I trust, and he it is that keeps my mind in perfect peace." Now, in our spiritual warfare we stand upon virtually the same ground that Joshua did. We are called to it as he was; and it is the way appointed for our getting possession of our destined inheritance. We also have our enemies at hand, with whom, in our own strength, it would be impossible for us to cope. But our God is for us, and confiding in him, we may bid a calm defiance to the most malignant powers of darkness. In our temporal trials also, encountered in the way of duty, we are required to exercise the same cheerful trust, for he who has called us to them will sustain us in them.

VER. 11. And they did eat of the old corn of the land on the morrow after the passover, unleavened cakes and parched corn in the self-same day.

*And they did eat of the old corn of the land.*—Of the old grain, of whatever kind it were. This they probably found in abundance in the deserted granaries of the inhabitants who had fled away, and betaken themselves for safety to the defended city of Jericho. The original phrase however may be rendered simply, "They did eat of the product or yielding of the earth," in contradistinction from the manna which came from heaven. *And parched corn.*—That is, the new corn of the present year, which they found standing in the fields. The new or green corn was parched to enable them more easily to grind it for food. This would not be necessary in respect to old corn. *On the morrow after the Passover.*—Meaning, probably, on the sixteenth day of the month; for the paschal lamb was killed and roasted on the fourteenth, and the feast began that night, which, according to their reckoning, formed a part of the fifteenth day, through the whole of which the feast continued, so that the sixteenth day was the morrow after the Passover, when they were required by the law (Lev. xxiii. 10, 11) to offer to God the wave-sheaf of the first-

fruits, and then were allowed to eat the rest. *In the self-same day.*—Perhaps importing the very great eagerness of the people to feast upon the fruits of the land as soon as they might lawfully do it. Having previously renewed their covenant with God and partaken of its seals, circumcision and the passover, they wished at once to enter upon the enjoyment of all the rights and privileges thereby confirmed to them.

VER. 12. And the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year.

o Ex. xvi. 35.

*And the manna ceased on the morrow.*—Because it was now no longer necessary. God would not have us expect extraordinary or miraculous supplies when they may be procured by ordinary means. The sudden cessation of the manna would teach the people also very impressively that it was not an ordinary production of nature, that it had not fallen for so long a time by chance, or, like the dew, in consequence of fixed laws, but that it was a special and preternatural gift of the divine goodness. We are prone to look upon our common mercies as matters of course, and God sometimes withdraws them to teach us our dependence more effectually. "The word and ordinances of God are spiritual manna, with which God nourishes his people in this wilderness; but when we come to the heavenly Canaan this manna will cease, for we shall then no longer have need of it."—Henry.

VER. 13. And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?

p Gen. xviii. 2; xxxii. 24. Ex. xxiii. 23. Zech. i. 8. Acts i. 10. q Numb. xxii. 23.

*When Joshua was by Jericho.*—Heb. "in Jericho;" *i. e.* in the plains of Jericho, in the country or territory immediately adjoining Jericho, and called by the same name, probably at some distance from the camp, whither he may have repaired for the purpose of observing in person the position of the city and the most favourable point of attack. The sixth chapter ought certainly to have commenced here, as the subject now entered upon is entirely new, and the present arrangement most unnaturally divides the communication which Joshua had with the angel, and which is continued to chap. vi. 5. *There stood a man.*—One in the appearance of a man, one whom Joshua at first took for a man. That he was a superhuman being, however, is evident from what follows; and there seems no good reason to dissent from the established opinion of both ancient and modern expositors, that this was no other than the Son of God, the Eternal Word, appearing in that form which he was afterwards to assume for the redemption of men. The reasons

for this opinion are, (1.) The title which he here gives himself, "Captain of the host of the Lord," which is but another form of the name, "Lord of hosts," implying the ruler of all the heavenly hosts, and which is evidently the appropriate title of Jehovah-Jesus. (2.) His acceptance of the worship or adoration which Joshua here pays him. This an angel or any created being would undoubtedly have refused. Comp. Rev. xix. 10; xxii. 9. Judges xiii. 16. Here, however, instead of reproving Joshua for doing him too much honour, he commands him to do still more, by "loosing his shoes from off his feet;" thus insisting upon the highest acknowledgment of the divine presence which was in use among the eastern nations. (3.) From this place being made holy by his presence, which was the special prerogative of God, Exod. iii. 5; and (4.) From his being expressly called "Jehovah," chap. vi. 2, which passage undoubtedly forms a part of the present narrative, as otherwise he must have appeared without any ostensible object, neither delivering any message, making any promise, nor uttering any command, except merely that Joshua should loose his shoes from his feet. *Over against him.*—As if with a hostile intent, in somewhat of a threatening attitude. The same phrase in the original occurs Dan. x. 13, "The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me." (Heb. "stood over against me.") *With his drawn sword in his hand.*—As a symbol of the character in which he was now to manifest himself in behalf of Joshua and Israel. So he is elsewhere termed, "A man of war," (Exod. xv. 3.) His appearing in this form would serve also not only to justify the war in which Joshua was now engaged, to show him that it was of God, who had given him his commission to kill and slay, but to encourage him to prosecute it with vigour. If God was for him, who could be against him? He had indeed previously received many promises of success, but God is often graciously pleased to confirm and follow up his promises by signal manifestations of his presence and favour: "Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, those that remember thee in thy ways." *And Joshua went unto him.*—Displaying herein a remarkable courage and intrepidity. Instead of turning away from the formidable personage before him, and seeking hastily to regain the camp, he walks boldly up, and demands of him whether he be a friend or a foe. This undaunted bearing was the fruit of his strong confidence in God. No face of clay will intimidate him who looks upon God as his friend and protector, and who is found in the way of duty. It is the disobedient, the obstinate, the rebellious spirit in which cowardice dwells. The good man is ever the true hero.

VER. 14. And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the LORD am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my lord unto his servant?

† Gen. xvii. 3.

And he said, Nay, but as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come.—"I am neither Israelite

nor Canaanite, neither friend nor foe, in your sense of the words, for I am not a mortal man, but as prince and leader of the Lord's host, of the angels in heaven, and even of that very power of which you are commander, have I now come, to instruct and aid thee in the great undertaking in which thou art engaged." He probably at the same moment put forth some visible demonstration of his true character, which at once satisfied Joshua, and filled him with an overwhelming sense of his majesty and glory, so that he instinctively fell on his face to the earth, and offered him those tokens of worship which a mortal is bound to pay to his Creator. *What saith my lord unto his servant?*—With the profoundest reverence I acknowledge thee as my lord and leader, I subject myself to thy sovereign will, and humbly wait for the orders it may seem good to thee to issue.

VER. 15. And the captain of the Lord's host said unto Joshua, 'Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy; and Joshua did so.

‡ Exod. iii. 5. Acts vii. 33.

*Loose thy shoe from off thy foot.*—This was a token of respect and reverence usual in the East, and equivalent to uncovering the head with us. (See Illustrations of the Scriptures, p. 129.) These are the same words which the angel of the burning bush spake to Moses, (Exod. iii. 5,) from which, and other circumstances, it is probable that it was the same person who appeared in both places. That great and glorious Being, who knows fully his own infinite perfections, which we are very inadequate to comprehend, knows what external manifestations of respect they justly claim of his creatures. "Outward expressions of inward reverence, and a religious awe of God, well become us, and are required of us, whenever we approach to him in solemn ordinances."—Henry. *The place whereon thou standest is holy.*—Heb. "is holiness." It was for the time made holy, or consecrated by the divine presence. As soon as that was withdrawn, its peculiar sacredness also forsook it, and it was no more holy than any other place. Yet with the pious heart there will naturally be, from the laws of association, a feeling of reverence for any place where God has been pleased to vouchsafe the special manifestations of himself. Such a sentiment, however, should be guarded from degenerating into superstition.

## CHAPTER VII.

VER. 1. Now Jericho was straitly shut up, because of the children of Israel: none went out, and none came in.

We fully assent to the remark of Dr. Adam Clarke, that there is scarcely a more unfortunate division of chapters in the whole Bible than here. According to the present arrangement, the reader is greatly at a loss to know what is intended by this extraordinary appearance of the

Son of God, as it would seem that the whole account of his visit is closed with the foregoing chapter, whereas in fact it is continued in the present. The first verse of chap. vi. is a mere parenthesis, relating the state of Jericho at the time that Joshua was favoured by this encouraging vision. The thread of the narrative respecting this divine personage, commenced in the preceding chapter, is then resumed, and continued to ver. 5.

*Now Jericho was straitly shut up.*—Strictly, closely shut up. Heb. "did shut up and was shut up," or "closing and was closed." The original expression is peculiar and emphatic, and was doubtless designed to imply the extreme care and vigilance with which the gates had been closed and were watched, not only by night, as when the spies came, (chap. ii. 5.) but also by day. Accordingly the Chal. renders it, "And Jericho was shut up with iron doors, and fortified with brazen bolts, so that none came out either to combat or to make offers of peace." The language also intimates, that the city was not only effectually shut up and made secure from within, but was also so closely blockaded by the Israelites from without, that there was no going out or coming in even to its own citizens. *Because of the children of Israel.*—Heb. "before the children of Israel." "Methinks I see how they called their council of war, debated of all means of defence, gathered their forces, trained their soldiers, set strong guards to the gates and walls; and now would persuade one another that unless Israel could fly into the city, the siege was vain. (So) vain worldlings think their ramparts and barricadoes can keep out the vengeance of God; their blindness suffers them to look no further than the means; the supreme hand of the Almighty comes not within the compass of their fears. Every carnal heart is a Jericho shut up; God sets down before it, and displays mercy and judgment in sight of the walls thereof: it hardens itself in a wilful security, and saith, 'Aha, I shall never be moved.'"—*Bp. Hall.*

VER. 2. And the LORD said unto Joshua, See, "I have given into thy hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour.

*a* Chap. ii. 9, 24, & viii. 1. *δ* Deut. vii. 24.

*And the Lord said unto Joshua.*—That is, after Joshua had loosed his shoes from off his feet, as commanded above, (chap. v. 15.) He who was before called the "Captain of the Lord's host," is here called "Lord," or "Jehovah," thus clearly proving that it was a divine personage; for who else could promise and perform what follows? *I have given into thy hand Jericho.*—Not only I will do it, but I have done it; it is all thine own, as surely as if it were even now in thy possession. *And the mighty men of valour.*—The copulative "and" does not occur here in the Hebrew. The proper rendering is, "I have given into thy hand Jericho and the king thereof, (who are, or, although they are,) mighty men of valour," *i. e.* experienced and powerful warriors, men with whom, if you were to contend on ordinary terms, you would be unable to cope, but whom, through my assistance, you shall utterly overthrow. A city, in Scripture style, is often taken, not for a

collection of houses and walls, but for the inhabitants, an assemblage of people dwelling together in a corporate capacity. The same distinction holds between the Latin *urbes* and *civitas*. By Jericho and its king, is here meant the inhabitants and their king, and they are spoken of collectively, as "mighty men of valour."

VER. 3. And ye shall compass the city, all ye men of war, and go round about the city once: thus shalt thou do six days.

*And go round about the city once.*—Heb. "by going round about the city once." *Thus shalt thou do six days.*—The address is here made to Joshua in the singular number, as the commander and representative of the people. In the preceding clause the plural is used. Such changes of person are frequent, and always worthy of attention, as showing the constructive unity of people and their leaders. It seemed good to Infinite Wisdom to appoint this method of besieging the city, (1.) To magnify his power, to show in a convincing manner, both to the Canaanites and to Israel, that Omnipotence alone had achieved the work, that he was infinitely above the need of the ordinary means of obtaining a victory, and to render those of his enemies entirely inexcusable who should presume to withstand his resistless arm. (2.) To try the faith and obedience of Joshua and his people, by prescribing a course of conduct that seemed to human wisdom the height of folly and absurdity, and also to secure a profound respect to all his subsequent institutions, however simple or contemptible they might seem to the eye of carnal reason. (3.) To put honour upon the ark, as the appointed token of his presence, and to confirm still more fully that veneration and awe, with which they had always been taught to regard it.

VER. 4. And seven priests shall bear before the ark seven trumpets of rams' horns; and the seventh day ye shall compass the city seven times, and the priests shall blow with the trumpets.

*c* See Judg. vii. 16, 22. *d* Num. x. 8.

*Seven trumpets of rams' horns.*—Heb. *עופרים ירלים* "trumpets of the jubilee," *i. e.* such trumpets as used to be blown in the year of jubilee, implying, perhaps, that the entrance of Israel into Canaan was a kind of jubilee to them, an occasion that called rather for the sound of the trumpet of joy, than the dreadful notes of the trumpet of war. No other scriptural instance is adduced, in which the word *ירל* *Jobel* is translated "ram," though it be true that the Chaldee paraphrase favours that rendering. But its single authority on the point is not conclusive. The like phrase in verse 5 is, in the original, *קרי ירל* horn of jubilee, and proves only that horns were used, without restricting the meaning to rams' horns. Still the sense of rams' horns, as a traditional sense, seems for ages to have connected itself with the phrase, grounded, we presume, on the fact, that the trumpets in question were made in the shape of the horns of this animal, and the appellation, "horn of jubilee,"

may be used figuratively for trumpet of jubilee, just as with us a well known musical instrument of brass is called "a horn," from its form, and another called "a serpent," for the same reason. *The seventh day ye shall compass the city seven times.*—The time was thus lengthened out, both to afford a continued exercise of the faith and patience of the people, and that the besieged and besiegers might be the more deeply impressed with that supernatural power by which the result was to be accomplished. Men are usually prone to precipitate measures. God moves deliberately, and he would have his people wait his time. "He that believeth shall not make haste." "It is the pleasure of God to hold us both in work and in expectation, and though he require our continual endeavours for the subduing of our corruptions, during the six days of our life, yet we shall never find it perfectly effected till the very evening of our last day."—*Bp. Hall.* The repeated mention of the number seven in this connexion is worthy of notice. It has been suggested that it might have a latent reference to the creation of the world in six days, and God's resting on the seventh, which completed the first week, and, in the present case, that it may convey an allusion to the preaching of the gospel for a limited period of time, at the close of which, perhaps, early in the seven thousand years, all Satan's remaining bulwarks shall fall to the ground, and the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ.

VER. 5. And it shall come to pass, that when they make a long *blast* with the ram's horn, and when ye hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city shall fall down flat, and the people shall ascend up every man straight before him.

*The wall of the city shall fall down flat.*—Not absolutely all the wall in the whole extent of its compass, since that would have involved the house of Rahab in the destruction, which, it is plain, was not intended, nor did it happen, (ver. 22.) As the city was completely surrounded by the Israelites, the falling of the walls would give the inhabitants no opportunity of escape. They could not break through the array of armed men that hemmed them in. The original for "fall down flat," is "fall down under itself," or "in its place," which appears to mean simply, that the wall should fall down to its very foundations. *Ascend up every man straight before him.*—The obstruction of the wall being removed, nothing stood in the way of the people's advancing in a direct line, as if from the circumference to the centre of a circle, and meeting in the heart of the city. This is called "going up," or "ascending," from the necessity there was of climbing over the ruins of the walls on their way. Besides which, it is common, in nearly all languages, to describe the approach to a city as a "going up" to it. After giving these directions, the Angel-Jehovah no doubt departed.

VER. 6. And Joshua the son of Nun called the

priests, and said unto them, Take up the ark of the covenant, and let seven priests bear seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of the LORD.

VER. 7. And he said unto the people, Pass on, and compass the city, and let him that is armed pass on before the ark of the LORD.

VER. 8. And it came to pass, when Joshua had spoken unto the people, that the seven priests bearing the seven trumpets of rams' horns passed on before the LORD, and blew with the trumpets: and the ark of the covenant of the LORD followed them.

*Passed on before the Lord.*—That is, as we suppose, before the ark of the Lord, (ver. 4, and chap. iii. 11.) *The ark of the covenant.*—The ark in which were deposited the two tables whereon the covenant was written.

VER. 9. And the armed men went before the priests that blew with the trumpets, and the rereward came after the ark, the priests going on, and blowing with the trumpets.

e Numb. x. 25.

*And the armed men.*—Heb. "the armed man," i. e. each armed man, collect. sing. for plur. *The rereward.*—The hinder part. The original, רָחֵמָה, "massaph," comes from רָחַם, "asaph," "to collect, to gather up," and is equivalent to our military phrase, "bringing up the rear," and not improperly rendered in the margin, "gathering host." It implies a kind and protecting care towards those who are its objects. The same phraseology occurs Isa. lii. 12, "The Lord will go before you, and the God of Israel will be your rereward." (Heb. "your gatherer.") Ps. xxvii. 10, "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up." (Heb. "will gather me.") A rereward, therefore, is that portion of an army which, moving behind the main body, gathers up all the stragglers, takes care of any that may faint and fall by the way, sees that neither cattle nor baggage are missing, and protects or covers the rear of the host from the assault of enemies. The Jews think the division of Dan is meant, which always brought up the rear. (Numb. x.)

VER. 10. And Joshua had commanded the people, saying, Ye shall not shout, nor make any noise with your voice, neither shall any word proceed out of your mouth, until the day I bid you shout; then shall ye shout.

*Nor make any noise with your voice.*—Heb. "nor cause your voice to be heard." They were not only required to abstain from shouting, but to observe a profound silence in every respect. This would be expressive of a reverent awe in anticipation of the event, and would preclude all danger of mistake as to the precise time when they were required to shout. If noise of any kind had been allowed, they might have taken it for the signal of a general acclamation. This would not

only have been ineffectual before the appointed time, but would have rendered them the derision of their enemies.

VER. 11. So the ark of the LORD compassed the city, going about it once: and they came into the camp, and lodged in the camp.

*So the ark of the Lord compassed the city.*—Or, “so he caused the ark of the Lord to compass the city.” The original will admit of either rendering. The procession undoubtedly moved at a sufficient distance to be out of the reach of the enemy’s arrows, and out of the hearing of their scoffs. They must have looked with a very contemptuous eye upon such an unwarlike mode of assault, and when day after day passed and no effect followed, would naturally become hardened in security, and think the whole the mere mockery of a siege, a senseless and childish parade. Thus they would cry “peace and safety,” while sudden destruction was coming upon them. “There was never so strange a siege as this of Jericho: here was no mount raised, no sword drawn, no engine plauted, no pioneers undermining; here were trumpets sounded, but no enemy seen; here were armed men, but no stroke given; they must walk, and not fight; seven several days must they pace about the walls, which they may not once look over to see what was within. Doubtless these inhabitants of Jericho made themselves merry with this sight. When they had stood six days on their walls, and beheld nothing but a walking enemy, ‘What,’ say they, ‘could Israel find no walk to breathe them with, but about our walls? Have they not travelled enough in their forty years’ pilgrimage, but they must stretch their limbs in this circle? We see they are good footmen, but when shall we try their hands? Do these vain men think Jericho will be won by looking at? Or do they only come to count how many paces it is about our city? If this be their manner of siege, we shall have no great cause to fear the sword of Israel.’ Wicked men think God in jest when he is preparing for their judgment.”—*Bp. Hall.*

VER. 12. And Joshua rose early in the morning, and the priests took up the ark of the LORD.

*f Deut. xxxi. 25.*

VER. 13. And seven priests bearing seven trumpets of rams’ horns before the ark of the LORD went on continually, and blew with the trumpets: and the armed men went before them; but the rereward came after the ark of the LORD, the priests going on, and blowing with the trumpets.

VER. 14. And the second day they compassed the city once, and returned into the camp: so they did six days.

VER. 15. And it came to pass on the seventh day, that they rose early about the dawning of the day, and compassed the city after the same manner seven times: only on that day they compassed the city seven times.

*The seventh day—they rose early.*—Because on this day they had to encompass the city seven times; a proof that the city could not have been very large, and also that the whole Israelitish host could not have been employed in going round it; for as the fighting men alone amounted to 600,000, independently of the mass of the people, who made a total of at least two millions more, the thing is utterly inconceivable. A select number, sufficient for the occasion, was doubtless all that were employed. It is evident that in the course of these seven days there must have been a sabbath. This the Jewish writers say was the last, the day on which the city was taken; but this is not certain. It is not material, however, which day it was. That God who commanded the sabbath to be set apart for rest and religious purposes, has a right to suspend or alter the usual modes of its observance when he sees fit, and his command is sufficient to make any action lawful at any time.

VER. 16. And it came to pass at the seventh time, when the priests blew with the trumpets, Joshua said unto the people, Shout; for the LORD hath given you the city.

*Shout, for the Lord hath given you the city.*—As before it does not appear that the people were informed how they were to cross the Jordan till they came to the river’s brink, so on this occasion Joshua seems to have forborne telling them how they were to become masters of the city, till they had compassed it six times. Their implicit obedience in this, as in the former instance, strikingly evinced their faith, which is commended by the apostle; “By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days.” (Heb. xi. 30.)

VER. 17. And the city shall be accursed, even it, and all that are therein, to the LORD: only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all that are with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent.

*g Chap. ii. 4.*

*And the city shall be accursed.*—Heb. “shall be a curse, an anathema;” *i. e.* devoted to utter destruction. No spoils were to be taken, no lives to be spared, except those of Rahab and her family. All was to be, if we may so say, consecrated to a curse. For an account of the cherem, or anathema, see on Levit. xxvii. 21, 28, 29. It is plain from 1 Kings xvi. 34, that Joshua spake this by divine direction: and though to human view it may carry the aspect of undue severity, yet, considered as the enactment of him whose judgments are righteous altogether, we cannot question its perfect equity. Jericho belonged to a nation which had filled up the measure of its iniquities, and its guilt was peculiarly enhanced by reason of the amazing display of divine power which it had recently witnessed, and against which it had hardened itself. It was just, therefore, that the vengeance taken should be in proportion to the light resisted. The severe judgment upon Jericho, moreover, would

tend to strike terror into the hearts of the rest of the devoted nations, and make them an easier conquest. *Only Rahab shall live, &c.*—The Most High never forgets his people. When he maketh inquisition for blood, he remembereth them, whoever else may be overlooked. *Because she hid.*—The original has an extraordinary and emphatic form, implying that she carefully and diligently hid them.

VER. 18. And ye, <sup>h</sup>in any wise keep yourselves from the accursed thing, lest ye make yourselves accursed, when ye take of the accursed thing, and make the camp of Israel a curse, <sup>and</sup> trouble it.

<sup>h</sup> Deut. vii. 26, & xiii. 17 : ch. vii. 1, 11, 12.  
<sup>i</sup> Chap. vii. 25. 1 Kings xviii. 17, 18. Jonah i. 12.

*In any wise keep yourselves.*—That is, by all means, most carefully, studiously, vigilantly. This city was, as it were, the first fruits of Canaan, and as such wholly devoted to the Lord. The spoil of other cities, subsequently taken, was allowed to be divided among the captors, but this was to be an exception to the general rule. *And make the camp of Israel a curse.*—Heb. “put, or place the camp a curse.” The Hebrew word for “put” has often the signification of “make, constitute, render.” The meaning is, that they would thereby render themselves obnoxious to the curse denounced upon the city. *And trouble it.*—Bring distress upon it by provoking the divine displeasure, and interrupting the prosperous course of your victories. Heb. עֲחָרֶתֶם *achartem*, from עָרַר *achar*, to trouble. See note on Gen. xxxiv. 30, 31. This is spoken as if in foresight of the sin of Achan, to whom Joshua afterwards said, (chap. vii. 25,) “Why hast thou troubled us? The Lord shall trouble thee this day.” From hence he is called Achar, trouble. (1 Chron. ii. 7.)

VER. 19. But all the silver, and gold, and vessels of brass and iron, are consecrated unto the LORD: they shall come into the treasury of the LORD.

*All the silver and gold.*—Except those portions of these metals which were formed into idols or their appendages, in respect to which the law was express, (Deut. vii. 25,) “The graven images of their gods shall ye burn with fire: thou shalt not desire the silver or gold that is on them, nor take it unto thee, lest thou be snared therein: for it is an abomination to the Lord thy God.” Compare 1 Chron. xiv. 12. *Consecrated unto the Lord.*—Heb. “holiness to the Lord,” *i. e.* dedicated exclusively to him; being first legally purified by passing through the fire, according to the ordinance. (Numb. xxxii. 21—23.) *Shall come into the treasury of the Lord.*—To be employed wholly for the service of the sanctuary, and not to be appropriated in any manner to the use of any private person or priest. The place of deposit was the tabernacle of the congregation, where the spoils of the Midianites were laid up. (Numb. xxxi. 54.)

VER. 20. So the people shouted when *the priests* blew with the trumpets: and it came to pass, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that <sup>h</sup>the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city.

<sup>h</sup> Ver. 5. Heb. xi. 30.

*So the people shouted, &c.*—More literally rendered from the Hebrew, “So the people shouted and blew with the trumpets,” *i. e.* the priests blew in the name of the people, “and it came to pass when the people heard the sound of the trumpets, that the people shouted with a great shout, and the wall fell down flat, and the people went up,” &c. The latter clause is merely a more detailed and exact account of what is contained in the first. Probably great numbers were killed by the falling of the wall. We are not warranted, perhaps, to speak of this event as typical. Nevertheless, it was doubtless intended to convey most important instruction to all succeeding ages. It was peculiarly calculated to show how easily God can make a way for the accomplishment of his own purposes, and for the salvation of his people. If it did not typify, it certainly well illustrates, the victories which the gospel was to obtain over all the principalities and powers of earth and hell. No human force was to be used. Nothing but the simple announcement of the truth, and that by the instrumentality of weak and sinful men,—men unlearned, unskilled in logic, and unfurnished with eloquence,—was the means chosen for the destruction of idolatry, and the establishment of the Redeemer’s kingdom over the earth. Yet how mightily has the bare sound of the gospel trumpet prevailed for the overthrow of Satan’s empire in the world!

VER. 21. And they <sup>’</sup>utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox, and sheep, and ass, with the edge of the sword.

<sup>’</sup> Deut. vii. 2.

*And they utterly destroyed.*—Heb. “made a curse, devoted to destruction.” *Both man and woman, young and old, &c.*—In all this the Israelites acted strictly according to their orders, (Deut. xx. 16, 17,) so that whatever charge of cruelty or barbarity may be brought against them in view of their conduct on this occasion, it strikes directly at the rectitude of the divine judgments. That the Canaanites were a nation of incorrigible idolaters, whose morals, from the most remote periods, were polluted to the utmost degree, we have the highest authority for asserting. Had Jehovah, after bearing with such a people for no less than four centuries, sent upon them at last a famine or a pestilence, and cut them off from the face of the earth, who could deny that he had acted with perfect justice? Had he again caused fire to fall upon them from heaven, or overwhelmed them by the waters of a flood, the same admission must have been made. Why then should it be urged that he acted in opposition to

any one of his known attributes, because he let loose another of his judgments upon them, namely, war? For such, as far as they were affected, was really the case. The Israelites were towards them neither more nor less than instruments of punishment in the hands of the great Ruler of the universe, who chose to slay them by the edge of the sword, rather than by earthquakes, famine, or plague. Towards the Canaanites themselves, we must admit that there was great severity in the order for their extermination. But there was goodness in it, yea, great goodness, towards the world at large; for it has shown the danger of unbelief and impenitence in such awful colours, that the proudest and most obdurate must tremble. If it be urged, that to subject women and inoffending children to the horrors of war, is inconsistent with our ideas of divine justice; we reply, that the very same observation might be made in the case of a plague or a deluge. In all public calamities, infants are involved, and tens of thousands die in great agony every year. If God is the agent in these calamities, they must consist with the most perfect justice and goodness, and on the same ground is the present order, fearful as it was, to be vindicated.

VER. 22.—But Joshua had said unto the two men that had spied out the country, Go into the harlot's house, and bring out thence the woman, and all that she hath, "as ye sware unto her.

*m* Chap. ii. 14. Heb. xi. 31.

*Go into the harlot's house.*—Which had been miraculously preserved in the general overthrow.

VER. 23. And the young men that were spies went in, and brought out Rahab, "and her father, and her mother, and her brethren, and all that she had; and they brought out all her kindred, and left them without the camp of Israel.

*n* Chap. ii. 13.

*The young men.*—These persons have all along hitherto been called simply "men," and no intimation of their having been *young*. For an explanation of the scriptural import of the phrase "young men," see on Gen. xiv. 24. *All her kindred.*—Heb. "all her families." *And left them without the camp.*—Heb. "made them to stay or abide." Till they were cleansed from the impurities of their gentile superstition, and prepared, by suitable instruction, for admission as proselytes into the Israelitish church.

VER. 24. And they burnt the city with fire, and all that *was* therein: "only the silver, and the gold, and the vessels of brass and of iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the LORD.

*o* Ver. 19.

VER. 25. And Joshua saved Rahab the harlot alive, and her father's household, and all that she had; and *she dwelleth* in Israel *even* unto

this day; because she hid the messengers, which Joshua sent to spy out Jericho.

*p* See Matt. i. 5.

*Saved alive.*—Heb. "vivified, made to live." The usage of the original is peculiar. It seems to imply that Rahab and her kindred were as good as dead, that they had virtually perished in the general destruction, but by being preserved through it, had had, as it were, their lives restored to them. See the note on Pharaoh's being preserved. (Exod. ix. 14—16.) *Dwelleth in Israel even unto this day.*—Heb. "in the midst of Israel," *i. e.* as a communicant and partaker of all the distinguishing privileges of the chosen seed. She afterwards married Salmon, the son of Nahshon, a prince of the tribe of Judah, and thus became one of the ancestors of David and of Christ. (Matt. i. 5.) *Unto this day.*—A strong proof that the book was written in or near the time to which it refers, and in all probability by Joshua himself. *Because she hid the messengers.*—This is repeated, as if the Spirit of inspiration delighted to dwell on the act which redounded so signally to her credit and to her salvation. God takes pleasure in reciting the good deeds of his people. From the various particulars recorded in the sacred narrative respecting Rahab, we may learn, 1. That there is no person so vile but that he may become an eminent saint. Would that all abandoned women in the world might hear of the mercy shown towards this harlot of Jericho! Despised and outcast as they are by their fellow-creatures, would that they knew what compassion for them exists in the bosom of God! They usually persist in their wickedness, through an utter despair of obtaining the mercy and grace which they need. But here they might see that there was hope for the vilest of the vile. 2. Faith, if genuine, will uniformly produce good works. 3. Whatever we do for God or for his people, because they are his people, shall most assuredly be richly rewarded.

VER. 26. And Joshua adjured *them* at that time, saying, "Cursed *be* the man before the LORD, that riseth up and buildeth this city Jericho: he shall lay the foundation thereof in his first-born, and in his youngest son shall he set up the gates of it.

*q* 1 Kings xvi. 34.

*Joshua adjured them.*—Made them to swear, caused them to bind themselves by a solemn oath, confirmed by an imprecation upon themselves and their posterity, if they broke it, that they would never rebuild the city. This he did, not on his own responsibility, but by a divine impulse. (1 Kings xvi. 34.) From the remarkable manner in which Jericho was taken and destroyed, it appears to have been the design of God to preserve such a memorial of the event, as would teach to the latest posterity his detestation of idolatry, and the vices that grow out of it. Accordingly Joshua here adjures the people by a solemn oath, and binds it upon them and their posterity, to leave the ruins of the city as a perpetual warning to after ages against the commis-

sion of those crimes. It would thus serve also as a precaution to Israel to abstain from worshipping the idol deities of the surrounding nations. *Cursed be the man before the Lord.*—That is, from God's presence and by his sentence. Thus Joshua is said, (chap. xviii. 8,) to have "cast lots before the Lord," *i. e.* as under his sanction, and expecting the decision from him. This was what gave its terror to the penalty. As to what is implied in the curse of God, see on Gen. iii. 14. *That riseth up and buildeth.*—That is, that attempts to build, that enters upon the work of building, that engages in it. This is often the sense of "rise," in the sacred writers. The denunciation is here limited to the builder, and extends not to those who should inhabit the city after it was built, for that it was subsequently rebuilt and inhabited is evident. See below. *Shall lay the foundation thereof in his first-born, &c.*—That is, shall lose all his children in the interval between laying the foundation and completing the walls; he shall, as it were, lay the first stone on the dead body of his eldest son, and the last on that of his youngest. This is said to have been fulfilled in Hiel, the Bethelite, (1 Kings xvi. 34,) who rebuilt Jericho in the reign of Ahaz, and "laid the foundation thereof in Abiram his first-born, and set up the gates thereof in his youngest son Segub." This was 550 years after the utterance of the curse. The city does not appear, however, to have lain in ruins during the whole period from Joshua to Hiel, at least if the "city of palm trees," mentioned Deut. xxxiv. 3, be, as is generally supposed, the same with Jericho: for we find this an inhabited place in the beginning of Judges, (chap. i. 16,) a short time after the death of Joshua; and the same city appears to have been taken from the Israelites by Eglon, king of Moab, (Judg. iii. 13.) Moreover, the ambassadors of David who were maltreated by Hanun, king of the Ammonites, were commanded to tarry at Jericho till their beards were grown. (2 Sam. x. 4, 5.) It appears, therefore, that there was a city which went under this name long before the time of Hiel, unless it be supposed that the "city of palm trees" was a different place from the ancient Jericho, though standing in its neighbourhood, and sometimes called by its name, which we think not improbable, especially as Josephus speaks of the site of the old city of Jericho, as if to distinguish it from a more modern one.

VER. 27. "So the LORD was with Joshua; and his fame was noised throughout all the country.

r Chap. i. 5. s Chap. ix. 1, 3.

*The Lord was with Joshua, &c.*—That is, by his powerful aid, giving him miraculous assistance, magnifying him and raising his reputation, making him acceptable to Israel, and formidable to the Canaanites. "Nothing can more raise a man's reputation, nor make him appear more truly great, than to have the evidence of God's presence with him."—Henry.

## CHAPTER VII.

VER. 1. BUT the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing: for "Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed thing; and the anger of the LORD was kindled against the children of Israel.

a Chap. xxii. 20.

*Committed a trespass.*—Heb. "prevaricated a prevarication." The sin of an individual is imputed to the whole people. This is on the ground of the constituted oneness of social and ecclesiastical bodies. (See note on Chap. i. 12.) In like manner, (Matt. xxvi. 8,) it is said, that "the disciples had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste?" Whereas, from John xii. 4, 5, it appears that it was Judas only who made this remark. No man, in sinning, can be sure that the consequences will stop with himself. For aught he knows, they may affect the whole extent of his relations; and this ought to make us watchful both over ourselves and others, that we neither commit nor countenance deeds that may spread desolation over the bosom of a whole community. "So venomous is sin, especially when it lights among God's people, that one dram of it is able to infect the whole mass of Israel."—Bishop Hall. *In the accursed thing.*—In respect to the accursed thing; in taking a portion of the spoils of the city, the whole of which God had commanded to be either destroyed or dedicated to the sanctuary.

*Achan, the son of Carmi.*—This Achan is elsewhere called Achar, "trouble or the troubler," undoubtedly in allusion to the effect of his conduct on this occasion. (See on ver. 25, and chap. vi. 18.) In like manner Bethel, "house of God," is called Bethaven, "house of vanity," (Hosea iv. 15,) on account of the idolatry practised there. Nothing is more common in the Scriptures, than for the names of persons and places to be changed in consequence of, and in allusion to, certain remarkable events by which they may have been distinguished. *Son of Zabdi.*—Called also Zimri. (1 Chron. ii. 6.) The line of his parentage is thus recited, among other reasons, that the discredit of such a foul deed may be reflected back upon those of his ancestors who, by being remiss in their duties as parents, had been, in one sense, the procuring cause of his sin. This is not an uncommon occurrence in the sacred writings. It seems to have been with a similar design, that the genealogy of Zimri is given. (Numb. xxv. 14.) In like manner the praise of the excellence of a son redounds to the honour of the line from which he springs. A warning is hereby administered to parents, to give the most diligent heed in training their offspring in the fear of God, lest they be a reproach to their memories when they themselves are no more.

VER. 2. And Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is beside Bethaven, on the east side of Bethel, and spake unto them, saying, Go up and view the country. And the men went up and viewed Ai.

*Sent men from Jericho to Ai.*—Called also Hai, (Gen. xii. 8,) and Aija, (Neh. xi. 31,) a city near the northern limit of the tribe of Benjamin, about ten miles north of Jerusalem, and nearly two east of Bethel. After its destruction by Joshua, it was again rebuilt by the Benjamites, and inhabited by them till the captivity. Sennacherib at length destroyed it, but though it was rebuilt after the Babylonish captivity, there is no vestige of it to be found at the present time. Even in the fourth century, the ruins of this city were scarcely visible. The spies sent on this occasion were not to go into the city, but merely into its vicinity, for the purpose of reconnoitring. *Beside Bethaven.*—This was a city of Benjamin, about three miles north of Ai, and nearly six miles east of Bethel, which gave name to the wilderness adjoining. (Chap. xviii. 12.) It was not the place called Bethaven, Hosea x. 5. See on ver. 1. *Go up and view the country.*—Heb. “go up and foot the country.” So afterwards, “and viewed,” Heb. “and footed.”

VER. 3. And they returned to Joshua, and said unto him, Let not all the people go up; but let about two or three thousand men go up and smite Ai; and make not all the people to labour thither; for they are but few.

*Let not all the people go up, &c.*—The easy conquest of Jericho had probably rendered the people presumptuous. They concluded that God would of course interpose for them just as he had done before. The counsel here given was based, as it would seem, upon a culpable assurance of success in the neglect of the proper means. To confide in God was right; but to expect his aid while they neglected to use their own endeavours, was nothing short of downright presumption. So prone is human nature to extremes. The first spies that were sent out by Moses brought back the most disheartening report. The Canaanites were invincible, and they would surely fall before them. Those sent to Ai were as much on the other extreme. Their enemies are contemptible, and can easily carry all before them. Even Joshua himself seems to have formed his measures without taking the usual precaution of consulting God as to his duty. The result showed that they should at least have had some intimation from heaven, that a part of the force was to be dispensed with in this instance. But the truth is, they were now under the Divine displeasure: sin unrepented had interrupted the communications of God's will, and where that is the case with a people or an individual, all goes wrong. No one can have security that he is planning or acting right, while the light of the Lord's countenance is hidden by sin. The pledge of the Divine blessing is wanting, and he is not to be surprised if all his counsels are carried headlong. *Make not all the people to labour thither.*—That is, to labour and fatigue themselves by going thither; an advice by which they obviously consulted the ease rather than the safety and glory of the people. It is perhaps in allusion to this incident that Solomon says, (Eccles. x. 15.) “The labour of the foolish wearieth every one of them, because he knoweth

not how to go the city.” *For they are but few.*—On which Henry well remarks, that “few as they were, they were too many for them.” It appears from Chap. viii. 25, that Joshua slew, in one day, twelve thousand of the citizens of Ai, and yet the spies reported the place merely garrisoned, and proposed to send against it only a detachment of two or three thousand!

VER. 4. So there went up thither of the people about three thousand men: and they fled before the men of Ai.

δ Lev. xxvi. 17. Deut. xxviii. 25.

VER. 5. And the men of Ai smote of them about thirty and six men: for they chased them from before the gate even unto Shebarim, and smote them in the going down: wherefore the hearts of the people melted, and became as water.

ε Chap. ii. 9, 11. Lev. xxvi. 36. Ps. xxii. 14.

*Chased them—even unto Shebarim.*—Heb. “to the breaches, breakings, or shiverings;” so called probably from the event, because the ranks of the Israelites were utterly broken, and the people, panic-struck, fled in the utmost confusion. *Smote them in the going down.*—That is, in the descent or declivity of the hill on which the town stood. The effect of this defeat would naturally be, (1.) To serve as an evidence of God's displeasure, and a solemn call upon them to humble themselves under his mighty hand, and institute a rigid self-examination to discover, if possible, the cause of so sad a reverse. (2.) To harden the Canaanites, and make them more secure than ever in their sins, prompting them to say of Israel, as the enemies of David said of him, (Ps. lxxi. 11,) “God hath forsaken him: persecute and take him, for there is none to deliver him.” Thus their ruin, when it came, would be the more dreadful. The Christian may derive some profitable hints from this narrative, as to the conduct of the warfare in which he is engaged. Notwithstanding the Canaan which he seeks is the gift of God, yet it must be obtained by a manly and continued conflict with our spiritual enemies. He must not despise any as too weak, nor fear any as too strong. As to the weak especially, he should remember that there is none so weak but he will be able to overcome us if we indulge a careless habit, or confide in an arm of flesh. *The hearts of the people melted, and became as water.*—That is, were utterly discouraged. Thus the very effect which was threatened to be produced on the devoted nations by the approach of the Israelites, was now, in the righteous judgment of God, wrought in the hearts of his own sinning people. See on Exod. xv. 15. Josh. ii. 9, 11.

VER. 6. And Joshua rent his clothes, and fell to the earth upon his face before the ark of the Lord until the eventide, he and the elders of Israel, and put dust upon their heads.

d Gen. xxxvii. 20, 34. e 1 Sam. iv. 12. 2 Sam. i. 2; xiii. 19. Neh. ix. 1. Job ii. 12.

*Joshua rent his clothes.*—A usual mode, among the ancients, of expressing the highest degree of

sorrow or grief. See Illustrations of the Scriptures, p. 156. It was not so much the defeat itself, as the undoubted though unknown guilty cause of it, that distressed Joshua. It showed evidently, that, for some reason or other, the Lord's hand was turned against them, as otherwise it would not have been possible for the enemy to have prevailed. *Until eventide.*—Thus spending the whole day in fasting and prayer. We cannot but highly applaud the conduct of Joshua on this occasion. The concern he expressed for the loss of so many lives, evinced a heart full of tender and generous sympathies. Common generals would have accounted the loss of thirty-six men as nothing; but the blood of Israel was precious in the sight of Joshua. We might have expected, too, that he would have blamed the spies for deceiving him in relation to the strength of the city, and have punished the soldiers for cowardice; but he viewed the hand of God, rather than of man, in this disaster; and this led to what all must admire, his deep humiliation before God. But his tender regard for the honour of the divine name, was that which eminently distinguished him on this occasion. "O Lord, what wilt thou do unto thy great name?" This was the plea which Moses had often used, and to which God had paid especial regard: and the man that feels it in his soul, and urges it in sincerity and truth, can never be ultimately foiled. *Put dust upon their heads.*—Rending the clothes, beating the breast, tearing the hair, putting dust on the head, and falling down prostrate, have always been among Eastern nations the usual marks of deep affliction and distress.

VER. 7. And Joshua said, Alas! O Lord God, wherefore hast thou at all brought this people over Jordan, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us? would to God we had been content, and dwelt on the other side Jordan!

f Ex. v. 22. 2 Kings iii. 10.

*Wherefore hast thou brought this people, &c.*—Heb. "passing caused to pass;" *i. e.* by a most stupendous miracle. This prayer of Joshua appears at first view to have been prompted by a murmuring, complaining spirit, very much akin to that manifested by the children of Israel on several occasions in the wilderness. (Exod. xiv. 11, 12; xvi. 3. Numb. xiv. 3.) Taken according to the letter it has an air of bold, and rather irreverent remonstrance, which would not have been expected from the pious captain of Israel, especially in a season of fasting and prayer, when he appears to have been most profoundly humbled. But much of this, undoubtedly, arises from the difficulty of transcribing the precise import of the original into English. The expressions "to deliver," "to destroy," according to a very common idiom, imply not the design, but simply the event. Joshua would not intimate that God had led the people into Canaan with the express intention of delivering them into the hands of their enemies, but he humbly inquires why he had permitted an occurrence that seemed likely

to issue in such an event, one entirely foreign to the original purpose. Before the phrase "would to God, &c." the word "and" occurs in the Hebrew, which is totally disregarded by our translators, requiring the sentence to be filled out by some such addition as this:—"to destroy us, and (to cause us to say,) would to God we had been content," &c. It is as if he should say:—"Should thy promises, O Lord God, now fail of accomplishment on account of our sin, the great miracle thou hast wrought in bringing us over Jordan would seem to be unavailing, and all thy past mercies abortive. To all human view it would have been better for us to have remained on the other side of Jordan, and we shall be strongly prompted to wish that that had been the case, for it will be inferred from the event, that thy sole purpose in bringing us hither, was to deliver us into the hands of the Amorites for our destruction, rather than to deliver them into our hands." This we have no doubt is the real drift of Joshua's expostulation, and as nothing in the answer which God makes to him carries the air of reprehension or rebuke, we see no reason to think that any thing of the kind was merited. His words were evidently prompted by the most commendable feelings. He felt for the thousands of Israel whom he considered as abandoned to destruction. He felt too for the glory of God, for he knew that should Israel be destroyed, God's great name would be blasphemed among the heathen. He therefore uses an argument based perhaps on the very words of God himself, (Deut. xxxii. 27.) "Were it not that I feared the wrath of the enemy, lest their adversaries should behave themselves strangely, and lest they should say," &c.

VER. 8. O Lord, what shall I say when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies!

*What shall I say, &c.*—Heb. "what shall I say after (*i. e.* since, or seeing that) Israel hath turned the neck before his enemies." What construction shall I put upon it, or how shall I answer the reproaches and taunts of thine enemies, when Israel, thine own people, for whom thou hast done such great things, and to whom thou hast made such glorious promises, when they turn their backs in ignoble flight before their enemies? He speaks as one at a loss what to think of the unhappy events that had just occurred; as if nothing more strange or marvellous could have happened than the defeat of the chosen people. *What wilt thou do to thy great name?*—*i. e.* What wilt thou do in respect to thy great name? How wilt thou preserve its glory unstained when such a flood of obloquy shall be poured upon it by the scoffing heathen? The cutting off of our name, though that would vastly disparage thy power and faithfulness, yet that is a matter of less consequence; but, O Lord, how wilt thou consult the honour of thine own blessed and glorious name, were such an advantage to be given to the adversary? Comp. Exod. xxxii. 12. Numb. xiv. 13. Joel ii. 27.

VER. 9. For the Canaanites, and all the inhabitants of the land shall hear of it, and shall en-

viron us round, and <sup>s</sup>cut off our name from the earth: and <sup>h</sup> what wilt thou do unto thy great name?

g Ps. lxxxiii. 4. h See Ex. xxxii. 12. Num. xiv. 13.

VER. 10. And the LORD said unto Joshua, Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face?

*Get thee up.*—Heb. “rise or stand up for thyself.” *Wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face?*—Heb. “wherefore this, (that) thou art fallen down upon thy face!” *i. e.* continuing to fall, doing it again and again. Not the language of rebuke, as though God were displeased with Joshua for prostrating himself in this humble posture, and bemoaning in bitterness of soul, the disaster that had befallen Israel; but merely implying that it was not enough; that God would not have him any longer continue that mournful posture; that he had other work to do than to spend time in grieving and afflicting himself in view of what was past; that he must arise and set about discovering the accursed thing, and casting it out; in a word, that he must lay aside his mourning weeds and enter upon that which was especially and preeminently at present incumbent upon him. “For every thing there is a season, and it befores us to see that the time is not spent in empty lamentation which God would have devoted to vigorous action in reforming what is amiss.”—*Henry.*

VER. 11. Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them: <sup>h</sup> for they have even taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen, and <sup>i</sup> dissembled also, and they have put it even among their own stuff.

i Ver. 1. k Chap. vi. 17, 18. l See Acts v. 1, 2.

*Israel hath sinned.*—For a view of the reason why this is spoken of as the act of the whole body of Israel, see note on ver. 1. *Have also transgressed my covenant.*—That is, have broken the conditions of the covenant or agreement of general obedience into which they had before entered, (Exod. xix. 8—24, 7;) or, have transgressed the particular precept relative to the accursed thing, (chap. vi. 19.) Covenant in the Scriptures, often has the sense of command, precept, ordinance. *Have also stolen.*—Have sacrilegiously taken and appropriated to their own use the portion which I had reserved to myself, and ordered to be brought into the treasury. *And dissembled also.*—Have covered the deed with deep dissimulation; instead of ingenuously confessing the sin and imploring pardon, have studiously endeavoured to hide it, as if by concealing it from their brethren they had concealed it also from me. The crime is recited with the utmost particularity, in order that its various aggravations may be more impressively set forth. *Have put it even among their own stuff.*—Among their own goods.

VER. 12. “Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies, because they were accursed: neither will I be with you any more,

except ye destroy the accursed from among you.

m See Num. xiv. 45. Judg. ii 14.  
n Deut. vii. 26. Chap. vi. 18.

*Because they were accursed.*—In exact accordance with the threatening before denounced against them, (chap. vi. 18.) Joshua was thus informed that this and nothing else, was the ground of the controversy which God now had with his people. They had, by their iniquity, put themselves out of the range of his protection and blessing, and unless summary punishment was executed upon the offender, they would transfer upon themselves the very curse denounced against their adversaries. *Except ye destroy the accursed.*—The accused person with all that pertains to him, (ver. 24.)

VER. 13. Up, <sup>o</sup>sanctify the people, and say, <sup>p</sup>Sanctify yourselves against to-morrow: for thus saith the LORD God of Israel, *There is an accursed thing in the midst of thee, O Israel: thou canst not stand before thine enemies, until ye take away the accursed thing from among you.*

o Ex. xix. 10.

p Chap. iii. 5.

*Up, sanctify my people.*—That is, command and see that they sanctify themselves. Cause them to purify their persons by legal washings, but more especially to put themselves into a suitable frame of mind to appear before God, and submit to the divine scrutiny. Although the act of Achan had been perpetrated with so much caution that it was unperceived by any human being, yet the eye of God had been upon it, and he declared to Joshua the true reason of his displeasure, and of Israel's defeat. But though he revealed the fact, he did not name the person who had committed it, but left that to be discovered in a way more impressive to the nation, and more merciful to the offender, inasmuch as it gave him time for repentance and voluntary acknowledgment. *There is an accursed thing, &c.*—The crime of sacrilege has been committed in the midst of thee, O Israel.

VER. 14. In the morning therefore ye shall be brought according to your tribes: and it shall be, *that the tribe which <sup>q</sup>the LORD taketh shall come according to the families thereof; and the family which the LORD shall take shall come by households; and the household which the LORD shall take shall come man by man.*

q Prov. xvi. 33.

*Ye shall be brought.*—Heb. “ye shall come near;” *i. e.* to the tabernacle, or to the ark, wherever that might now be deposited. *The tribe which the LORD taketh.*—That is, the tribe which shall be discovered or declared guilty by the lot. The tribe thus indicated is said to be “taken by the Lord,” because the lot was disposed of by him, according to Prov. xvi. 33; the transaction was specially overruled by him in his mysterious providence for the detection of the guilty. Of the sacred use of lots, see 1 Sam. x. 20, 21; xiv. 41;

42. Acts i. 24, 26. The original for "take" has the import of arresting, seizing, being the appropriate term for the apprehension of criminals.

VER. 15. And it shall be, *that* he that is taken with the accursed thing shall be burnt with fire, he and all that he hath: because he hath transgressed the covenant of the LORD, and because he hath wrought folly in Israel.

r See 1 Sam. xiv. 38, 39. s Ver. 11.  
t Gen. xxxiv. 7. Judg. xx. 6.

*He that is taken with the accursed thing.*—Heb. "in the accursed thing." That is, he that is divinely pointed out as being involved in the guilt of the accursed thing. *Shall be burnt with fire.*—The doom expressly appointed for persons or things accursed. (Deut. xiii. 15, 16.) In addition to this, and previously to it, the culprit, as appears from ver. 25, was to be stoned to death at the hands of the congregation. This was the punishment ordained for blasphemers and presumptuous offenders. (Num. xv. 30, 35.) We do not read that Achan verbally blasphemed; but all high-handed, deliberate transgression is virtual blasphemy, and is so regarded in the judgment of heaven. *He and all that he hath.*—His sons, daughters, cattle, and goods, &c., all being, in the Divine estimation, in consequence of their connexion with him, considered as infected with the taint of his guilt, and therefore exposed to share with him in his condemnation. This may appear to human view a severe, if not an unjust, sentence; but we can only say it is in strict accordance with the general analogy of God's providence in this world, and as such is to be unhesitatingly acknowledged as bearing the impress of perfect equity and justice. *Hath wrought folly in Israel.*—That is, a base, foolish, and sinful deed, such as every wise and well principled man would utterly condemn. In this sense the term "folly" frequently occurs. See Gen. xxxiv. 7. Deut. xxxii. 21. 2 Sam. xiii. 12. It was a conduct that brought shame and disgrace upon a nation, sustaining the reputation of a wise and understanding people.

VER. 16. So Joshua rose up early in the morning, and brought Israel by their tribes; and the tribe of Judah was taken:

VER. 17. And he brought the family of Judah; and he took the family of the Zarahites: and he brought the family of the Zarahites man by man; and Zabdi was taken:

*And he brought the family of Judah.*—That is, the several families, the collection of families, collect. sing. for plur. *He brought the family of the Zarahites, man by man.*—It was ordered, ver. 14, that all Israel should come near by tribes, and one tribe was to be fixed on; then that tribe came by its families, and one family was fixed on; then came that family by its households, and one household was fixed on; and finally that household coming man by man, one man was fixed on. In the present passage there appears to be some confusion in this prescribed order of selection. In speaking of Zarahi, the phrase "by

households" is left out, and "man by man" expressed twice. The probability is, that a slight error has crept into the original text. Instead of לנבויים "man by man," ver. 17, the true word is undoubtedly לנבויים "by households;" and this reading, according to Kennicott, is preserved in six Hebrew copies, and in the Syriac version.—"We may well imagine how Achan's countenance changed, and what horror and confusion seized him, when he was singled out as the delinquent, when the eyes of all Israel were fastened upon him, and every one was ready to say, 'Have we found thee, O our enemy!'"—Henry.

VER. 18. And he brought his household man by man; and Achan the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken.

u 1 Sam. xiv. 42.

VER. 19. And Joshua said unto Achan, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the LORD God of Israel, and make confession unto him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me.

x See 1 Sam. vi. 5. Jer. xiii. 16. John ix. 24.  
y Num. v. 6, 7. 2 Chron. xxx. 22. Ps. li. 3. Dan. ix. 4.  
z 1 Sam. xiv. 43.

*And Joshua said unto Achan, My son.*—Adopting this affectionate style of address to show that the present severe proceedings against him were not prompted by any personal ill will, or an angry spirit of revenge. Though he was obliged to act as a magistrate, yet he was willing Achan should know that he felt as a father, and in so doing proposed a noble example to all who have the administration of justice, "not to insult over those who are in misery, though they may have brought themselves into it by their own wickedness, but to treat even offenders with the spirit of meekness, not knowing what we ourselves should have done, if God had put us into the hand of our own counsels."—Henry. *Give glory to the Lord God of Israel.*—Heb. "put, appoint, ordain glory to the Lord God." That is, by confessing the truth, by honestly pleading guilty to the charge, by ingenuously acknowledging the sin, and the justice of the punishment which it incurred. By so doing he would not only ascribe to God the glory of his omniscience, from which no secrets are hid, in detecting and exposing the crime, but also of his justice in punishing it. He would in fact thereby most effectually give him the praise of all his perfections, and consult the best interests of his soul in the world to come. It appears from a similar usage in several other instances, that God regards the confession of the truth as very intimately connected with giving him glory. Thus, Luke xxiii. 47, "Now when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God," i. e. gave him glory, "saying, Certainly this was a righteous man." John ix. 24, "Then again called they the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give God the praise; we know that this man is a sinner:" on which passage Mr. Barnes remarks, "The meaning here is not, 'Give God the praise for healing you,' but confess that you have declared to us a falsehood; and that you

have endeavoured to impose on us; and by thus confessing your sin give praise and honour to God, who condemns all imposture and falsehood; and whom you will thus acknowledge to be right in your condemnation." Nothing should be more deeply impressed upon the mind of the sinner, than that the humble and penitent confession of guilt tends directly to the glory of God, and that withholding confession is robbing him of his right, as well as incurring his displeasure. *Tell me now what thou hast done.*—The testimony of God would have been sufficient, who could neither deceive nor be deceived. Joshua also, who was now knowing to his crime, might have declared it, but he could not prove it; and as it was intended that the offender should be made a public monument of justice, and be held up as a warning to the whole nation, it was desirable that the most indisputable evidence of his guilt should be adduced. He is made, therefore, himself to supply a testimony which none could controvert or doubt; even to bear witness against himself. Joshua requires this confession to be made to him, because he stood, both to Achan and to the people, in God's stead. It was in effect the same, therefore, as making it to God himself.

VER. 20. And Achan answered Joshua, and said, Indeed I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done.

*Indeed I have sinned, &c.*—The confession, though not made till it was extorted, was finally made with great frankness and ingenuousness. He recites the circumstances of the act in all their particulars, and with all their aggravations; attempts no excuse or extenuation; complains not of the severity of the sentence, nor seeks to prevent or delay its execution; from which we may indulge the hope, however feeble, that the poor culprit found mercy for his soul.

VER. 21. When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it.

*A goodly Babylonish garment.*—Heb. "a splendid or costly robe of Shinar," rendered "Babylonish garment," because Babylon or Babel was situated in the plain of Shinar. Bochart and Calmet have shown at large that Babylonish robes were very splendid and in high repute. (Ezek. xxiii. 15.) Josephus calls it "a royal garment woven entirely of gold." The word signifies such a robe or mantle as princes wore when they appeared in state, (Jonah iii. 6,) and this probably belonged to the king of Jericho. *Two hundred shekels of silver.*—In weight, not in coin. Its value in our currency was a little upwards of one hundred dollars. *A wedge of gold.*—Heb. "a tongue of gold," i. e. what we understand by an ingot of gold, a corruption, according to A. Clarke, of the word *lingot*, signifying a little tongue. *I coveted them and took them.*—The three words occurring in this narrative, "I saw—I coveted—I took," strikingly express the rise, pro-

gress, and consummation of crime. The whole process is here laid open. The inward corruption of the heart is first drawn forth by some enticing object. The desire of gratification is then formed, and the determination to attain it fixed. Then comes the act itself, followed by its bitter and fearful consequences. In this instance the temptation entered by the eye; he saw those fine things as Eve saw the forbidden fruit; and he allowed his eyes to gaze and feast upon the interdicted objects. The sight inflamed his desire; and he coveted them. The next step was to carry out the feeling into act; the desire prompted him to take them, as he actually did, and thus accomplished the fearful deed. So naturally does lust, when it hath conceived, bring forth sin, and sin when finished bringeth forth death. The only way to avoid sin in action is to quench its incipient workings in the heart, to mortify sinful desires, especially the desire of worldly wealth, the source of such untold evils in the world. *And the silver under it.*—That is, under the Babylonish garment; covered with it, or wrapped up in it.

VER. 22. So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran unto the tent; and, behold, it was hid in his tent, and the silver under it.

*So Joshua sent messengers.*—To put to the test the truth of his confession. *And they ran unto the tent.*—Ran, not only to show their alacrity in obeying Joshua's orders, but to show also how uneasy they were till the camp was cleared of the accursed thing, and the divine favour regained. *It was hid.*—That is, the parcel of things mentioned ver. 21, 24.

VER. 23. And they took them out of the midst of the tent, and brought them unto Joshua, and unto all the children of Israel, and laid them out before the LORD.

*Laid them out before the Lord.*—Heb. "poured them out before the Lord." That is, before the ark of the covenant, the hallowed sign of the Lord's presence, where Joshua and the elders were awaiting the issue of the transaction.

VER. 24. And Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, and the silver, and the garment, and the wedge of gold, and his sons, and his daughters, and his oxen, and his asses, and his sheep, and his tent, and all that he had: and they brought them unto "the valley of Achor.

a Ver. 26. Chap. xv. 7.

*And his sons and his daughters.*—As no intimation is given that Achan's sons, or any of his family, were accessory to his crime, we are not warranted perhaps in supposing that they were now condemned to suffer on that account; although it may be admitted that he could not very easily have concealed the articles in the midst of the tent without some of its inmates being privy to it. But the supposition of their guilt we do not deem necessary to vindicate the equity and justice of the sentence. As all lives are really forfeited by sin; as the ungodly deserve worse punishment

than temporal death, and as God, the supreme arbiter of life and death, may exact the debt which all owe in any way or time that seemeth to him good, we know not who can question the righteousness of his judgment on this occasion. If evil, no injustice would be done them, and if good, they would the sooner be taken to their reward; and we can easily conceive that the death of a few persons at this particular juncture and under the solemn circumstances in which they now stood, might be attended with the happiest results. They were now in the commencement of their national existence in Canaan. It was necessary that the people should know, by a fresh demonstration, what a God they had to do with. Whilst they learned from his mercies how greatly he was to be loved, they needed also to learn from his judgments how greatly he was to be feared. This lesson would be effectually taught them by the present act of severity, and the death of a single individual might by its admonitory influence, be the means of afterwards preventing the death of many thousands. *His oxen, and his asses and his sheep.*—Brute beasts are of course incapable of sin and so of punishment, properly so called, but as they are made for man's use, and are daily killed for food, there seems no impropriety in taking away their lives for moral purposes, to show us more impressively the destructive and detestable nature of sin. The truth is, the animal world being originally formed for the service of man, is to be considered as a kind of appendage to him, and so is made to share in his lot, whether of weal or woe. On this principle the earth with its various tribes felt the effects of the curse when Adam sinned, and the whole creation has groaned in bondage ever since. Occurrences like that mentioned in the text are merely illustrations of this general law. *And they brought them unto the valley of Achor.*—Heb. "brought them up, made them go up or ascend." Persons are generally said to descend to a valley, but the phraseology here is probably founded on the relative situation of the valley and the camp. In going to it they may have been obliged to travel some distance over the hilly country towards the interior. This would be ascending from the Jordan, and that such was the fact is to be inferred from chap. xv. 7. The valley is called Achor by anticipation. It was so named from the event.

VER. 25. And Joshua said, <sup>b</sup> Why hast thou troubled us? the LORD shall trouble thee this day. <sup>c</sup> And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones.

<sup>b</sup> Ch. vi. 18. 1 Chron. ii. 7. Gal. 6. 12. <sup>c</sup> Deut. xvii. 6.

*Why hast thou troubled us? the Lord shall trouble thee this day.*—This is said in allusion to the words of the warning, (chap. iv. 18.) "Lest ye make the camp of Israel a curse and trouble it." From this circumstance, his name Achan seems to have been changed to Achar, "trouble," *i. e.* troubler. (1 Chron. ii. 7.) See on chap. vi. 18. How strikingly did Achan's conduct verify the saying of Solomon, (Prov. xv. 27.) "He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house;" and how clear from this instance is it, that sin is a

very troublesome as well as a very wicked thing, and that not only to the sinner himself, but to all around him. *And all Israel stoned him with stones.*—The burning therefore commanded ver. 15, must have had reference to the dead body. He was first stoned, and his carcase then consigned to the flames, himself and all his sharing the same fate. "He perished not alone in his iniquity." The punishment is said to have been executed by "all Israel;" not because every individual without exception had a hand in it, but because all were present as spectators, all were consenting to the act, and as many as could be were active agents in it in the name of the rest. This showed the universal detestation of the deed, and their anxiety to avert from them the divine displeasure.

VER. 26. And they <sup>d</sup> raised over him a great heap of stones unto this day. So <sup>e</sup> the LORD turned from the fierceness of his anger. Wherefore the name of that place was called, <sup>f</sup> The valley of Achor, unto this day.

<sup>d</sup> Chap. viii. 29. 2 Sam. xviii. 17. Lam. iii. 53.

<sup>e</sup> Deut. xiii. 17. 2 Sam. xxi. 14.

<sup>f</sup> Ver. 24. Isa. lxxv. 10. Hos. ii. 15.

*Raised over him a great heap of stones.*—As a monument to perpetuate the memory of this transaction, and to serve as a warning to all future generations to beware of presumptuous sin. The burying place of Absalom was distinguished by a similar erection, as a monument of his disgrace to future ages. (2 Sam. xviii. 17.) *Unto this day.*—That is, that remaineth unto this day. In a parallel passage, (chap. viii. 29,) the supplementary words "that remaineth," are inserted in the text. *Was called the valley of Achor.*—Or, Heb. "the valley of trouble," from the event. In Hos. ii. 15, the valley of Achor is said to be given to Israel as a "door of hope," in allusion to the transaction that now occurred here, and implying, perhaps, that when they had repented and put away the accursed thing, then there would begin to be a door of hope concerning them, and that the very places which had before been the scenes of troublesome judgments, and the memorials of wrath, should henceforth become only the mementos of the most signal mercies. Compare Ezra x. 2. Where sin is seen and lamented, and decisive steps taken towards reformation, there are tokens for good, and even gross offenders may receive encouragement. God is always pleased to have the monuments of his displeasure converted, by the conversion of sinners, into the remembrancers of kindness.—From the foregoing narrative we may learn, (1.) The deceitfulness of sin. Achan, at first, had in mind only the satisfaction he should feel in possessing the Babylonish garment, and the wedge and shekels of gold and silver. The ideas of shame and remorse and misery were hid from him. But ah! with what different thoughts did he contemplate his gains, when inquisition was made to discover the offender! How would he begin to tremble, when he saw that his own tribe was selected as containing the guilty person? How would his terror be increased when he saw his own family pointed out! and what dread

would seize upon him when the lot fell upon his household! What a paleness would be spread over his cheeks, and what a trembling would take hold of his limbs! What now becomes of all his expected enjoyments? What beauty does he now see in the splendid garment, or what value in the shining metals? Ah! could he but recall the act, which has thus brought him to shame and ruin! But it is too late. The deed is done, and the sense of guilt, as with the fangs of a serpent, has fastened itself upon his inmost spirit! Thus too with the transgressor of every name. The thief, the adulterer, the seducer, in the commission of crime, thinks only of the pleasure the gratification of his lusts will afford. But he has no sooner attained his object than his before blinded eyes are opened, and the enormity of his sin stares him full in the face. Then he finds that it stings like a serpent, and bites like an adder. (2.) The certainty of its exposure. Achan took great precautions to conceal his iniquity, but it was unavailing. Men may hide their wickedness from their fellow men, but not from God. His providence will, sooner or later, bring the hidden iniquity to the light, and for the most part in this world; but certainly in the great day of the revelation of all things. To every sinner, therefore, may the solemn warning be addressed, "Be sure your sin will find you out." (3.) The awfulness of its reward. Who does not shudder at the thought of that vengeance which was executed on Achan and his family? Who does not see how fierce the indignation of God against sin was, when the sin of one single person prevailed more to provoke him against the whole nation, than the innocence of the whole did to pacify his wrath against the individual? When in fact nothing but the most signal punishment of the individual could reconcile him to the nation to which he belonged? Yet was all this but a faint shadow of the indignation which he will manifest in a future world. We should profit from such a history as this. We should learn to dread the displeasure of the Almighty, and to glorify him now by an ingenuous confession, that he may not be glorified hereafter in our eternal condemnation.

#### CHAPTER VIII.

VER. 1. AND the LORD said unto Joshua, "Fear not, neither be thou dismayed: take all the people of war with thee, and arise, go up to Ai: see, I have given into thy hand the king of Ai, and his people, and his city, and his land:

a Deut. i. 21, and vii. 18, and xxxi. 8. Chap. i. 9.  
b Chap. vi. 2.

*Fear not, neither be thou dismayed.*—The sin of Achan and its consequences had probably weighed deeply on the spirits of Joshua, grieving and discouraging him, so as to render this renewed exhortation peculiarly seasonable at this time. When we have faithfully put away the sin that separated between God and us, we may confidently expect the light of his countenance to be

restored to us, and that he will animate us with such encouragements as shall banish the fear of our most formidable enemies. *Take all the people of war with thee.*—This can hardly be understood of the whole number of men of war in the congregation, which amounted to upwards of six hundred thousand. It is more probable, that by "all the people of war" is to be understood the thirty thousand men mentioned ver. 3, the choicest part, the flower of the host, those who were most experienced in warlike affairs. The main body of the soldiery remained in the camp at Gilgal. *I have given.*—I have purposed to give. The event is certain, that they shall be delivered into your power. *And his land.*—That is, the territory immediately adjoining the city, and under the jurisdiction of the king.

VER. 2. And thou shalt do to Ai and her king as thou didst unto Jericho and her king: only <sup>d</sup> the spoil thereof, and the cattle thereof, shall ye take for a prey unto yourselves: lay thee an ambush for the city behind it.

c Chap. vi. 21.

d Deut. xx. 14.

*Thou shalt do to Ai and her king as thou didst unto Jericho and her king.*—That is, in general, in the main, not in every particular. Ai was to be overcome and destroyed, and in this respect its fate was to resemble that of Jericho. But the precise manner of its destruction was not the same; the king of Ai was not to be put to death by the sword, as the king of Jericho had been, nor was a curse denounced against him that should rebuild Ai, as was the case in regard to Jericho. *Only the spoil thereof—shall ye take to yourselves.*—This was the grand point of difference in the prescribed manner of treating the two cities. In the one case, the spoil was granted to the people, in the other, not. There was, therefore, no danger of their committing the same trespass here that they had there. "Observe how Achan, who caught at forbidden spoil, lost that, and life, and all; but the rest of the people, who had conscientiously refrained from the accursed thing, were quickly recompensed for their obedience with the spoil of Ai. The way to have the comfort of what God allows, is to forbear what he forbids us. No man shall lose by his self-denial."—Henry. *Lay thee an ambush for the city behind it.*—That is, on the west side of the city, as the Israelites, at the time of receiving this command, were on the east side of it, and the orientals, in designating the relative position of places, were always supposed to face the east. This stratagem is to be justified on the ground that God commanded it, and it is obvious that if it was right for them to overpower their enemies, it was equally right to outwit them, if they could do it. "No treaties were violated, no oaths broken, no falsehoods uttered; and it cannot be requisite to inform our enemies of our intentions and purposes, however they may be deceived by appearances. But perjuries, lies, and infractions of treaties cannot, in any war or in any case, be allowable or excusable."—Scott.

VER. 3. So Joshua arose, and all the people of

war, to go up against Ai: and Joshua chose out thirty thousand mighty men of valour, and sent them away by night.

*So Joshua arose to go up against Ai.*—That is, set about the business of going up, took measures preparatory to it, consulted and laid the plan of operations. It does not express the fact of their actually marching towards Ai, for this is inconsistent with what follows, but according to a familiar idiom of the Hebrew, on which we have remarked before, chap. vi. 25, merely implies their entering upon the preliminary measures. "To arise," in innumerable instances in the scriptures, means nothing more than "to address oneself to a particular business, to set about it, to engage in it." *Chose out thirty thousand mighty men.*—The whole number of men to be employed on this occasion. *And sent them away by night.*—That is, as we suppose, not the whole of the thirty thousand, but the party of five thousand expressly mentioned ver. 12. The next verse, as well as ver. 9, seems to limit it to those who were "to lie in wait," and these were unquestionably the five thousand, and not the whole detachment specified above, who could not well have executed such a design without being discovered. It is true that, according to this interpretation, we must suppose the pronoun "them" to be put before its antecedent, which is left to be inferred from the tenor of the ensuing narrative; but this is no unusual thing with the sacred writers. See Ex. xiv. 19. Ps. lxxxvii. 1; cv. 19. Prov. vii. 8. On any other mode of construction it is extremely difficult to make out a consistent narration of the facts. The reasons for sending an ambuscade by night, are too obvious to require remark.

VER. 4. And he commanded them, saying, Beth-el, "ye shall lie in wait against the city, *even* behind the city: go not very far from the city, but be ye all ready:

*e* Judg. xx. 29.

*And he commanded them.*—That is, the party of five thousand, just spoken of as sent away by night.

VER. 5. And I, and all the people that *are* with me, will approach unto the city: and it shall come to pass, when they come out against us, as at the first, that *I* will flee before them,

*f* Judg. xx. 22.

*All the people that are with me.*—That is, the twenty-five thousand remaining after the five thousand were sent away, and whom he kept for a lure to draw out the inhabitants of Ai from the city. *As at the first.*—As on the former expedition, when Israel was so sadly worsted.

VER. 6. (For they will come out after us) till we have drawn them from the city; for they will say, They flee before us, as at the first: therefore we will flee before them.

*Till we have drawn them.*—Heb. "till we have pulled, or plucked them."

VER. 7. Then ye shall rise up from the ambush, and seize upon the city; for the LORD your God will deliver it into your hand.

*Then shall ye rise up from the ambush.*—Upon the signal given, ver. 18.

VER. 8. And it shall be, when ye have taken the city, *that* ye shall set the city on fire: according to the commandment of the LORD shall ye do. *See* I have commanded you.

*g* 2 Sam. xiii. 28.

*Ye shall set the city on fire.*—Probably this means no more than that they should kindle a fire in the city, the smoke of which should be an indication that they had taken it. Had they set fire to the whole city, the spoils which were to be divided among the people, would have been all consumed. It appears, moreover, from ver. 28, that the city was not burned till afterwards.

VER. 9. Joshua therefore sent them forth: and they went to lie in ambush, and abode between Beth-el and Ai, on the west side of Ai: but Joshua lodged that night among the people.

*Joshua therefore sent them forth.* That is, the detachment of five thousand, spoken of above, and designated by the pronoun "them," ver. 3. *Joshua lodged that night among the people.*—That is, the people of war, as they are called, ver. 11, or in other words, the twenty-five thousand. Others suppose the night was spent at the camp at Gilgal with the main body of the people: but this is less likely.

VER. 10. And Joshua rose up early in the morning, and numbered the people, and went up, he and the elders of Israel, before the people to Ai.

*Numbered the people.*—Or, Heb. "visited, inspected, mustered, set in order." This again probably means the band of twenty-five thousand, whom he carefully reviewed, to see that they were in perfect readiness, and that none had withdrawn themselves during the darkness of the night preceding. It would thus also appear more clearly when the work was done, that it was effected without any loss of men, whereby a new ground of encouragement and confidence in God would be afforded. *He and the elders of Israel.*—As a kind of council of war, to give more weight and solemnity to the proceeding, and to see to the just and equal distribution of the spoil. The elders were usually associated with the leader in every important measure that concerned the interests of the people.

VER. 11. <sup>a</sup>And all the people, *even the people* of war that *were* with him, went up, and drew nigh, and came before the city, and pitched on the north side of Ai: now *there was* a valley between them and Ai.

Ver. 5.

VER. 12. And he took about five thousand men,

and set them to lie in ambush between Beth-el and Ai, on the west side of the city.

*And he took about five thousand men.*—Rather, "he had taken." The verse is apparently thrown in as a parenthesis with a view to give a more particular explanation of what is said, in a general way, (ver. 3, 9.) Incidents omitted in their proper place are often brought in in this manner in order to prevent the interruption of the previous narrative.

VER. 13. And when they had set the people, even all the host that was on the north of the city, and their liers in wait on the west of the city, Joshua went that night into the midst of the valley.

*Their liers in wait.*—Heb. "their lying in wait, their ambuscade," abst. for concrete. Or it may be rendered "their heel," *i. e.* the hinder part of the army, referring to the party that lay in ambush. *Went that night into the midst of the valley.*—That is, as is most likely, very early in the morning, when it was yet dark, as John xx. 1. It seems hardly probable, that when every thing was ready they should have remained inactive during a whole day. We prefer the opinion that Joshua, having sent away the five thousand in the evening of the previous day, and having taken a few hours' sleep with the twenty-five thousand, rose at a very early hour, perhaps a little after midnight, and had them inspected, which might be speedily done by the aid of the officers, and then went, at so early an hour that it might still be called night, into the valley, perhaps alone, to supplicate God for a blessing on the enterprise in which he was now engaged, and which had come so near to its crisis; or, it may imply that at this time he led the army through the valley, and when the day dawned appeared in full view of the city, from whence the king and people immediately sallied out in pursuit.

VER. 14. And it came to pass when the king of Ai saw it, that they hastened and rose up early, and the men of the city went out against Israel to battle, he and all his people, at a time appointed, before the plain: but he wist not that there were liers in ambush against him behind the city.

*i* Judg. xx. 34. Eccles. ix. 12:

*When the king of Ai saw it, they hastened and rose up early.*—That is, when the king was informed of it, by the city guards, an alarm was immediately given, and the citizens who had not yet risen, hurried from their beds, and soon commenced the pursuit. "To see," in scripture usage, often has the sense of to know, to learn, to understand. *He and all his people.*—That is, all the men of war; for the rest, the old men, the women, and children remained in the city, as appears ver. 34. *At a time appointed.*—Or, Heb. "at a concerted sign or signal."

VER. 15. And Joshua and all Israel <sup>made as if</sup>

they were beaten before them, and fled by the way of the wilderness.

*k* Judg. xx. 36, &c.

*Made as if they were beaten.*—Turned their backs. Heb. "were beaten or smitten," but rightly understood as here rendered, of apparently suffering themselves to be beaten, to make a show or pretence of being beaten. See a like phraseology, Gen. xlii. 7. 2 Sam. xiii. 5. *Fled by the way of the wilderness.*—Lying between Ai and Jericho or Gilgal.

VER. 16. And all the people that were in Ai were called together to pursue after them; and they pursued after Joshua, and were drawn away from the city.

*And all the people that were in Ai.*—That is, all who had not sallied out before, all the men able to bear arms who remained behind when the first body of pursuers issued forth from the city. Some portion of the population, however, was still left, who were afterwards slain, (ver. 24.)

VER. 17. And there was not a man left in Ai, or Beth-el, that went not out after Israel; and they left the city open, and pursued after Israel.

*Was not a man left in Ai.*—Not a man that was able to bear arms, not one fit for military service. *Or Bethel.*—This city, situated at three miles distance from Ai, was probably confederate with it and aiding it with forces on the present occasion.

VER. 18. And the LORD said unto Joshua, Stretch out the spear that is in thy hand toward Ai; for I will give it into thine hand. And Joshua stretched out the spear that he had in his hand toward the city.

*Stretch out the spear that is in thine hand.*—That is, hold extended or stretched out, continue it in that position. Com. ver. 26. This was probably agreed upon as the signal to be given by Joshua to the men in ambush, to notify them of the precise moment when to issue forth from their retreat and rush into the city. If, as some commentators suppose, a flag or a burnished shield were fixed to the end of a long spear, pike, or lance, making it conspicuous from a distance, it would still better answer the purpose intended. Conjoined with this there might have been, as far as we can see, another object in thus elevating the spear on this occasion; viz. that it should serve like the lifting up of Moses's hands in the battle with Amalek, as a token of the divine presence and assistance, a pledge of the secret efficacy of the almighty arm in securing them the victory. This seems highly probable from ver. 26. *Set the city on fire.*—See on ver. 8.

VER. 19. And the ambush arose quickly out of their place, and they ran as soon as he had stretched out his hand: and they entered into the city, and took it, and hastened, and set the city on fire.

VER. 20. And when the men of Ai looked behind them, they saw, and, behold, the smoke of the city ascended up to heaven, and they had no power to flee this way or that way: and the people that fled to the wilderness turned back upon the pursuers.

*Had no power to flee.*—Heb. “no hand,” *i. e.* no place, no quarter, no direction to which to flee, being hemmed in on every side. Most of the ancient versions, however, render with ours, “power, ability, strength,” in which sense it is certain that “hand” is sometimes used. *Pursuers.*—Heb. “pursuer,” collect. sing.

VER. 21. And when Joshua and all Israel saw that the ambush had taken the city, and that the smoke of the city ascended, then they turned again, and slew the men of Ai.

*When all Israel saw.*—That is, all the Israelites then present, all that were employed in this service. Such general expressions are often to be limited by the tenor of the narrative.

VER. 22. And the other issued out of the city against them; so they were in the midst of Israel, some on this side, and some on that side: and they smote them, so that they let none of them remain or escape.

1 Deut. vii. 2.

*And the other.*—Heb. “and these,” *i. e.* those who had formed the ambush. *So they let none of them remain or escape.*—Heb. “so that there remained not to them a survivor, (*i. e.* one taken alive,) or one that escaped.” They were all indiscriminately put to the sword, with the single exception mentioned in the next verse.

VER. 23. And the king of Ai they took alive, and brought him to Joshua.

*The king of Ai they took alive.*—He was reserved for a more exemplary and ignominious death, as a warning to other kings who, like him, might be disposed to defy the power of Israel.

VER. 24. And it came to pass, when Israel had made an end of slaying all the inhabitants of Ai in the field, in the wilderness wherein they chased them, and when they were all fallen on the edge of the sword, until they were consumed, that all the Israelites returned unto Ai, and smote it with the edge of the sword.

*Smote it with the edge of the sword.*—Heb. “with the mouth of the sword.” That is, the old men, women, and children, who remained in the city, who had not joined in the pursuit, ver. 16, 17.

VER. 25. And so it was, that all that fell that day, both of men and women, were twelve thousand, even all the men of Ai.

*Both of men and women.*—Heb. “from the man

to the woman.” *Twelve thousand, even all the men of Ai.*—It seems scarcely credible that this number should have included all that were slain on this occasion, as it would leave the fighting men not more than two or three thousand, and yet this mere handful daring to go forth against a force of between thirty and forty thousand! Can we believe them so infatuated, doomed though they were to destruction? We are constrained therefore to understand the twelve thousand of the effective men of arms, the sense in which the phrase “men of Ai” occurs in ver. 20, 21, as also the sing. “man,” ver. 17. The assertion of the verse we suppose to be, that the number of the men of war who perished, together with their whole families, old men, women, and children, was twelve thousand. The latter are not expressly but implicitly included in the enumeration, and the proportion which they bore to the fighting men is a mere matter of inference. They were probably at least thrice as many.

VER. 26. For Joshua drew not his hand back, wherewith he stretched out the spear, until he had utterly destroyed all the inhabitants of Ai.

*For Joshua drew not his hand back, &c.*—The object of these words seems to be to assign the reason of the utter and unsparring destruction of the people of Ai. The movements of Israel were directed by the uplifted spear of Joshua. As long as that continued stretched out they were to persist in the work of slaughter. When it was let down they were to cease. This shows that the stretching out of the spear was not designed merely as a signal to the men in ambush, for in this case the continuance of the act would have been unnecessary. It was doubtless intended to answer the same end as the uplifted hands of Moses on the occasion before referred to, that is, as a visible sign of the presence and agency of Omnipotence in behalf of his people, as long as it continued to be extended. To the judgment of sense there was perhaps little connexion between Joshua's holding forth his spear and the success of the combatants at a distance, and it might have appeared that he would have been better employed at the head of the army, animating and directing them. But he knew who alone could give the victory, and that a compliance with God's commands was the surest means of obtaining help from him. Hence, without any apprehensions as to the issue, he maintained his stand before God, and held forth his spear till all his enemies were destroyed. Such is the confidence and perseverance which the Christian is to evince in his conflicts with sin and Satan, notwithstanding the apparently little connexion between his poor efforts and the destruction of such mighty foes. It is perhaps in allusion to this circumstance that the phrase “stretching out the hand against,” is employed by the prophets as equivalent to “contending with, or fighting against.” Thus, Isa. v. 25, “Therefore is the anger of the Lord kindled against his people, and he hath stretched forth his hand against them, and hath smitten them; and the hills did tremble, and their carcases are torn in the midst of the streets. For all this his anger is not turned away,

but his hand is stretched out still," *i. e.* his judgments still continue, as did the slaughter of the Aittes while Joshua's outstretched spear was not withdrawn. *Until he had utterly destroyed.*—Heb. "had devoted to a curse."

VER. 27. *m* Only the cattle and the spoil of that city Israel took for a prey unto themselves, according unto the word of the LORD which he *n* commanded Joshua.

*m* Num. xxxi. 22, 26. *n* ver. 2.

VER. 28. And Joshua burnt Ai, and made it *a* heap for ever, *even* a desolation unto this day.

*o* Deut. xiii. 16.

*Made it an heap for ever*—Heb. "put it an heap of eternity," *i. e.* an everlasting heap, a perpetual pile of ruins. The meaning is, it was made such for a long time, through a long tract of ages: a frequent sense of the phrase "for ever." It seems to have been rebuilt about a thousand years afterwards by the Benjaminites, (Neh. xi. 31.) under the name of Aija, or Aiya. *Unto this day.*—Near the close of Joshua's life.

VER. 29. *p* And the king of Ai he hanged on a tree until eventide: *q* and as soon as the sun was down, Joshua commanded that they should take his carcass down from the tree, and cast it at the entering of the gate of the city, and *r* raise thereon a great heap of stones, *that remaineth* unto this day.

*p* Chap. x. 26. *Ps.* cvii. 40; *ex.* 5. *q* Deut. xxi. 23. *r* Chap. vii. 26; *x.* 27.

*The king of Ai he hanged.*—The kings of the devoted nations were dealt with with more exemplary severity than the common people, because they were more deeply criminal, both in having formerly by their connivance encouraged the abominations of their subjects, and in now instigating them to resistance, when they might and should have known that resistance was vain. In the present case, though the king of Ai was taken alive and brought to Joshua, yet it is not certain that he was not first put to death in some other way, and his body hung upon a tree after his execution, as a mark of the utmost disgrace and detestation. Upon consulting the following passages, this opinion will appear far more plausible than the one which maintains that he was first hung, a mode of capital punishment that does not appear to have been customary in those early days. (Chap. x. 26. 2 Sam. iv. 12. 1 Sam. xxxi. 8—10.) *As soon as the sun was down.*—This was according to the law, (Deut. xxi. 22, 23.) "If a man have committed a sin worthy of death, and he be to be put to death, and thou hang him on a tree; his body shall not remain upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day."

*Cast it at the entering of the gate.*—The gates of cities were usually the places of judgment, of the transaction of the most important public business, and of general resort and rendezvous. We know of no other reason for casting the dead body of the king of Ai in this place, than that it was the most public place that could be chosen, one that

would stamp the act with the utmost possible notoriety.

VER. 30. Then Joshua built an altar unto the LORD God of Israel *in* mount Ebal,

*s* Deut. xxvii. 4, 5.

*Joshua built an altar—in mount Ebal.*—This was in obedience to the command given Deut. xxvii. 42—48, on which see notes. Mount Ebal, as well as mount Gerizim, was situated near Shechem, in what was afterwards the tribe of Ephraim, and not far from the ancient Samaria. It was at considerable distance from the camp at Gilgal; yet as it was a ceremony that had been expressly commanded, and the performance of which was not to be delayed any longer than was absolutely necessary after they had entered Canaan, (Deut. xxvii. 2.) they seem to have penetrated in a body through the mountainous regions that intervened, till they came to the appointed place, although no details of the journey thither are given. Viewed in connexion with their then present circumstances, the incident was a very remarkable one. While engaged in the mid career of conquest, the business of the war is suddenly suspended, and instead of pushing their victories on every side, after mastering the frontier towns, they commence a peaceful march into the heart of the country, to attend upon a religious solemnity! But God had ordered it, and they cheerfully obeyed. Whatsoever else stands still, the service of God must go forward. Whatever other interest may suffer, our spiritual concerns must receive attention. But in truth there is no danger that our worldly interests will suffer in consequence of a paramount regard to the one thing needful. God will take them into his own hand, and see that we are no losers by any thing done for him. In the present instance, we see that his providential care was wonderfully exercised towards his faithful servants. Though in the midst of an enemy's country, as yet unconquered, yet they passed on unarmed, the terror of God having fallen upon the cities round about, as when Jacob some ages before had passed through this very region on his way to Bethel. (Gen. xxxv. 5.) The way of duty is the way of safety.—The object of erecting the altar was to offer the sacrifices spoken of in the next verse. It was a federal transaction in which they were now engaged. The covenant was now to be renewed upon their taking possession of the land of promise, and a formal profession made of their subjection to the law, and of their dependence for success in all their enterprises, upon the blessing of the Most High. All this it was proper should be ratified by sacrificial offerings.

VER. 31. As Moses the servant of the LORD commanded the children of Israel, as it is written in the *'*book of the law of Moses, an altar of whole stones, over which no man hath lifted up *any* iron: and *they* offered thereon burnt-offerings unto the LORD, and sacrificed peace-offerings.

*t* Exod. xx. 25. *Deut.* xxvii. 5, 6. *u* Exod. xx. 24.

*Over which no man hath lift up any iron.*—Ra-

ther "had lift up." The writer does not intend to quote the precise words of the law, but merely to say that Joshua constructed an altar in accordance with the precept of Moses, (Ex. xx. 25. Deut. xxvii. 5.) viz. one over which no man had lifted up an iron tool.

VER. 32. And <sup>e</sup> he wrote there upon the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he wrote in the presence of the children of Israel.

<sup>a</sup> Deut. xxvii. 2, 8.

*Wrote there upon the stones.*—Upon comparing this with the injunction, (Deut. xxvii. 2—7.) it appears quite obvious that, in addition to the altar, they were required also to erect a number of stone pillars, and that the writing was to be done upon the pillars, instead of upon the altar, for which purpose they were previously to be plastered over. *A copy of the law.*—Heb. "a repetition, a duplicate of the law." That is, a copy of the blessings and curses commanded by Moses; not a copy of the decalogue, as some imagine, nor of the book of Deuteronomy, as others think; much less of the whole Pentateuch; but simply that part of the law which contained the blessings and curses, and which was to be read on this solemn occasion. See note on Deut. xxvii. 8.

VER. 33. And all Israel, and their elders, and officers, and their judges, stood on this side the ark and on that side before the priests the Levites, <sup>y</sup> which bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD, as well <sup>z</sup> the stranger as he that was born among them; half of them over against mount Gerizim, and half of them over against mount Ebal; "as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded before, that they should bless the people of Israel.

<sup>y</sup> Deut. xxxi. 9, 25. <sup>z</sup> Deut. xxxi. 12.  
<sup>a</sup> Deut. xi. 29; xxvii. 12.

*Before the priests, the Levites.*—That is, in view of the priests, the Levites; not that the elders, officers, and judges stood nearer the ark than the priests, but that they so surrounded the ark that the priests, who were carrying it, had a full view of them. In like manner it might be said, that a great crowd in a funeral were before the bearers and pall-bearers, if they stood full in their view. *Over against mount Gerizim—and over against mount Ebal.*—For an account of these mountains, see on Deut. xi. 29. The two divisions seem not to have stood upon the summit of the mountains, but were ranged along their base and some way up their sides, that they might be nearer the ark, which occupied the valley between, and more conveniently hear the reading of the law. *That they should bless the people.*—And curse also; though the last is not expressly mentioned; it is however plainly to be inferred, both from the original command of Moses, (Deut. xxvii. 13.) and from the phraseology of the next verse.

VER. 34. And afterward <sup>b</sup> he read all the words of the law, <sup>c</sup> the blessings and cursings, accord-

ing to all that is written in the book of the law.

<sup>b</sup> Deut. xxxi. 11. Neh. viii. 3.

<sup>c</sup> Deut. xxviii. 2, 15, 45; xxix. 20, 21; xxx. 19.

*And afterward he read.*—That is, he commanded the priests, or Levites, to read, as is evident from Deut. xxvii. 14. In innumerable instances in the Scriptures, a person is said to do that, which he orders or procures to be done. *The words of the law, the blessings and curses.*—All the sanctions of the law; from which, and from ver. 35, it would seem that much more was read on this occasion than was written on the stones.

VER. 35. There was not a word of all that Moses commanded, which Joshua read not before all the congregation of Israel, <sup>d</sup> with the women, and the little ones, and <sup>e</sup> the strangers that were conversant among them.

<sup>d</sup> Deut. xxxi. 12.

<sup>e</sup> Ver. 33.

*With the women and little ones.*—It was a word that concerned all, and all of all sexes and ages were present, giving a solemn and heedful attention to what was read. Children would be deeply impressed by the solemnities of the scene, and a salutary fear of offending God would sink into their tender hearts. *The strangers that were conversant among them.*—Heb. "the strangers that walked among them." Proselytes. No other strangers can well be supposed to have been present at this time.

## CHAPTER IX.

VER. 1. AND it came to pass, when all the kings which were on this side Jordan, in the hills, and in the valleys, and in all the coasts of "the great sea over against Lebanon, <sup>b</sup> the Hittite, and the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite, heard thereof;

<sup>a</sup> Num. xxxiv. 6. <sup>b</sup> Exod. iii. 17; xxiii. 23.

*On this side Jordan.*—The west side; where the children of Israel now were, and where the writer was at the time of penning this narrative. *Heard thereof.*—That is, of the remarkable events which had transpired since the Israelites had entered Canaan; of the sacking of Jericho and Ai, and of their being now assembled together at mount Ebal.

VER. 2. That they <sup>c</sup> gathered themselves together, to fight with Joshua and with Israel, with one accord.

<sup>c</sup> Psal. lxxxiii. 3, 5

*They gathered themselves together to fight.*—Entered into a league, agreed to form a confederacy. It does not appear that they actually united their forces at this time, but they now consulted together, and agreed to do it. Subsequent events, however, seem to have deranged their plans, and prevented a combined attack till some time afterwards. In this conduct we see, as in a glass, the

strange infatuation of the wicked! Though seeing and feeling that the hand of God is unquestionably against them, yet, instead of repenting and humbling themselves before him, these devoted kings, who, like Ahaz, "in their distress trespassed yet more against the Lord," madly seek by power and policy to counteract and defeat his designs! "Thou hast stricken them but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction; they have made their faces harder than a rock." *With one accord.*—Heb. "with one mouth;" expressive of their entire unanimity in the measure. Though of different clans, having different interests, and doubtless heretofore often at variance with one another, yet they are ready to make common cause against the people of God, showing that the hatred of the righteous is one of the strongest bonds of union between wicked men. "And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together; for before they were at enmity between themselves." What an admonition to Christians to cease from dissension, to give up their petty feuds and animosities, to sacrifice party interests to the public welfare, and cordially unite against the common enemies of God's kingdom among men.

VER. 3. And when the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done unto Jericho and to Ai,

d Chap. x. 2. 2 Sam. xxi. 1, 2. e Chap. vi. 27.

*The inhabitants of Gibeon.*—Gibeon was a city of the Hivites, probably its capital. In the division of the land it fell to the tribe of Benjamin, and was situated on a hill about six miles north of Jerusalem. At the present time, a small village called Geb, occupies the site of the ancient city. The inhabitants of this place declined entering into the alliance offensive and defensive above mentioned. This might have been owing to their form of government, which left more scope for the good sense of the people. Had they had a king, of which we nowhere read, he would probably have been induced, in the pride of his heart, to join the confederacy; but this city, with the three others mentioned ver. 17, seem to have been governed by elders or senators, (ver. 11,) who consulted the common safety more than their own personal dignity. In this case of the Gibeonites we may see a striking instance of the different effects produced by the same tidings upon different minds. The news of the victorious progress of Israel excites the several kings to resistance, but moves the Gibeonites to think of making peace with their invaders. In the same manner the Gospel message is a saviour of life to some, and of death to others. Some it irritates and provokes to deadly and self-destructive opposition, others it softens, melts, persuades to surrender, and brings to saving repentance. In such a difference Divine sovereignty must be acknowledged, though the obstinately impenitent are left without excuse.

VER. 4. They did work wilily, and went and made as if they had been ambassadors, and

took old sacks upon their asses, and wine-bottles, old, and rent, and bound up;

*They did work wilily.*—Heb. "they also did work wilily," i. e. cunningly, shrewdly, craftily. The term "also," which is omitted in our translation but occurs in the original, carries in it a reference to the course adopted by the Canaanitish kings. They adopted the measures which seemed to them the wisest and most politic, under the circumstances. In like manner the Gibeonites also determined to exercise their ingenuity in the present emergency, but they had recourse to a subtle stratagem, entirely different from the more open, straightforward, but ruinous course pursued by their neighbours. As to the moral character of this device of the Gibeonites, we can only say of it, as our Saviour said of the unjust steward, "they acted wisely in their generation;" they did what the common maxims of mere worldly prudence dictated under the circumstances, and yet their fraud and prevarication cannot be justified, nor have we any reason to think they fared so well by employing it as they would have done without it. A more simple and upright course would undoubtedly have secured to them far greater advantages. Some correct notions of the God of Israel they had certainly formed, (ver. 9, 10,) and these should have prompted some other expedient than that of lying and deceit. They should have followed up the little light they had, and inquired into the procuring causes of God's severity against them. They should have acknowledged that it was their heinous sins which were at the bottom of all their troubles; and having humbled themselves in deep repentance, and trusting to Providence for the issue, should have come to the Israelites, and simply submitted themselves, without opposition or fraud, and there is every reason to believe they would have been spared, as Rahab and her relations had been. Lying and hypocrisy always defeat themselves in the long run; their success is only temporary, while truth and honesty will always ultimately redound to the safety, prosperity, and happiness of those who adhere to them. *As if they had been ambassadors.*—The root of the original word פָּר, "ambassador," properly denotes "a hinge;" because an ambassador is a person upon whom the business of his embassy turns, as upon a hinge. So the Latin *Cardinalis*, cardinal, from *cardo*, a hinge, was the title of the prime minister of the emperor Theodosius; but it is now applied only to the Pope's electors and counsellors, though the original reason probably holds with equal force here too: they are the hinges upon which the vast and complicated interests of the Papacy turn. *Took old sacks—and wine bottles, old, &c.*—Pretending to have come from a very distant country, and that their sacks, and the skins that served them for carrying their wine and water, were worn out by the length of the journey. Sir John Chardin informs us, that the Arabs, and all those who lead a wandering life, keep their water, milk, and other liquors, in leathern bottles. They keep more fresh in them than in any other way. These leathern bottles are made of goat skins. When the animal is killed, they cut

off its feet and its head, and then draw it out of the skin, which is thus left nearly whole. They afterwards sew up the places where the legs and the tail were cut off, and when it is filled they tie it about the neck. These nations and the country people of Persia never go a journey without a small leathern bottle of water hanging by their side, like a scrip. These bottles are frequently rent, when old and much used, but they are capable of being repaired. This they do sometimes by putting in a piece, sometimes by gathering up the wounded place in the manner of a purse; sometimes they put in a round flat piece of wood, and by these means stop the hole. Similar bottles are still used in Spain, and are called "borrachas."—See *Burder's Orient. Cust.* vol. i. p. 54.

VER. 5. And old shoes and clouted upon their feet, and old garments upon them; and all the bread of their provision was dry and mouldy.

*Old shoes and clouted.*—This latter epithet, in the time of Shakspeare, when applied to shoes, meant such as had nails driven into the soles to strengthen them. (*Cymb. Act iv. Sc. 2.*) In this sense it may be derived from the French word *clou*, a nail. But this does not seem to correspond well with the original, which is a derivative from a root signifying to spot, to patch, to spot with patches. For this reason, it is supposed by Adam Clarke, with much plausibility, to come from the old Saxon *clut*, a clout, rag, or small piece of cloth, used for piecing or patching. This makes our present version to express very precisely the spirit of the original. As their shoes or sandals were made of skins in those early ages, it means that those they now wore were in a miserable tattered condition, having been often patched, pieced, or mended.

VER. 6. And they went to Joshua *f*unto the camp at Gilgal, and said unto him, and to the men of Israel, We be come from a far country: now therefore make ye a league with us.

*f* Chap. v. 10.

*And to the men of Israel.*—Heb. "אִישׁ אִישׁ" the man or manhood of Israel;" collect. sing. for plur. Not to the whole body of the people, but to the heads, elders, or princes of the congregation, (ver. 15—21,) who in all important matters acted in the name of the rest. In this sense, as a term of eminence or dignity, the original אִישׁ אִישׁ ish, "man," is often used. *Make ye a league with us.*—Heb. "cut a covenant with us;" on which, see notes on Gen. xv. 10. The assertion that they came from a far country, is made as a reason for the Israelites complying with their request. From ver. 24, it appears that they were well acquainted with the divine mandate in regard to the destruction of the devoted nations, and they may have heard of the exception mentioned Deut. xx. 15, in favour of the cities which were "very far off, and which were not of the cities of these nations." Of this exception they intended to take advantage.

VER. 7. And the men of Israel said unto the \*Hivites, Peradventure ye dwell among us; and *h* how shall we make a league with you?

*g* Chap. xi. 19. *h* Exod. xxiii. 32. Deut. vii. 2, & xx. 16. Judg. ii. 2.

*And the men of Israel.*—Heb. "and the man of Israel;" i. e. the elders or princes, as above. *Said unto the Hivites.*—Heb. "the Hivite." This is the first intimation of the particular nation to which the Gibeonites belonged. In Josh. xi. 9, it is stated still more expressly. *Peradventure ye dwell among us.*—Heb. "dwell in my midst." They speak, in the confidence of faith, as if they were already actual possessors and occupants, old settled inhabitants of the region which God had covenanted to give them. *And how shall we make a league with you?*—Seeing God has expressly forbidden our forming any such alliance. (Exod. xxiii. 31; xxxi.; xxxiv. 12. Deut. vii. 2.) They speak as acting entirely according to orders, and as having no discretion in the case; and by putting their answer into the form of a question, do virtually appeal to the consciences, the innate sense of right of these heathen people, for the propriety of their conduct in refusing. A contrary course the Gibeonites themselves knew was not even to be thought of. Some duties are so obvious, that we may unhesitatingly take it for granted that the consciences of the worst of men do really side with us in regard to them.

VER. 8. And they said unto Joshua, *i* We are thy servants. And Joshua said unto them, Who are ye? and from whence come ye?

*i* Deut. xx. 11. 2 Kings x. 5.

*We are thy servants.*—We are willing to make any concessions; do but grant our request, and we will submit to any terms you may see fit to propose. Fix your own conditions, even should they require us to become your tributaries and bond-men for life. *Who are ye, and from whence come ye?*—Probably this very intimation of such unconditional submission tended to excite the suspicions of Joshua, especially as they were so backward to name the country whence they came.

VER. 9. And they said unto him, *k*From a very far country thy servants are come, because of the name of the LORD thy God: for we have *l*heard the fame of him, and all that he did in Egypt,

*k* Deut. xx. 15. *l* Exod. xv. 14. Josh. ii. 10.

*Because of the name of the Lord thy God.*—Because of what we have heard of that name; because of the reverence with which it has inspired us; and because we are convinced that it is above every name. They pretend to have been moved mainly by religious motives in taking this journey, which was in part doubtless true, but it was truth mixed with both falsehood and hypocrisy. This pretence, however, was one well calculated to prevail with the Israelites, for those who are guileless themselves are least suspicious

of guile in others, and nothing wins more upon the simple-heartedness of good men than the appearance of piety and devotion where it was little or not at all expected. *All that he did in Egypt.*—They artfully confine themselves to the mention of events that happened a long time ago, avoiding any allusion to those of more recent occurrence; such as the dividing of Jordan, and the destruction of Jericho and Ai, as if willing to have it believed that they lived so far off, that the tidings of them had not yet reached their ears.

VER. 10. And "all that he did to the two kings of the Amorites, that were beyond Jordan, to Sihon king of Heshbon, and to Og king of Bashan, which was at Ashtaroth.

*m Num. xxi. 24, 33.*

VER. 11. Wherefore our elders, and all the inhabitants of our country spake to us, saying, Take victuals with you for the journey, and go to meet them, and say unto them, We are your servants: therefore now make ye a league with us:

*Wherefore our elders,—spake to us.*—Another evidence that they did not live under a kingly but a popular form of government. *Go to meet them.*—Had they deferred till the Israelites came to the gates of their cities, it would have been too late; their yielding themselves up would have been of no avail. So the way to avoid a judgment is to meet it by repentance. Sinners should imitate the example of these Gibeonites, and while God who is coming to make war against them, "is yet a great way off, should send an ambassage and desire conditions of peace." We have as clear evidence of God's determination to destroy all the ungodly, as the Gibeonites had of his purpose to root out the Canaanites. Let us learn then of these heathens; learn to come to Jesus ere it be too late. Let us not stay till besieged by sickness and death. Nor let us come covering our design with falsehoods, but confessing the whole truth. In the old and tattered garments of our native vileness we may come. Christ the true Joshua, will receive and make with us a league of life and peace; but let us come saying at first as they did after their imposture was discovered; "Behold we are in thine hand; as it seemeth good and right unto thee to do unto us, do."

VER. 12. This our bread we took hot for our provision out of our houses on the day we came forth to go unto you; but now, behold, it is dry, and it is mouldy:

VER. 13. And these bottles of wine, which we filled, were new, and behold they be rent: and these our garments and our shoes are become old by reason of the very long journey.

VER. 14. And the men took of their victuals, "and asked not counsel at the mouth of the LORD.

*n Num. xxvii. 21. Isa. xxx. 1, 2. See Judg. i. 1. 1 Sam. xxii. 10; xxiii. 10, 11; xxx. 8. 2 Sam. ii. 1; v. 19.*

*And the men took of their victuals.*—By the "men" are meant those who are elsewhere termed the princes of the congregation, (ver. 18, 19.) They took the victuals into their hands to satisfy themselves of the truth of their statement. Some suppose the meaning to be that they ate together with the Gibeonites in token of friendship, as is still common in the east; but this is less likely, especially as the words may be rendered, "they received the men by reason of their victuals." *And asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord.*—That is, instead of asking as they ought to have done at the lips of the high priest, whose duty it was to inquire through the medium of the Urim and Thummim. (Exod. xxviii. 30. Num. xxvii. 21. 1 Sam. xxx. 7, 8.) It is by no means certain, if they had sought the divine direction, that they would have been commanded to reject the suit of the Gibeonites and show them no mercy. The probability is, that upon any of the devoted nations voluntarily coming forward, professing repentance, renouncing idolatry, and embracing the true religion, the Israelites would have been authorised by God to spare their lives. See on chap. xi. 19. But the circumstance is mentioned here as a severe reflection upon the princes of Israel for neglect of duty, for rashness, credulity, and impolicy. They rushed precipitately into an alliance which they had no right to form without the express sanction of Jehovah, and their "lips became a snare to their souls." In like manner how often do men now involve themselves in dangers and difficulties, and hedge up their own way with troubles, because they ask not counsel at the mouth of the Lord. They listen with a yielding ear to plausible representations, hurry forward in their chosen schemes, and enter heedlessly into doubtful connexions without weighing the consequences. But sooner or later we shall find that no business or interest truly prospers in which we engage without the counsel and approbation of heaven, and with shame and sorrow shall seek to him to retrieve the evils which our rashness has procured. Let it then be engraven upon the tablets of our hearts, that no proposed course of conduct can be so clear to a Christian as to excuse him from the duty of seeking direction from above.

VER. 15. And Joshua "made peace with them, and made a league with them, to let them live; and the princes of the congregation sware unto them.

*o Chap. xi. 19. 2 Sam. xxi. 2.*

*Joshua made peace with them, &c.*—Agreed to receive them into a friendly connexion with the Israelites, and to respect their lives and property. It has been doubted by some whether the Israelites were bound by an oath that had been obtained from them by means of a gross imposition. But it is plain that they thought themselves solemnly bound by it, and were apprehensive that the wrath of God would fall upon them if they broke it. That they were right in this, and that their adherence to their oath was acceptable to God, is to be inferred: (1.) From his expressing no displeasure at the time, and from the subsequent tenor of his dealings towards them, which was

kind and favourable, not implying rebuke nor savouring of disapprobation. (2.) From the fact that he long afterwards severely avenged the wrong done by Saul to the Gibeonites in violation of this treaty. Let us learn from this the binding nature of an oath. It lays a bond upon the soul from which we cannot be released. Even when an oath has been taken which it is unlawful to keep, still we are not to consider that it is a light matter to dispense with it, or that we stand in the sight of God just where we did before it was taken. We have in fact laid upon ourselves a load of obligation which he only can take off. It is he only who in view of our unfeigned repentance for having taken it can relieve the conscience of the awful burden which rests upon it. How much more then ought we to feel the force of those compacts and promises which are wholly lawful and right! How religiously and scrupulously should every promise be performed!

VER. 16. And it came to pass at the end of three days after they had made a league with them, that they heard that they *were* their neighbours, and *that* they dwelt among them.

*That they dwelt among them.*—Heb. “dwelt in his midst,” collect. sing. the very thing which Joshua feared, and of which he hinted his suspicion, (ver. 7.) “They that suffer themselves to be deceived by the wiles of Satan, will soon be undeceived to their confusion, and will find that to be near, even at the door, which they imagined was very far off.”—Henry.

VER. 17. And the children of Israel journeyed, and came unto their cities on the third day. Now their cities *were* Gibeon, and Chephirah, and Beeroth, and Kirjath-jearim.

*p* Chap. xviii. 25, 26, 28. Ezra ii. 25.

*And the children of Israel journeyed and came unto their cities, &c.* This might better be rendered, “For when the children of Israel journeyed, they came unto their cities.” According to the present translation they learnt the fraud practised upon them some days before they arrived at their cities. The contrary supposition seems the most probable, and we presume the 17th verse is intended to inform us how they became possessed of the information mentioned in the 16th.

VER. 18. And the children of Israel smote them not, *because* the princes of the congregation had sworn unto them by the LORD God of Israel. And all the congregation murmured against the princes.

*q* Eccles. v. 2. Ps. xv. 4.

*The congregation murmured.*—Principally, no doubt, because they were deprived of the spoils of the Gibeonites. Though they did submit to the restraints laid upon them by this league, yet it was with an ill grace; they were vexed to have their hands thus tied by their rulers, and vented their disaffection in the most unequivocal

manner. Some of them, however, might have honestly resented what they deemed a flagrant breach of the divine commandment. There is often, nay, generally, more conscience and principle among the common mass of the people, than among those placed in authority over them, although this remark is not to be construed to the disparagement of Joshua.

VER. 19. But all the princes said unto all the congregation, We have sworn unto them by the LORD God of Israel: now therefore we may not touch them.

*We have sworn unto them.*—They plead neither the lawfulness nor the prudence of the oath, but only its obligation when taken. Although they had been deceived in the business, and the covenant had been made on a supposition which was afterwards proved to be false; yet, having sworn by Jehovah, they did not feel at liberty to break their compact. It has been suggested that Joshua might have taken advantage of their own words to annul the treaty, and said to them, “Ye are come, according to your own statement, from a far country; but these cities are near at hand; their inhabitants, therefore, are not the people with whom we have covenanted, and ye have nothing to do to interfere with or prevent their destruction.” But he would not resort to any shifts or quibbles to elude the oath. Like the good man of the Psalmist, though he had sworn to his own hurt, he would not change. Having made a solemn compact, he would abide by it at all events. If he had now broken his covenant, the whole people of Canaan would have represented him as a violator of his engagements; it was therefore better to fulfil his agreement, however hasty and ill advised, than by departing from it to give occasion to the enemies of God to blaspheme. His answer takes it for granted that the sentiments of the people accorded with his own as to the solemn obligations now resting upon them. *May not touch them.*—May not hurt or injure them. For this sense of the word, see Gen. xxvi. 11. Ruth ii. 9. Job i. 11. Ps. cv. 15. Zech. ii. 8.

VER. 20. This we will do to them: we will even let them live, lest *wrath* be upon us, because of the oath which we swore unto them.

*r* See 2 Sam. xxi. 1, 2, 6. Ezek. xvii. 13, 15, 18, 19. Zech. v. 3, 4. Mal. iii. 5.

VER. 21. And the princes said unto them, Let them live; but let them be *hewers* of wood, and *drawers* of water unto all the congregation; as the princes had *promised* them.

*s* Deut. xxix. 11. *t* Ver. 15.

*And the princes said unto them.*—Rather, “said concerning them,” as the original for “unto” often signifies. See on Gen. xx. 2. *Let them be hewers of wood and drawers of water unto all the congregation.*—Let them be taken at their own word, ver. 8, and made public servants, to be employed in the most menial offices and drudgeries which the service of the sanctuary might require. The

expression is proverbial for the lowest and most servile employments, of whatever kind. (Deut. xxix. 11.) *Unto all the congregation.*—To all the congregation considered as one great worshipping body, whose religious rites were concentrated at one place, and not to all the several families in their private capacity, as residing in their tents. They were to be made public and not private servants. *According as the princes had promised them.*—Rather, Heb. “had purposed, ordained, fixed upon concerning them;” that is, in a previous consultation. The whole verse, however, as it stands in the original, is exceedingly intricate, and commentators are very much divided as to its true construction. It would seem from the next verse that nothing had as yet been said directly to the Gibeonites.

VER. 22. And Joshua called for them, and he spake unto them saying, Wherefore have ye beguiled us, saying, “We are very far from you: when <sup>a</sup>ye dwell among us?”  
a Ver. 6, 9. z Ver. 16.

*Wherefore have ye beguiled us?*—The mode of their treatment having been previously resolved upon in a council of the elders or princes of the nation, Joshua now summons them into his presence, and acquaints them with the result. “He does not load them with ill names, does not give them any harsh provoking language, does not call them, as they deserved to be called, base liars, but only asks them, ‘Why have ye beguiled us?’ Under the greatest provocations it is our wisdom and duty to keep our temper and to bridle our passion; a just cause needs not anger to defend it, and a bad one is made never the better by it.”—*Henry.*

VER. 23. Now therefore ye are <sup>b</sup>cursed, and there shall none of you be freed from being bondmen, and <sup>c</sup>hewers of wood and drawers of water for the house of my God.  
y Gen. ix. 25. z Ver. 21, 27.

*Now therefore ye are cursed.*—Ye shall be subjected to a severe calamity. Ye shall pay a bitter penalty for your deception. Ye shall subject yourselves and your children to the curse of a degrading bondage, and thereby shall the ancient denunciation against your ancestor be fulfilled,—“Cursed be Canaan, a servant of servants shall he be.” Had they dealt fairly and ingenuously with Israel, their lives would no doubt have been spared on more favourable and honourable terms. As it was, however, it cannot be doubted that their punishment was overruled and turned to a signal blessing to them. They were hereby brought into a situation where they would naturally acquire the knowledge of the true God and of his revealed will, were made to dwell in the courts of the Lord’s house, were honoured with near access to him in the services of the sanctuary, and thus placed in circumstances eminently favourable to their spiritual and eternal interests. If David could say, “I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness,” surely these poor benighted heathen may well have esteemed their lot a blessing,

hard and toilsome and humble as it was. They are supposed to have been afterwards called Nethinim, *i. e.* persons given, dedicated, consecrated to the service of the sanctuary, and the assistance of the Levites. See ver. 27. 1 Chron. ix. 2. *There shall none of you be freed from being bondmen.*—Heb. “there shall not be cut off from you a servant;” *i. e.* the line of servitude shall be kept up; a sentence by which the bondage imposed upon them should be entailed upon their posterity. Mr. Harmer undertakes to show from Shaw and other travellers, that these were the employments of females in the East, and that consequently the bitterness of their doom consisted not so much in being subjected to a laborious service, as in being degraded from the characteristic employments of men to those of women. There may be some force in this remark as applied to domestic civil life, but here the case is different; it is certain that these menial services, if they had not been performed by the Gibeonites, would have devolved upon the Israelites, and that too upon the men and not the women of the congregation, for only males were employed about the sanctuary. *For the house of my God.*—Spoken primarily of the tabernacle which was at that time the seat of worship, but with an ulterior reference to the temple which should be afterwards erected.

VER. 24. And they answered Joshua, and said, Because it was certainly told thy servants, how that the LORD thy God <sup>a</sup>commanded his servant Moses to give you all the land, and to destroy all the inhabitants of the land from before you, therefore <sup>b</sup>we were sore afraid of our lives because of you, and have done this thing.

a Exod. xxiii. 32. Dent. vii. 1, 2. b Exod. xv. 14.

*And they answered, &c.*—The words in which they make reply are well weighed. It is a delicate and very cogent appeal to the humanity and piety of Israel. They offer the best excuse for themselves which their conduct would admit. They attempt not to justify their prevarication, but in effect beg pardon for it; pleading that it was purely to save their lives that they had recourse to it. No one who feels the force of the law of self-preservation but must make great allowances for them, especially as they were not prompted by the fear of man, but of God himself, whom nothing can resist.

VER. 25. And now, behold, we are <sup>c</sup>in thy hand: as it seemeth good and right unto thee to do unto us, do.

c Gen. xvi. 6.

*We are in thine hand.*—In thy power, at thy disposal, having nothing more to say for ourselves. *As it seemeth good and right unto thee, do.*—Whatever justice and mercy dictate to thee to do unto us, that perform. They expect justice because they deceived the Israelites; yet they hope for mercy because they were driven to this expedient for fear of losing their lives. This willing submission of the Gibeonites may be improved by

us. They accounted it no great matter to cede their cities, and to spend their days in servitude, seeing God had spared their lives. And shall we think much of sacrificing any temporal interests, or of performing any self-denying duties, when we have reason to think that God has spared the life of our souls? If we look for mercy at the hands of Jesus, all that we have and are must be the Lord's. We must be willing to be any thing and do any thing that he appoints for us.

VER. 26. And so did he unto them, and delivered them out of the hand of the children of Israel, that they slew them not.

*And so did he unto them.*—That is, he dealt with them according to justice and mercy; he delivered them out of the hands of the people, who would fain have slain them, and yet he doomed them to servitude as a just retribution for their offence.

VER. 27. And Joshua made them that day hewers of wood and drawers of water for the congregation, and for the altar of the LORD, even unto this day, in the place which he should choose.

*d* Ver. 21, 23.

*e* Deut. xii. 5.

*And Joshua made them, &c.*—Heb. נתתם יתנתם *yittenam*, "gave them," whence the epithet נתתים *nethinim*, "given," Lat. *deditii* or *deodati*, applied to them. (Ezra ii. 43—58; viii. 20. Neh. iii. 26. See on ver. 21.) *In the place which he should choose.*—That is, the place which he should choose for his sanctuary, whether it were the tabernacle or temple; for here were their services more especially, though not exclusively, to be bestowed. They were not to keep possession of their cities, for we afterwards find that three of them fell to the lot of Benjamin, and one to that of Judah; nor were they to be at their own disposal, but were most of them probably dispersed through the cities of the priests and Levites, and came up with them in their courses to serve at the altar, out of the revenues of which they were doubtless maintained.

## CHAPTER X.

VER. 1. Now it came to pass, when Adoni-zedek king of Jerusalem had heard how Joshua had taken Ai, and had utterly destroyed it; <sup>a</sup> as he had done to Jericho and her king, so he had done to <sup>b</sup> Ai and her king; and <sup>c</sup> how the inhabitants of Gibeon had made peace with Israel, and were among them;

*a* Chap. vi. 21. *b* Chap. viii. 22, 26, 28. *c* Chap. ix. 15.

*Adoni zedek.*—This name, signifying "lord of righteousness," is very nearly akin to that of Melchizedek, "king of righteousness," who reigned at the same place upwards of four hundred years before. He might have been a descendant as well as successor of this distinguished

personage, or the name, in one form or the other, may have been common, like Pharaoh in Egypt, or Abimelech in Gerar, to the royal line. How the epithet "righteous" came to be connected with the title of the kings of this remarkable city it is not possible now to determine. Viewed in connexion with its subsequent history, it must be regarded as not a little remarkable, though from the case of this individual it does not appear to have been always a true index of the character of him who bore it. *King of Jerusalem.*—The name Jerusalem here occurs for the first time in the Scriptures. The original designation of the city seems to have been Salem, (Gen. xiv. 18. Psal. lxxvi. 2,) as it was called in the time of Melchizedek, though whether he were its founder is altogether uncertain. It was afterwards called ירושלים *yerushalayim*, "Jerusalem," a name supposed to be compounded of ירו *yiru*, (from ראו *ra'u* "to see") and שלום *shalom*, "peace," and signifying "vision of peace," or more literally, "they shall see peace," in prophetic allusion to the gospel of peace which was afterwards to issue from thence. Reland, Schultens, and others, it is true, derive it from ירוש *yerush* and שלום *shalom*, "possession of peace," but we prefer the former, and are not unwilling to believe, with Masius, that the name carries in it a latent reference to the incident mentioned, and the words employed, (Gen. xxii. 14,) "And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen." The Hebrew יירח *yirah* or *jirah* seems to have been affixed to the ancient denomination Salem, and thus to have formed the word Jerusalem, mystically pointing to the vision of peace which Abraham saw in the future sacrifice that was to be offered up in the latter day on that same memorable mount or in its immediate vicinity. Moriah, one of the mountains of Jerusalem, signifying "vision of God," is derived from the same root, and was probably so called for the same reason. After coming into the possession of the Jebusites it was occasionally called Jebus, (Josh. xviii. 28. Judg. xix. 10, 11,) from the inhabitants, but it seems never to have been familiarly known by that appellation among the Israelites. It was doubtless overruled in Providence that a name should be bestowed on the place pre-intimating the nature of the glorious events by which it was afterwards to be distinguished. *Had utterly destroyed.*—Heb. "had made a curse, had devoted."

*Were among them.*—Had made alliance with them, had come over to their interest, had put themselves under their protection, and so were entitled henceforth to dwell together with them in the country, without being exterminated or disturbed.

VER. 2. That they <sup>a</sup> feared greatly, because Gibeon <sup>b</sup> was a great city, as one of the royal cities, and because it <sup>c</sup> was greater than Ai, and all the men thereof <sup>d</sup> were mighty.

*d* Exod. xv. 14—16. Deut. xi. 25.

*That they feared greatly.*—He and his people; from which it appears, that under the term "king," in the preceding verse, we are to understand also the people whom he represented.

*As one of the royal cities.*—Heb. “as one of the cities of the kingdom.” Not that it was actually a royal city, the seat of a king, but it was like one, being a capital city, and having others subordinate to it, (chap. ix. 7.) It was great, well inhabited, and well fortified, after the manner of those cities which served for royal residences. But they were undoubtedly a small but powerful republic, governed by elders, as we hear nothing here or elsewhere of their having a king. See on chap. ix. 3.

VER. 3. Wherefore Adoni-zedek king of Jerusalem sent unto Hoham king of Hebron, and unto Piram king of Jarmuth, and unto Japhia king of Lachish, and unto Debir king of Eglon, saying,

*Wherefore Adoni-zedek sent.*—Because he was most exposed to danger, Jerusalem being only six miles from Gibeon, and midway between that and the camp at Gilgal, and because also he might have possessed some degree of precedency over the other kings mentioned.

VER. 4. Come up unto me, and help me, that we may smite Gibeon: for it hath made peace with Joshua and with the children of Israel.

*e* Ver. 1. Chap. ix. 15.

*That we may smite Gibeon.*—That is, the Gibeonites. It is very conceivable that Adoni-zedek and his associates may have been glad of a plausible pretext for attacking the Gibeonites, as their more liberal form of government was a standing rebuke of the despotism that prevailed among themselves. But their avowed motive undoubtedly was to punish the citizens of Gibeon for making peace with Joshua, as if they had thereby acted the part of traitors to the country, and greatly strengthened the common enemy. In this incident we see what usually takes place when any of the enemies of Christ submit themselves to him. Their former friends and companions consider them as deserters from their standard, and are often bitterly exasperated against them. “He that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey.” Or if their opposition does not amount to actual enmity, it will at least show itself in a way of contempt and ridicule. Satan too is indignant at losing one of his vassals, and not only stimulates his subjects to commence hostilities against them, but labours by all possible wiles and devices to bring them back again to their former bondage. There is the same enmity existing against the cause of Christ now as ever. Earth and hell will still combine against his church, and every one that enters into covenant with him will, like the Gibeonites, have a powerful confederacy to contend with.

VER. 5. Therefore the five kings of the Amorites, the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, the king of Eglon, gathered themselves together, and went up, they and all their hosts,

and encamped before Gibeon, and made war against it.

*f* Chap. ix. 2

*The five kings of the Amorites.*—The name of this people is often taken in a large sense for that of the Canaanites generally, or any one of them, doubtless from their being the most powerful of the distinct tribes that inhabited the country. Strictly speaking, the people of Hebron were Hittites, (chap. xi. 19,) and those of Jerusalem, Jebusites, (chap. xv. 63;) and in one place, (2 Sam. xxi. 2,) the Gibeonites themselves, though generally termed Hivites, are said to be “of the remnant of the Amorites.” The probability is, that the Amorites, being a numerous and powerful people in the Moabish territory, sent out colonies to these several places, which having subdued the original inhabitants, communicated their own name very extensively over the country. *Made war against it.*—Put themselves in a warlike attitude, made ready for an assault, were on the eve of attacking them.

VER. 6. And the men of Gibeon sent unto Joshua to the camp to Gilgal, saying, Slack not thy hand from thy servants; come up to us quickly, and save us, and help us; for all the kings of the Amorites that dwell in the mountains are gathered together against us.

*g* Chap. v. 10; ix. 6.

*Sent unto Joshua.*—They trusted to the compassion, the nobleness, the generosity, if not the justice, of their new ally. They doubted not that he would consider himself bound in honour and conscience to succour and defend them, although it may not have been expressly stipulated for in the articles of the treaty. It was because of their confidence in Israel, and their having thrown themselves entirely upon their protection, that they were now marked out as objects of the vengeance of their enemies: and to whom should they go in their extremity, but to these their natural defenders? So when the powers of darkness, like mighty Amorites, assail the children of God, to whom shall they betake themselves but to Christ, their true Joshua? It is when we are encompassed with evils, that we feel the value of that covenant into which we have entered with him. If we attempt to resist our enemies in our own strength, we shall infallibly be vanquished; but if we betake ourselves to the Captain of our salvation by fervent prayer, we cannot but succeed. *Slack not thy hand from thy servants.*—Do not leave them to the fate which threatens them, put forth vigorous efforts for their deliverance, relax not the hold which thou hast by covenant taken of them. See on chap. i. 5. *That dwell in the mountains.*—Heb. “dwellers or inhabitants of the mountain;” *i. e.* of the mountainous regions. The allusion is to the tract lying to the south-west of Jerusalem, called “the hill country,” (Luke i. 39, 65,) in which were situated the four cities mentioned above, ver. 5.

VER. 7. So Joshua ascended from Gilgal, he,

and <sup>a</sup> all the people of war with him, and all the mighty men of valour.

<sup>b</sup> Chap. viii. 1.

*And all the mighty men of valour.*—Rather, “even all the mighty men of valour;” so the particle translated “and” is used in thousands of instances, and it is not easy to suppose that “all the people of war,” and “all the mighty men of valour,” constituted two separate portions of the host. The meaning is simply that he went up with an army of picked men, men of approved valour and tried skill, to defend the Gibeonites, their new allies, against their invaders. A sufficient force would of course be left to guard the camp at Gilgal. Instead of taking any advantage of the mere letter of their compact, and saying that they never promised to run the hazard of their own lives to save theirs, he nobly acts on its spirit, and resolves that they shall be no losers by the confidence they have reposed in him; that they shall not suffer by any calamity which he can avert. “To a good mind the strongest obligation is another’s trust; and even permission in those things we may remedy, makes us no less actors, than consent. We are guilty of all the evil we might have hindered.”—*Bp. Hall.*

VER. 8. And the LORD said unto Joshua, <sup>i</sup> Fear them not: for I have delivered them into thy hand; <sup>k</sup> there shall not a man of them stand before thee.

<sup>i</sup> Chap. xi. 6. Judg. iv. 14. <sup>k</sup> Chap. i. 5.

*And the Lord said unto Joshua.*—More correctly, “for the Lord had said;” as we cannot suppose that Joshua undertook this expedition before he had sought counsel of God, and received the encouragement contained in the ensuing words. Without some such encouragement as this, Joshua might have thought that this formidable host was sent against him and his new allies, as a judgment upon him for negotiating an unlawful treaty. The verse properly falls into a parenthesis. *I have delivered them into thy hand.*—The usual form of speech to express the absolute certainty of a future event.

VER. 9. Joshua therefore came unto them suddenly, and went up from Gilgal all night.

*Went up from Gilgal all night.*—The distance from Gilgal to Gideon was about twenty-six miles. By a forced march this distance might have been accomplished in one night; but the words do not necessarily restrict us to this period of time. They imply only that he travelled all night, to which, if we please, we may add part of the preceding or of the following day. The clause quoted reads somewhat awkwardly as it now stands, from its seeming to put the march after the arrival. By omitting the word “and,” which does not occur in the original, and enclosing the remainder in a parenthesis, (“he had gone up from Gilgal all night,”) every thing is made plain. Though he had received the positive assurance of a victory, yet he neglects no prudent

means of effecting it, and therefore adopting a military stratagem, comes upon them by surprise. “God’s promises are not intended to slacken or supersede, but to quicken and encourage our own endeavours.”—*Henry.*

VER. 10. And the LORD <sup>i</sup> discomfited them before Israel, and slew them with a great slaughter at Gibeon, and chased them along the way that goeth up <sup>m</sup> to Beth-horon, and smote them to <sup>n</sup> Azekah, and unto Makkedah.

<sup>i</sup> Judg. iv. 15. 1 Sam. vii. 10, 12. Ps. xviii. 14. Isa. xxviii. 21. <sup>m</sup> Chap. xvi. 3, 5. <sup>n</sup> Chap. xv. 35.

*The Lord discomfited them.*—Or, Heb. “struck with dismay, confounded.” It is the word employed Ex. xxiii. 27, in describing the effect that should be produced by divine power upon the enemies of Israel, though there rendered less accurately, “destroy.” It occurs also Ps. cxliv. 6. 2 Chron. xv. 6. *And slew them with a great slaughter.*—Or, “he slew them,” *i. e.* Israel slew them. In consequence of the panic into which the Lord had thrown them, his people were enabled to effect a great slaughter. The direct work of God on the occasion appears to be described ver. 11. *At Gibeon.*—Heb. “in Gibeon;” not in the city, but in the adjoining territory or domain called by the same name, as Joshua is said, chap. v. 13, to be in Jericho, when he was merely in the immediate vicinity. *Beth-horon.*—The tribe of Ephraim contained two places of this name, the upper and the lower. The latter is here probably referred to, which lay twelve or fifteen miles to the north-west of Jerusalem, and where Dr. Clarke says there is now an Arab village called Bethoor. *Azekah.*—A city of Judah, situated about twelve miles west from Jerusalem. Eusebius and Jerome inform us that there was a town in their time about this place named Ezeca, which was probably the same with the ancient Azekah here mentioned. *Makkedah.*—This place was also in the tribe of Judah, about fourteen miles south-west of Jerusalem.

VER. 11. And it came to pass, as they fled from before Israel, and were in the going down to Beth-horon, <sup>o</sup> that the LORD cast down great stones from heaven upon them unto Azekah, and they died: *they were* more which died with hailstones than *they* whom the children of Israel slew with the sword.

<sup>o</sup> Ps. xviii. 13, 14; lxxvii. 17. Isa. xxx. 30. Rev. xvi. 21.

*The Lord cast down great stones from heaven upon them.*—That is, hailstones of an extraordinary size, and capable of doing dreadful execution in their fall from heaven. Some have indeed contended that stones, in the common acceptation of the word, or rather meteoric stones, are intended, and that such stones have actually fallen from the clouds, or from a greater height, is an incontestable fact. But there is no good reason to believe that any such phenomenon is alluded to here, for it is immediately added, as if to preclude any ground of mistake, that “they

were more which died with hailstones, than they whom the children of Israel slew with the sword." The Septuagint in both places translates it by λιθος χαλαζης, "hailstones;" Josephus calls it "a violent tempest of hailstones of prodigious size;" and the author of Ecclesiasticus, chap. xlvi. 6, thus speaks of the event: "With hailstones of mighty power he made the battle to fall violently upon the nations, and in the descent of Bethoron he destroyed them that resisted." That God has, on other occasions, made use of hailstones to destroy both men and cattle, is clear from the instance of the plague of hail in Egypt, (Exod. ix. 18.) and in the predictions of Ezekiel against Gog, (xxxiii. 22.) the Most High is introduced as threatening that "he would plead against him with pestilence, and with blood, with an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire and brimstone." God himself, moreover, speaks to Job (xxviii. 22, 23) of treasures, or magazines, of snow and hail, which he has reserved for the day of battle and war. But although we have no doubt that a shower of hailstones is here intended, yet we are equally convinced that this shower, though natural in itself, was supernaturally employed on this occasion. They probably far exceeded the usual size, and it certainly indicates a miraculous interposition of providence, that they should have fallen at the very crisis when God promised to assist his people against their enemies, and that while in falling they slew multitudes of the fugitive Canaanites, they should not have harmed one of their pursuers! The following account of a similar phenomenon happening in our own times, is graphically described by one of our own countrymen, who was something more than an eyewitness of its effects. The letter is dated Constantinople, August, 1831. "We had got perhaps a mile and a half on our way, when a cloud rising in the west gave indications of an approaching rain. In a few minutes we discovered something falling from the heavens with a heavy splash, and of a whitish appearance. I could not conceive what it was, but observing some gulls near, I supposed it to be them darting for fish; but soon after discovered that they were large balls of ice falling. Immediately we heard a sound like rumbling thunder, or ten thousand carriages rolling furiously over the pavement. The whole Bosphorus was in a foam, as though heaven's artillery had been discharged upon us and our frail machine. Our fate seemed inevitable, our umbrellas were raised to protect us; the lumps of ice stripped them into ribands. We fortunately had a bullock's hide in the boat, under which we crawled and saved ourselves from farther injury. One man, of the three oarsmen, had his hand literally smashed; another much injured in the shoulder; Mr. H. received a severe blow in the leg; my right hand was somewhat disabled, and all more or less injured. A small kaick accompanied with my two servants. They were both disabled, and are now in bed with their wounds; the kaick was terribly bruised. It was the most awful and terrific scene that I ever witnessed, and God forbid that I should be ever exposed to such another. Balls of ice, as large as my two fists, fell into the boat, and some of them came with such violence as certainly to have

broken an arm or leg had they struck us in those parts. One of them struck the blade of an oar and split it. The scene lasted, perhaps, five minutes; but it was five minutes of the most awful feeling that I ever experienced. When it passed over we found the surrounding hills covered with masses of ice, I cannot call it hail; the trees stripped of their leaves and limbs, and every thing looked desolate. We proceeded on our course, however, and arrived at our destination, drenched and awe-struck. The ruin had not extended so far as Candalic, and it was difficult to make them comprehend the cause of the nervous and agitated condition in which we arrived; the Reis Effendi asked me if I was ever so agitated when in action? I answered no, for then I had something to excite me, and human means only to oppose. He asked the minister if he ever was so affected in a gale of wind at sea? He answered no, for then he could exercise his skill to disarm or render harmless the elements. He asked him why he should be affected now? He replied, "From the awful idea of being crushed to death by the hand of God with stones from heaven, when resistance would be vain, and where it would be impious to be brave." He clasped his hands, raised his eyes to heaven, and exclaimed, "God is great!" Up to this hour, late in the afternoon, I have not recovered my composure; my nerves are so affected as scarcely to be able to hold my pen, or communicate my ideas. The scene was awful beyond all description. I have witnessed repeated earthquakes: the lightning has played as it were about my head; the wind roared, and the waves have at one moment thrown me to the sky, and the next have sunk me into a deep abyss. I have been in action, and seen death and destruction around me in every shape of horror; but I never before had the feeling of awe which seized upon me on this occasion, and still haunts, and I feel will ever haunt me. I returned to the beautiful village of Buyuudere. The sun was out in all its splendour, at a distance all looked smiling and charming, but a nearer approach discovered roofs covered with workmen repairing the broken tiles, desolated vineyards, and shattered windows. My porter, the boldest of my family, who had ventured an instant from the door, had been knocked down by a hailstone, and had they not dragged him in by the heels, would have been battered to death. Of a flock of geese in front of our house, six were killed, and the rest dreadfully mangled. Two boatmen were killed in the upper part of the village, and I have heard of broken bones in abundance. Many of the thick brick tiles, with which my roof is covered, are smashed to atoms, and my house was inundated by the rain that succeeded this visitation. It is impossible to convey an idea of what it was. Imagine to yourself, however, the heavens suddenly froze over, and as suddenly broken to pieces in irregular masses, of from half a pound to a pound weight, and precipitated to the earth. My own servants weighed several pieces of three quarters of a pound; and many were found by others of upwards of a pound. There were many which fell around the boat in which I was, that appeared to me to be as large as the swell of a large size water decanter. You may think this romance. I refer

to the bearer of this letter, who was with me, and witnessed the scene, for the truth of every word it contains."—*Com. Porter's Letters from Constantinople and its Environs*, vol. i. p. 44.

VER. 12. Then spake Joshua to the Lord in the day when the Lord delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, *☉* Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of *☾* Aja-lon.

*☉* Isa. xxviii. 21. Hab. iii. 11. *☾* Judg. xii. 12.

*Then spake Joshua to the Lord.*—That is, before, in the presence of, having a reference to. There is nothing said of a direct address to Jehovah, though we cannot doubt that such an one was made on the occasion, but the address here mentioned was to the sun and moon. The phraseology in the original is not that which is usually employed to intimate a direct address whether in prayer or otherwise from one person to another. Instead of *אל יי* to Jehovah, it is *יי* properly importing, before Jehovah or in reference to him. It is a similar mode of expression to that employed by Paul, (1 Cor. xiv. 2,) "He that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men but unto God;" *i. e.* not directly to God, but so that God understands him, God takes cognizance of what he says. (2 Cor. v. 13,) "For whether we be beside ourselves it is to God," *i. e.* in reference to God, he is the ultimate object of it. So here Joshua's speaking was not directly to God, but there was a union between his spirit and the Spirit of God in his speaking, and he had all along a believing reference to God. (See on ver. 14.) Seeing the day far spent, Joshua feared that he might not have time to complete the victory which he had so auspiciously begun, and being suddenly prompted from above, and inspired with divine confidence, he commanded, in the name of Jehovah, the occurrence of a stupendous miracle in order to prolong the day till the destruction of his enemies was completely effected! *He said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still, &c.*—Or, Heb. "he said, In the sight of Israel, Sun, be thou silent in Gibeon." The verb in the original, generally rendered cease, rest, be still, keep silence, properly implies cessation from action or noise, rather than from motion, and is perhaps most frequently used metaphorically to signify a silent submissive frame of spirit, a subdued, patient, expectant attitude of soul, like that of the Psalmist when he says, (Psal. lxii. 1,) using this very word, "Truly my soul waiteth upon (Heb. is silent to) God." See also 1 Sam. xiv. 9. Psal. iv. 4; xxxvii. 7. Isa. xxiii. 2. It is usually spoken of an intelligent agent, and as the import of the Heb. word for sun, is servant or minister, it is used with great propriety here as expressive of the command of a master to a servant to pause, to rest, in his routine of service, and to assume a still, quiet, patient posture, indicative of the most entire subjection, and as if waiting for further orders. Such is the genuine force of the original, which cannot perhaps be fully expressed in any version.—The phrase "in Gibeon" means, in this connexion, over

Gibeon, implying that Joshua looked off to a distance and saw the sun apparently standing over the city or cities of Gibeon.—As to the nature of the miracle itself, on which much has been written, it may be remarked, (1.) That the Scriptures generally speak in popular and not in scientific language; that they describe the things of the natural world, not according to strict philosophic truth, but according to appearance and common apprehension. Thus they speak of the sun's rising and setting, of the ends of the earth, of passing from one end of heaven to another, &c. Indeed, it was only in this way that Joshua could have conveyed any clear idea to the people of what he intended to express by the command. Had he uttered the words, "Earth, stand thou still upon thine axis," they would have thought him absolutely distracted. He spake, therefore, in the common popular style adopted by philosophers themselves in ordinary discourse, and every one can see that this was obviously the proper mode. Nor can any one object to this diction in the sacred writers without virtually entering his protest against the every day language of all enlightened countries on the earth. Whether, therefore, the sun or the globe be supposed to have been arrested in its career on this occasion, is immaterial to the truth of the narrative, as the appearance, in each case, would be the same, and it is the appearance and not the reality which is described. (2.) Of the precise mode in which the miracle took place, two solutions may be given, though it must necessarily ever be impossible to determine positively which of them is the true one. The effect may have been owing to the actual cessation of the earth's motion round the sun. This, however, without an equally miraculous interference of the Almighty would have produced the most tremendous effects not only upon the globe itself, but perhaps upon the entire solar system and the equilibrium of the whole material universe. The natural consequence of such a sudden check in the course of the earth would have been, by means of the atmosphere, to crush at once all animal and vegetable existence, to level with the ground the most lofty and massive structures, and in fact to sweep the whole surface of the globe as with the besom of destruction. Yet the same power which was competent to stay the globe in its diurnal revolution, was equally competent to guard against any destructive consequences arising from it, and the miracle may have been wrought in the way now described. But the more probable explanation in our opinion is, that the phenomenon related was merely optical; that the rotatory motion of the earth was not disturbed; but that instead of this the light of the sun and moon was supernaturally prolonged by the operation of the same laws of refraction and reflection that ordinarily cause the sun to appear above the horizon when he is in reality below it. He who created the heavenly luminaries, and established the laws which regulate the transmission of light, may at this time have so influenced the medium through which the sun's rays passed as to render the sun's disk still visible long after the time when in ordinary circumstances it would have disappeared. This would

of course have had all the visible effect of actually bringing the earth to a pause in its revolution round its axis, and as this answers all the demands of the text we are not solicitous to seek any more satisfactory solution of the difficulty. *Thou moon in the valley of Ajalon.*—That is, over the valley of Ajalon. A city of Benjamin in the near neighbourhood of Gibeon, so near in fact, that what is here termed the valley of Ajalon seems, in Isa. xxviii. 24, in allusion to this event, to be called the valley of Gibeon. Junius and Temellius, for the most part extremely judicious commentators, understand the import of the command to be, that the sun should stay itself from setting over Gibeon, and the moon from rising or advancing over Ajalon, because the appearance of the moon is the signal for the coming on of night, which Joshua would now have to be delayed. Certain it is, that the light of the moon, even when seen, is of very little service while the sun is above the horizon, and as we suppose the sun itself to have been at this time near the horizon, we take this command to the moon to be introduced merely as a poetic ornament to make out the parallelism so common to the poetical style of the Hebrews. It is in fact doubtful whether the whole passage be not a quotation from the book of Jasher mentioned below, and whether that book were not a collection of national songs or lyric poems composed in praise of Joshua and other distinguished heroes and champions of Israel.

VER. 13. And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies. *Is not this written in the book of Jasher?* So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day.

† 2 Sam. i. 18.

*Written in the book of Jasher.*—Or, Heb. “the book of the upright;” *i. e.* perhaps, of eminently good and upright men, men distinguished at once for moral worth and military prowess. As this book is generally supposed to have long since perished, though affirmed by some of the Jews to be still in existence, it is impossible to determine with certainty what it was. Mention of it occurs again, (2 Sam. i. 18,) where David’s lamentation over Saul is said to be extracted from it. It was probably a collection of poems, or national ballads, celebrating the chief events of the wars of Israel and the praises of their most distinguished heroes. *In the midst of heaven.*—Heb. “in the division, or the half of the heavens;” *i. e.* above the horizon, where the upper is divided from the lower hemisphere of heaven. Some have supposed it to mean the same as “in the meridian of heaven;” but at that hour of the day how could the moon be visible, or how did Joshua know but he should have ample time, before sunset, to complete the victory? The other view is, therefore, we think, to be preferred. *Hasted not to go down about a whole day.*—Heb. “hasted not to go down” כִּי־לֹא־הָסִיף־לֵרְדֹתָ “as at the perfect day;” *i. e.* as it naturally does when the day is finished, when the ordinary space of a day has elapsed. This we conceive to be the true force of the original, though

aware that it requires one to be acquainted with the Hebrew in order to feel the force of the evidence in favour of such a rendering. Such a one, however, upon turning to the original of Exod. xxxi. 18. Deut. xvi. 6; xxiv. 13. Psal. lxxiii. 19, will find, if we mistake not, ample proof of the correctness of this interpretation. The meaning, as we understand it, is not, that the day was miraculously lengthened out to the extent of twelve hours, or another whole day, but simply that when the ordinary duration of a day was completed, the sun still delayed his setting, but for how long a time we are not informed; long enough, however, we may presume, for fully accomplishing the objects for which the miracle was granted.

VER. 14. And there was ‘no day like that before it, or after it, that the LORD hearkened unto the voice of a man: for ‘the LORD fought for Israel.

† See Is. xxxviii. 8. † Deut. i. 30. Ver. 42. Ch. xxlii. 3.

*That the Lord hearkened unto the voice of a man.*—That is, for such a purpose. Not that this was the first time that the prayers of a mortal had power with God, for those of Moses had often prevailed with him, but he had never before hearkened to the voice of man to alter so signally the course of nature, or to grant such an illustrious display of his power in behalf of his people. The passage imports that the command of Joshua was in effect, though not in form, a prayer to Jehovah for the performance of the miracle. In like manner, that which seems to have been uttered by Elijah, (1 Kings xvii. 1,) as a prophecy, is spoken of by James (chap. v. 17,) as a prayer. Probably no miracles were wrought by the ancient prophets or servants of God but in connexion with the most fervent “in-wrought” prayer. It is only by earnest prayer that we take hold of the strength of God. *For the Lord fought for Israel.*—This seems to be added as if in answer to the natural inquiry, “Why was such a miracle wrought on this occasion? To what was it owing that Israel was so favoured?” Because, says the writer, the Lord fought for them. He was engaged on their side; and it was in consequence of his purpose and his promise to befriend them, (ver. 8, 12,) that he graciously heard the prayer of Joshua.

VER. 15. \*And Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, unto the camp to Gilgal.

† Ver. 43.

*And Joshua returned to Gilgal.*—The occurrence of this verse in this place has occasioned great perplexity to commentators. As it is verbatim the same as the last verse of this chapter, and is wanting in some of the ancient versions, many have thought that it was inserted here by the error of some transcriber, and that the only way to obtain a correct view of the thread of the narrative is to neglect it altogether. It cannot, it is said, be supposed that Joshua should have broken off in the mid-career of his victory and just after the above-mentioned miracle, marched his army twenty or thirty miles to Gilgal, and

then have immediately returned again to the scene of action to complete the work of conquest. What could be the object of such a strange diversion of his forces at such a crisis? But we are inclined to consider it as inserted here merely by anticipation. The writer's drift is apparently to close the general account of the engagement described above by saying that when it was ended, Joshua and the Israelites returned to the camp; not however that this took place immediately; there were some additional incidents that occurred prior to that return, which were too important to be overlooked in the history, and which he here takes occasion to relate. This he does in the ensuing verses, (ver. 16—42,) after which he asserts again, in its proper place, the account of Joshua's return to the camp. The repetition of the words at the end of the chapter seems designed to correct the misapprehension that might arise, on reading them in their first connexion, as to the precise time to which they refer. This we regard as a safer solution of the difficulty than to suppose an error in the copyist, which in this instance seems to us improbable.

VER. 16. But these five kings fled, and hid themselves in a cave at Makkedah.

*In a cave at Makkedah.*—Heb. "in Makkedah;" that is in the vicinity of Makkedah, in the region adjoining the city, not in the city itself. See what is said above of the phrase, "in Jericho," (chap. v. 13,) and "in Gibeon," (chap. x. 10.) Compare too with this what is said Amos ix. 2—4, of the vain attempts of God's enemies to conceal themselves from his presence.

VER. 17. And it was told Joshua, saying, The five kings are found hid in a cave at Makkedah,

VER. 18. And Joshua said, Roll great stones upon the mouth of the cave, and set men by it for to keep them :

*Set men by it.*—Heb. "give men charge over it."

VER. 19. And stay ye not, but pursue after your enemies, and smite the hindmost of them; suffer them not to enter into their cities: for the LORD your God hath delivered them into your hand.

*Smite the hindmost of them.*—Heb. "cut off the tail," as the rear-guard of an army is called. The original term occurs once elsewhere, Deut. xxv. 1, 18. "Servants, dependents, or courtiers, in the East, always follow their superiors. Should one of them cease to serve or follow his master or patron, having gained his end, another on seeing this, says, "Where is your tail?"—"The tail has been long in my way, I have cut it off."—*Roberts.* Suffer them not to enter into their cities.—Where they would recover strength and renew the war. It seems however from the next verse that a few stragglers succeeded in getting refuge in these defended cities, but they were soon followed thither and destroyed.

VER. 20. And it came to pass, when Joshua and the children of Israel had made an end of slaying them with a very great slaughter, till they were consumed, that the rest which remained of them entered into fenced cities.

*When Joshua and the children of Israel.*—That is, Joshua by the children of Israel, by their agency. It is evident from ver. 21, that Joshua did not accompany them in person, but awaited their return at Makkedah. It is, however, entirely according to Scripture analogy to speak of that as done by a commander, which was done by the soldiers under his authority and control. The phrase may also be rendered, "Joshua, even the children of Israel."

VER. 21. And all the people returned to the camp to Joshua at Makkedah in peace: none moved his tongue against any of the children of Israel.

x Ex. xi. 7.

*All the people returned to the camp at Makkedah.*—That is, the whole detachment which Joshua had sent out to scour the country and cut off the remaining straggling Canaanites. Probably a temporary encampment had been formed here for the accommodation of the army after the victory, in consequence of the kings being imprisoned in a cave near it. *In peace.*—Safe and sound. (See Gen. xxviii. 21. Judg. viii. 9.) *None moved his tongue.*—That is, none of the Canaanites. They were struck dumb with astonishment; they were so utterly confounded by the display of supernatural power put forth in behalf of Israel, that they presumed not to breathe a whisper of insult or reproach. As the Israelites marched in triumph through their towns and villages, so far from venturing to lift a hand against them, they did not even open their lips. It is a proverbial expression, intimating a freedom from any kind of insult or molestation. "When a person speaks of the fear to which his enemy is reduced, he says, 'Ah! he dares not now to shake his tongue against me.' 'He hurt you! the fellow will not shake his tongue against you.'"—*Roberts.* See a similar mode of speech, Exod. xi. 7. The Chal. renders it, "There was no hurt or loss to Israel, for which any man should afflict his soul." Whether or no this be the sense of the words, such was no doubt the fact. When the army came to be reviewed after the battle, there was none slain, none wounded, none missing, not one Israelite had occasion to lament the loss of a friend or the loss of a limb. The original is very express that not one single Israelite was harmed either by word or weapon. So complete, so superhuman, so glorious was the victory.

VER. 22. Then said Joshua, Open the mouth of the cave, and bring out those five kings unto me out of the cave.

VER. 23. And they did so, and brought forth those five kings unto him out of the cave, the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the

king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, and the king of Eglon.

VER. 24. And it came to pass, when they brought out those kings unto Joshua, that Joshua called for all the men of Israel, and said unto the captains of the men of war which went with him, Come near, <sup>y</sup> put your feet upon the necks of these kings. And they came near, and put their feet upon the necks of them.

<sup>y</sup> Ps. cvil. 40; ex. 5; exlix. 8, 9. Isa. xxvi. 5, 6. Mal. iv. 3.

*All the men of Israel.*—Heb. “all the man or manhood of Israel,” i. e. all the men of war, the flower and prime of the army by whom the recent victory had been obtained. See on chap. ix. 6. *Put your feet upon the necks of these kings.*—Not as a personal insult to these kings, but symbolically, in token not only of the present complete victory, but of the absolute subjection to which all their adversaries would finally be reduced, as Joshua himself explains it in the next verse. “This in the East is a favourite way of triumphing over a fallen foe. When people are disputing, should one be a little pressed, and the other begin to triumph, the former will say, ‘I will tread upon thy neck, and after that beat thee.’ A low caste man insulting one who is high, is sure to hear some one say to the offended individual, ‘Put your feet on his neck.’”—*Roberts*. In like manner, we are also taught to regard our victories past as pledges of future and greater conquests.—The severity enjoined towards the vanquished kings, though abhorrent to our humane feelings, was right, because it was commanded, (Deut. xx. 16, 17,) and it was important that in doing the Lord’s work the Israelites should be taught the lesson elsewhere inculcated by the prophet, (Jer. iv. 8,) “Cursed be he that doeth the Lord’s work deceitfully; and cursed be he that keepeth back his sword from blood.” The act here mentioned was in fulfilment of the prediction (Deut. xxxiii. 29,) “Thou shalt tread upon their high places;” on which see note.

VER. 25. And Joshua said unto them, <sup>z</sup> Fear not, nor be dismayed; be strong and of good courage: for <sup>a</sup> thus shall the LORD do to all your enemies against whom ye fight.

<sup>z</sup> Deut. xxxi. 6, 8. Chap. i. 9.  
<sup>a</sup> Deut. iii. 21; vii. 19.

VER. 26. And afterward Joshua smote them, and slew them, and hanged them on five trees: and they <sup>b</sup> were hanging upon the trees until the evening.

<sup>b</sup> Chap. viii. 29.

*Hanged them on five trees, &c.*—See on chap. viii. 29.

VER. 27. And it came to pass at the time of the going down of the sun, that Joshua commanded, and they <sup>c</sup> took them down off the trees, and cast them into the cave wherein they had

been hid, and laid great stones in the cave’s mouth, which remain until this very day.

<sup>c</sup> Deut. xxi. 23. Chap. viii. 29.

*At the time of the going down of the sun.*—Whether this was on the evening of the day so miraculously lengthened out, or of the following, it is not perhaps possible to determine. Considering the space of time naturally requisite for the preceding events, we incline to the latter supposition. *Cast them into the cave.*—“That which they thought would have been their shelter, was made their prison first, and then their grave. So shall we be disappointed in that which we flee to from God; yet to good people the grave is still ‘a hiding-place,’” (Job xiv. 3.)—*Henry*. *Laid great stones in the cave’s mouth.*—Mainly, we presume, for the same reason that a similar monument was raised over the place where Achan was stoned and burnt, (chap. vii. 26;) to perpetuate the memory of the event in connexion with the disgrace and infamy of the culprits who suffered there. *Masius* remarks, without specifying his authority, that “those who have visited this region say, that the cave is still shown in a hill near Makkedah, its mouth being closed by a wall to preserve it as a monument.”

VER. 28. And that day Joshua took Makkedah, and smote it with the edge of the sword, and the king thereof he utterly destroyed, them, and all the souls that were therein; he let none remain: and he did to the king of Makkedah <sup>a</sup> as he did unto the king of Jericho.

<sup>a</sup> Chap. vi. 21.

*That day Joshua took Makkedah.*—The same day on which the kings were hung, and which we have already remarked was probably the day subsequent to that on which the sun stood still. Yet it is possible that the sense may be, that about that time—not on the identical day—he took the city of Makkedah. It might have been a day or two later. *The king thereof he utterly destroyed.*—Heb. “devoted, made a curse.” *All the souls.*—That is, all the people, men, women, and children; for it would appear from chap. xi. 14, that the cattle and spoils were given to the conquerors. *As he did unto the king of Jericho.*—How he had dealt with this king we are not expressly informed. Probably he had been first slain, and then hanged up, as was the king of Ai, and the five kings here mentioned.

VER. 29. Then Joshua passed from Makkedah, and all Israel with him, unto Libnah, and fought against Libnah:

VER. 30. And the LORD delivered it also, and the king thereof, into the hand of Israel; and he smote it with the edge of the sword, and all the souls that were therein; he let none remain in it; but did unto the king thereof as he did unto the king of Jericho.

*And all Israel with him.*—That is, all of Israel that had been engaged with him in this late expedition. *Unto Libnah.*—A city in the tribe of

Judah, near its western border, not far from Makkedah, about twelve miles west or south-west from Jerusalem. It was afterwards given to the priests, (chap. xxi. 13.) Even its ruins have now disappeared.

VER. 31. And Joshua passed from Libnah, and all Israel with him, unto Lachish, and encamped against it, and fought against it:

*Unto Lachish.*—Situated a few miles directly south of Libnah, near the western limits of Judah. It was probably a strongly fortified place, as Joshua could not take it till the second day, and Sennacherib afterwards was obliged to "raise the siege." (2 Kings xix. 8. Isa. xxxvii. 8.) Nothing is here said of the king of Lachish, as he was one of the five who had been executed before.

VER. 32. And the LORD delivered Lachish into the hand of Israel, which took it on the second day, and smote it with the edge of the sword, and all the souls that were therein, according to all that he had done to Libnah.

VER. 33. Then Horem king of Gezer came up to help Lachish; and Joshua smote him and his people, until he had left him none remaining.

*Horem king of Gezer.*—There was a city of this name in the tribe of Ephraim, twenty miles south-west of Jerusalem. (Chap. xvi. 3, 10. Judges i. 19.) But this seems too remote from the scene of action. The probability is, that it was some place in the tribe of Judah but little distant from Lachish, the king of which, either as an ally of the king of Lachish, or for his own security, offered to aid in resisting the further progress of Joshua. "Thus wicked men are often snared in their counsels, and by opposing God in the way of his judgments, bring them sooner upon their own heads."

VER. 34. And from Lachish Joshua passed unto Eglon, and all Israel with him; and they encamped against it, and fought against it:

*Unto Eglon.*—Another city of Judah, near to Lachish, and fifteen miles from Jerusalem. See map.

VER. 35. And they took it on that day, and smote it with the edge of the sword, and all the souls that were therein he utterly destroyed that day, according to all that he had done to Lachish.

*Took it on that day.*—The same day on which they encamped against it.

VER. 36. And Joshua went up from Eglon, and all Israel with him, unto Hebron; and they fought against it:

*e* See chap. xiv. 13; xv. 13. Judg. i. 10.

VER. 37. And they took it, and smote it with the edge of the sword, and the king thereof, and all the cities thereof, and all the souls that were therein; he left none remaining, according to all that he had done to Eglon; but destroyed it utterly, and all the souls that were therein.

*Unto Hebron—and the king thereof.*—Probably a successor to him who had been slain and hanged before, (ver. 23, 26.) The rank which this city evidently held among its sister cities doubtless made it important that, in such a crisis as the present, a new head should be immediately appointed.—Though now taken, the city of Hebron seems afterwards to have fallen back into the hands of the Canaanites, which made it necessary for Caleb to take it a second time as related, chap. xv. 14. (Judges i. 10.) The case appears to have been the same in regard to some other of the places captured on this occasion. (Judges i. 11—13.) The reason of it was, that Joshua, in his rapid conquests, contented himself with taking, demolishing, and burning those cities, but did not garrison any of them for fear of weakening his army. The scattered Canaanites in several instances no doubt took advantage of this, and returned, re-peopled, and put in a state of defence, the cities from which they had been expelled. Hence the Israelites were obliged to conquer them a second time. So the Christian in his spiritual warfare finds it as much as he can do to keep possession of the ground which he has once gained. His old enemies are incessantly returning upon him. His battles must be fought and his victories achieved anew. The lusts which appeared to be slain, are ever and anon giving signs that they still live; and are intent upon regaining their former ascendancy. This makes it dangerous to remit our activity for a single hour. Constant vigilance is the grand condition of final triumph. *All the cities thereof.*—The cities subject to its jurisdiction and dependent upon it; so that Hebron was properly speaking a metropolis, *i. e.* a mother city. Such too was Gibcon, spoken of above. (Ver. 2. chap. ix. 17.)

VER. 38. And Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, to Debir; and fought against it:

*f* See chap. xv. 15. Judg. i. 11.

*And Joshua returned.*—That is, turned his course, began to march in a new direction. It is not implied that he had been at Debir before; but that having now advanced to the south-west as far as he thought fit, even as far as Gaza, (ver. 41,) he turned and directed his course towards Gilgal, lying to the north-east, and fell upon Debir on his way. This city was in the tribe of Judah, about thirty miles south-west of Jerusalem, and ten miles west of Hebron. It was also called Kirjath-Sepher, (chap. xv. 15,) and Kirjath-Sannah, (chap. xv. 19,) perhaps from its being one of the seats of learning among the Canaanites; the name Kirjath-Sepher signifying the city of books or of letters. The Canaanites having subsequently retaken it, Caleb, to whom

it fell by lot, gave his daughter Achsah in marriage to Othniel for his bravery in having carried it by storm, (chap. xv. 16.) It was afterwards given to the priests, (chap. xxi. 15.) but no trace of it is to be found at the present time.

VER. 39. And he took it, and the king thereof, and all the cities thereof; and they smote them with the edge of the sword, and utterly destroyed all the souls that were therein; he left none remaining: as he had done to Hebron, so he did to Debir, and to the king thereof; as he had done also to Libnah, and to her king.

VER. 40. So Joshua smote all the country of the hills, and of the south, and of the vale, and of the springs, and all their kings: he left none remaining, but utterly destroyed all that breathed, as the LORD God of Israel  $\epsilon$  commanded.

*Smote all the country of the hills.*—Overrun as a conqueror, subdued and took possession of all the southern section of Canaan, familiarly known by the appellation of "Habar," *i. e.* the hill country, which subsequently fell to the lot of Judah. Of this mountainous region Burekhardt says, the whole country between Tekoa and Hebron is finer and better cultivated than in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem; while the sides of the hills, instead of being naked and dreary, are richly studded with the oak, the arbutus, the Scotch fir, and a variety of flowering shrubs. Of the hitherto unknown tract south of Hebron, Bankes, Legh, Irby, and Mangles inform us that three days to the south of Hebron, they passed towards the Dead Sea, through a country well cultivated, but extremely uninteresting: eight or nine miles beyond Kerek they found themselves on the borders of an extensive desert, entirely abandoned to the wandering Bedouins. A tribe of Jellaheen Arabs here told them, that in years of scarcity they were accustomed to retire into Egypt. The same necessity compelled Jacob to the same expedient: and the custom seems handed down from the patriarchs. See *Russell's Palestine. Of the south.*—That is, of Canaan. The southern part of the tribe of Judah and Idumea were designated by the general term, the south. (Gen. xx. 1.) *Of the vale.*—Heb. "the low country," *i. e.* the level champaign on the Mediterranean sea, extending from Joppa to the borders of Egypt. (Deut. i. 7. Judges. i. 9. Jer. xvii. 26.) *The springs.*—Heb. "the descents," *i. e.* probably the slopes or declivities of mountains, tracts formed by the washing down of the mountains, and so capable of cultivation. See Numb. xxi. 15. Deut. iii. 17. *Destroyed all that breathed.*—That is, of mankind; for they kept the cattle for spoil.

VER. 41. And Joshua smote them from Kadesh-barnea even unto  $\delta$  Gaza,  $\epsilon$  and all the country of Goshen, even unto Gibeon.

$g$  Deut. xx. 16, 17.  $h$  Gen. x. 19.  $\delta$  chap. xi. 16.

*All the country of Goshen.*—Not the country of that name in Egypt, the former residence of the Hebrews, but a place so called in Judah, fourteen miles south of Hebron, (chap. xi. 16; xv. 51.)

VER. 42. And all these kings and their land did Joshua take at one time;  $\delta$  because the LORD God of Israel fought for Israel.

$h$  Ver. 14.

*At one time.*—Heb. "at one turn, or one stroke;" *i. e.* in one uninterrupted course of vigorous action; or, as we should say, in one campaign. The leading idea is, that from the time Joshua entered upon this career of victories till it was closed there was no pause, no intermission, no cessation. *Because the Lord fought for Israel.*—This clause is introduced in order to give credibility to the foregoing narrative. Viewed in any other light than as the result of omnipotence, such a tide of victories would naturally stagger all belief.

VER. 43. And Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, unto the camp to Gilgal.

## CHAPTER XI.

VER. 1. AND it came to pass, when Jabin king of Hazor had heard *those things*, that he  $\epsilon$  sent to Jobab king of Madon, and to the king  $\delta$  of Shimron, and to the king of Achshaph.

$a$  Chap. x. 3.  $b$  Chap. xix. 15.

*Jabin king of Hazor.*—After the very remarkable reduction of the southern parts of Canaan, related in the foregoing chapter, the kings of the north becoming apprehensive for their safety, are here presented in the act of making a common interest, and uniting with Jabin to put a stop to the further progress of the Israelites. Jabin was probably the common name of all the kings of Hazor, as we find that the king by whom the Israelites were afterwards kept in bondage for twenty years, and who was defeated by Deborah and Barak, was so called. The name signifies wise or intelligent. Hazor was a strong city on the west side of the waters of Merom, or lake Samechonitis, and the capital of northern Canaan. In the distribution of the land it fell to the tribe of Naphtali. It was in subsequent times frequently the seat of war, but not a ruin now remains to mark the place where it stood. *Madon.*—The position of this city is unknown. It was doubtless in the neighbourhood of the others here mentioned. *Shimron.*—Called also Shimron-Meron, (chap. xii. 10.) It fell afterwards to the lot of Zebulon, and was situated about eleven miles to the north-east of Nazareth. *Achshaph.*—Situated in the tribe of Asher, near the confines of Zebulon. It was reduced to a small village, called Chasalus, in the time of Jerome, at the close of the fourth century, but is now entirely swept away.

VER. 2. And to the kings that were on the north

of the mountains, and of the plains south of Chinneroth, and in the valley, and in the borders of Dor on the west,

<sup>c</sup> Numb. xxxiv. 11.   
 <sup>d</sup> Chap. xvii. 11. Judg. i. 27. 1 Kings iv. 11.

*That were on the north of the mountains.*—Heb. "from the north in the mountain," i. e. residing in the mountainous region of the north, the tract of Anti-Libanus. *The plains south of Chinneroth.*—Heb. "plain." An ancient city belonging afterwards to the tribe of Naphtali, and supposed to have occupied the same site with the more modern Tiberias. From this city or village, the sea of Chinneroth, or Gennesareth, probably had its name. From the original it is not perfectly clear whether the plain spoken of lay to the south of Chinneroth, or Chinneroth to the south of that. In the former case, it would seem to have been the plain of the Jordan, which we think less likely. *In the valley.*—In the low or valley tracts generally, in contradistinction from the mountainous points which were inhabited. *The borders of Dor.*—This was a place on the coast of the Mediterranean, about nine miles north of Cesarea Palestine, and at a little distance from Mount Carmel. A small village, called Tortura, is in the vicinity of the ruins of the ancient town, containing forty or fifty houses.

VER. 3. And to the Canaanite on the east and on the west, and to the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, and the Jebusite in the mountains, and to the Hivite under Hermon in the land of Mizpeh.

<sup>e</sup> Judg. iii. 3. <sup>f</sup> Chap. xiii. 11. <sup>g</sup> Gen. xxxi. 49.

*The Canaanite on the East, &c.*—The Canaanites, properly so called, dwelt part of them in the east near Jordan, and part on the west near the sea; both are here united. *The Hivite under Hermon.*—At the foot of mount Hermon; of which mountain see on Deut. iii. 9. They are designated in this way to distinguish them from another portion of the same race dwelling at Gibeon, of whom we have already spoken. *In the land of Mizpeh.*—That is, the land of watching or espial; so called from its commanding an extensive prospect of the surrounding country, from which the approach or movements of an enemy might be discovered. There were several places of this name, but reference is here undoubtedly had to that lying in the northern quarter of Gilead, where Laban and Jacob made their covenant, as related Gen. xxxi. 48, 49.

VER. 4. And they went out, they and all their hosts with them, much people, even as the sand that is upon the sea-shore in multitude, with horses and chariots very many.

<sup>h</sup> Gen. xxii. 17; xxxii. 12. Judg. vii. 12. 1 Sam. xiii. 5.

*And they went out.*—Took the field; a phrase frequently employed by the sacred writers for going forth upon a military expedition. Thus 2 Sam. xi. 1, "and it came to pass—at the time when kings go forth," i. e. to battle, as our version rightly understands it. Comp. Numb. xxi. 23. Job xxxix. 21. *As the sand that is upon the*

*sea-shore.*—A proverbial expression, used to denote a vast but indefinite number—a number of which no accurate estimate could be formed. Josephus, upon what authority we know not, is more particular. He states the number at 300,000 foot, 10,000 horse, and 20,000 chariots of war. Whether this be correct or not, the words of the text lead us to infer that a vast population now occupied the land of promise, and that the soil must have been of exuberant fertility to sustain it. The immense multitude, moreover, of the enemy went to heighten the glory of Joshua's victory. *With horses and chariots very many.*—Heb. "horse and chariot very much." The horses were probably brought out of Egypt or Armenia, and not bred in Canaan, which was not a country favourable to their production or use. (Deut. xvii. 16. 1 Kings x. 28, 29.) The war chariots of the Canaanites are supposed to have been armed with iron scythes fastened to the poles and to the ends of the axletrees. When furiously driven they would make fearful havoc in the ranks of infantry, of which only were the forces of Israel composed, mowing them down like grass. In view, therefore, of such a formidable armament mustered against him, Joshua receives from the Lord a special encouragement and promise of success.

VER. 5. And when all these kings were met together, they came and pitched together at the waters of Merom, to fight against Israel.

*Were met together.*—Heb. "were assembled by appointment." In pursuance of previous arrangements. Chal. "met at a time agreed upon." *At the waters of Merom.*—Generally understood of the lake Semechon or Samechonitis, lying between the head of the river Jordan and the lake of Gennesaret. The name imports "highness," and is supposed to be so called because its waters were higher than those of the sea of Galilee. The Arabic Samaka, from which Semechon is derived, has the same import. It is situated in a valley, and is now called Bahhrat el-Hhule, i. e. "the lake of the valley," a valley formed by the two branches of mount Hermon. In summer the lake is for the most part dry, and covered with shrubs and grass, in which lions, bears, and other wild beasts conceal themselves.

VER. 6. And the Lord said unto Joshua, Be not afraid because of them: for to-morrow about this time will I deliver them up all slain before Israel: thou shalt hough their horses, and burn their chariots with fire.

<sup>i</sup> Chap. x. 8.

<sup>k</sup> 2 Sam. viii. 4.

*Shall hough their horses.*—That is, hamstring them, cut the sinews of their legs. On the effects of such a treatment of these animals Michaelis remarks, that "from ignorance of military affairs, most expositors have understood this command, as if it meant, not that the horses should be killed, but merely lamed in their hind legs, and then let go. But a horse so treated must, instead of running off, fall instantly backwards, and writhe about miserably till he die, which generally happens from loss of blood, by the

stroke of the sabre cutting the artery of the thigh. This is still, as military people have since informed me, the plan adopted to make those horses that are taken, but cannot be easily brought away, unserviceable to the enemy again. They hamstringing them, which can be done in an instant, and they generally die of the wound by bleeding to death; but though they should not, the wound never heals; so that even if the enemy recover them alive, he is forced to dispatch them: and every compassionate friend of horses, who has ever seen one in that situation, will do so in order to terminate his misery. There is no foundation for Kimchi's opinion, that mere laming was enjoined, because it would be wrong to put an animal unnecessarily to death. For thus to lame a horse that would still live, in my opinion, would rather have been extreme cruelty; because, being then useless, nobody would be likely to give him any food." (Comment. on Laws of Moses, Art. LXIV.) The reasons for prescribing such a treatment probably were, 1. Because God would have his people act upon the resolution expressed by the Psalmist, (Psal. xx. 7.) "Some trust in chariots and some in horses; but we will remember the name of the Lord our God." If horses had been in common use among them they would have been apt to rely upon them instead of trusting to the aid of Omnipotence in achieving their conquests. But God's design was to cut them off from human resources, and, by enabling a company of raw and inexperienced footmen to rout powerful bodies of cavalry, to secure the glory of the victory to his own right arm, to which only it was due. 2. Because horses were a kind of useless plunder to the Israelites. From the nature of the country, they could not be well employed for purposes of agriculture. In that rough and mountainous land oxen and asses could be employed to much greater advantage; and as to travelling, it was never designed that the Israelites should be a travelling people. They were to be an agricultural, and not a commercial race. They were to live apart from other nations as a religious community. Their stated journeys to Jerusalem, to attend upon the religious festivals, would be about all the travelling that would be necessary, and this on their rough roads could be better performed on foot or on asses than on horses. Such of these animals, therefore, as they took in war could be of no use to them, unless they sold them, and this would not be wise, as they might finally have come round again to the hands of their enemies. The true policy accordingly was to diminish as far as possible this race of animals, which might give their enemies a signal advantage, and in this policy we suppose the present order to have originated.

VER. 7. So Joshua came, and all the people of war with him, against them by the waters of Merom suddenly, and they fell upon them.

*Suddenly.*—The great feature of Joshua's military operations appears to have been dispatch. In the celerity of his movements he seems to have equalled the most renowned generals, whether of ancient or modern times. Being now apprized of this grand combination of the northern kings, he

loses no time, but by a forced march, and before they could have supposed him at hand, comes suddenly upon them and puts them to the rout.

VER. 8. And the LORD delivered them into the hand of Israel, who smote them, and chased them unto great Zidon, and unto 'Misrephoth-maim, and unto the valley of Mizpeh eastward; and they smote them, until they left them none remaining.

l Chap. xiii. 6.

*Unto great Zidon.*—A well known city of ancient Phœnicia, situated on the east coast of the Mediterranean, about twenty-five miles north of Tyre, fifty south of Berytus (Beyroot,) and sixty-west of Damascus. Its modern name is Said. The epithet זִיִּדוֹן, "great," here affixed to it, is expressive of number rather than of size, and implies not only its populousness, but the extent and variety of its resources of every kind. *Misrephoth-maim.*—Or, Heb. "Misrephoth of the waters," i. e. "the burnings of the waters;" but whether so called from its being noted for hot springs, or the manufacture of glass, or of salt, each of which has been conjectured, or from some other cause, it is not possible to determine. It is supposed to have been a place on the sea coast, about three miles north of Sidon. *Valley of Mizpeh.*—Under mount Hermon, as appears by comparing this with ver. 3 and 17, in the latter of which it appears to be called the valley of Lebanon. This place lay on the east, as Sidon did on the west, so that the vanquished enemy fled in two different directions, in both of which they were pursued by the conquerors. *Until they left them none remaining.*—From other portions of the history, it is plain that this language here and elsewhere is not to be construed in its most literal import. Numbers of the Canaanites did undoubtedly escape the sword of the Israelites, and fled to Zidon, Tyre, and other maritime cities; and even here it appears that Jabin escaped with his life from the battle. But the drift of the words is to intimate, that they left none alive who fell into their hands, whomsoever they encountered or overtook, they slew.

VER. 9. And Joshua did unto them <sup>n</sup>as the LORD bade him: he houghed their horses, and burnt their chariots with fire.

<sup>m</sup> Ver. 6.

VER. 10. And Joshua at that time turned back, and took Hazor, and smote the king thereof with the sword: for Hazor beforetime was the head of all those kingdoms.

*Hazor was the head, &c.*—Not of all Canaan, but of those northern principalities which were combined in this expedition against Israel. This city, however, afterwards recovered itself, and grievously oppressed the people of Israel. (Judg. iv. 2.)

VER. 11. And they smote all the souls that were therein with the edge of the sword, utterly

destroying them: there was not any left to breathe: and he burnt Hazor with fire.

*Not any left to breathe.*—Heb. “not any breath;” i. e. not any human being. *He burnt Hazor with fire.*—Compare ver. 13. It is not said expressly of the Israelites, in this part of the narrative, that they burnt any city whatever, as such a statement might give rise to the impression, that, in the ardour of military zeal, they were guilty of excesses, and, in the spirit of a licentious soldiery, were eager to apply the torch to the devoted cities. On the contrary, the act is attributed to Joshua, implying that it was done calmly and deliberately, and in all likelihood by divine direction. The phraseology is so constructed as to give a striking testimony to the moderation and self-control of the armies of the Most High.

VER. 12. And all the cities of those kings, and all the kings of them, did Joshua take, and smote them with the edge of the sword, and he utterly destroyed them, “as Moses the servant of the LORD commanded,

n Num. xxxiii. 52. Deut. vii. 2; xx. 16, 17.

*Utterly destroyed them.*—That is, the persons, the inhabitants; for many of the cities themselves, as well as the spoils which they contained, were preserved, as we learn in the ensuing verse.

VER. 13. But as for the cities that stood still in their strength, Israel burned none of them, save Hazor only: that did Joshua burn.

*The cities that stood still in their strength.*—Heb. עמדת על רומם “standing upon, or by their heaps.” It would be difficult to point out any single expression in the whole book of Joshua, perhaps in the whole Scriptures, more difficult of explanation than this. The exact literal version of the words we have given above; but our common translation has followed the Chaldee paraphrase in rendering the Heb. עמדת, by “strength,” a sense which it has in no other instance that we can discover, in the compass of the sacred writings. Its prevailing and legitimate import is, a “heap of ruins.” Thus Deut. xiii. 16, in reference to the city which had become the seat of idolatry: “Thou shalt gather all the spoil of it into the midst of the street thereof, and shalt burn with fire the city, and all the spoil thereof, for the Lord thy God; and it shall be ‘an heap’ (רומם) for ever; it shall not be built again.” (Josh. viii. 28.) “And Joshua burnt Ai, and made it ‘an heap’ (רומם) for ever, even a desolation unto this day.” (Jer. xlix. 2.) “I will cause an alarm of war to be heard in Rabbah of the Ammonites, and it shall be a ‘desolate heap,’ (רומם עממת) and her daughters shall be burned with fire.” (Jer. xxx. 18.) “The city shall be builded upon her own ‘heap’ (רומם);” i. e. upon its own ruins. These examples show the genuine force of the word. The mass of expositors, however, from the affinity of the ideas of a heap of ruins and an eminence, or elevation of any kind, and not knowing what to understand by cities ‘standing upon their ruinous heaps,’ have been led to in-

terpret it of cities standing upon hills, or rocky heights, forming natural fortresses of great strength, and such as the Israelites chose to retain for their own use. To this solution we should have nothing to object, were it warranted by the native import of the term; but we are persuaded it is not. The true rendering is unquestionably that which we have given, and a consistent sense is to be sought for the phrase. From an attentive comparison of the context, it appears that the kings and the inhabitants of these cities were all put to the sword, while the cattle and the spoil generally went into the hands of the captors. During the time, therefore, of the actual occurrence of these events, the cities in question must have presented a fearful scene of carnage and desolation. Heaps of lifeless bodies and of gathered spoil would be accumulated in the streets, and wherever such a complete conquest and pillage could be easily effected without demolishing the walls, buildings, or fortifications of the cities, those cities might be said to “stand still, or continue to stand upon, over, or by their ruinous heaps;” i. e. heaps of the slain, and heaps of spoil. This doubtless was the case in numerous instances. It was not absolutely necessary to raze and burn all the cities, and so many of them were spared; but Hazor being the head of the confederacy, and more guilty than the rest, was properly made an exception, and utterly destroyed. *Save Hazor only.*—As this city had begun the war, and from its being a royal residence and strongly fortified, might, if it should fall back into the hands of the Canaanites, possess peculiar facilities for renewing and carrying it on afresh, Joshua deemed it prudent to guard against all danger from that quarter, by demolishing it altogether.—So the Christian, if he finds his spiritual enemies likely to entrench themselves in any particular corruption or infirmity of his nature, and thence to make violent inroads upon his peace, is bound at all hazards, by crucifying such a lust, to deprive them of this advantage. If they can be dislodged from their strong hold in no other way, let him destroy the strong hold itself.

VER. 14. And all the spoil of these cities, and the cattle, the children of Israel took for a prey unto themselves: but every man they smote with the edge of the sword, until they had destroyed them, neither left they any to breathe.

*All the spoil of these cities—Israel took.*—With the exception of such things as had been employed for idolatrous purposes. (Deut. vii. 25.)

VER. 15. “As the LORD commanded Moses his servant, so did Moses command Joshua, and so did Joshua: he left nothing undone of all that the LORD commanded Moses.

o Exod. xxxiv. 11, 12. p Deut. vii. 2. q Chap. i. 7.

*As the Lord commanded Moses, &c.*—A virtual vindication of the Israelites from the charge of cruelty, which might possibly be brought against them in view of the severities exercised towards

these vanquished kings and people of Canaan. *He left nothing undone.*—Or, Heb. “removed, rejected, diminished nothing.”

VER. 16. So Joshua took all that land, <sup>r</sup> the hills, and all the south country, <sup>s</sup> and all the land of Goshen, and the valley, and the plain, and the mountain of Israel, and the valley of the same;

<sup>r</sup> Chap. xii. 8.

<sup>s</sup> Chap. x. 41.

*The mountain of Israel, and the valley of the same.*—Not any particular mountain and valley, but the mountains and valleys generally, included in the whole extent of the land of Israel.

VER. 17. *Even* from the mount Halak, that goeth up to Seir, even unto Baal-gad in the valley of Lebanon under mount Hermon: and <sup>r</sup> all their kings he took, and smote them, and slew them.

<sup>t</sup> Chap. xii. 7.

<sup>u</sup> Deut. vii. 24; chap. xii. 7.

*From the Mount Halak.*—That is, Heb. “the bare, smooth, or bald mountain,” so called from its being destitute of trees. The writer’s design seems to be to specify the extreme southern and northern limits of the promised land. Joshua’s conquests extended from the borders of Seir or Edom, where Mount Halak was situated, northward to Baal-gad, which lies at the foot of Mount Lebanon.

VER. 18. Joshua made war a long time with all those kings.

*Joshua made war a long time.*—Heb. “many days.” As many at least as six or seven years; as appears from comparing chap. xiv. 7—10; the first having been occupied in the conquest of the southern portion of the land, and the remaining five or six in that of the northern. It would seem that the writer, by inserting this statement here, designed to guard the reader against the impression that, as the record of these wars is very brief, so the space of time in which they were accomplished was also brief. This by no means follows, as the present account is intended as a mere rapid sketch or outline of Israel’s victories over the nations of Canaan. In the sacred writings the compass of a few sentences often contains the events of many years.—We may not perhaps be able to state all the reasons that weighed in the divine mind for thus prolonging the warfare of his people, but of one we are assured by God himself, (Deut. vii. 22.) “The Lord thy God will put out those nations before thee by little and little; thou mayest not consume them at once, lest the beasts of the field increase upon thee.” In addition to this, it was no doubt the purpose of heaven to try the faith and patience of his people by a long series of arduous struggles. Although the commencement of the work was marked by a succession of wonderful interpositions in their behalf, yet in its progress they were to be left more to their personal exertions. God would not make his miraculous aid too cheap in their eyes by making it common.

He would train them to a course of the most vigorous efforts on their part, while at the same time they were taught their continual dependence on him for success in their conflicts. This is in beautiful analogy with the warfare of the Christian. In its commencement, at the outset of the Christian life, the power of God is no less wonderfully displayed than in the history before us. The transition of a soul from darkness to light is virtually a miracle. It is effected by the sovereign power of God as really, and to the sinner’s consciousness in many instances as marvellously, as the passage of Israel through the cloven waters of Jordan. But in its progress, the work is carried forward more appropriately by his own actings. He has the armour given him, but his own activity is called forth in the use of it. His whole life is to be a state of warfare, and it is by hard fighting that he is to obtain the victory. No one enemy will submit to him without an obstinate resistance, nor until violently smitten with the sword of the Spirit. There will be some seasons of more than ordinary conflict, when he will need peculiar succour from on high; and there will be other seasons of comparative rest; but there is no entire discharge in this war till mortality is swallowed up of life; and then he shall enjoy the fruit of his victories in everlasting rest.

VER. 19. There was not a city that made peace with the children of Israel, save <sup>r</sup> the Hivites, the inhabitants of Gibeon: all *other* they took in battle.

<sup>x</sup> Chap. ix. 3, 7.

*Not a city that made peace—save the Hivites, &c.*—Although in the commands given to Moses respecting the extirpation of the Canaanites we have no express intimation that any of them were to be spared upon their voluntary surrender and submission, yet from the examples of Rahab and the Gibeonites, and especially from these words, the presumption is, that this was the case. The divine laws, wherever it can be done without compromising the interests of justice, always lean to the side of mercy. Besides, it has been justly remarked, that the reason of the law is the law. The evil designed to be prevented by the order for the universal destruction of the Canaanites, was the infecting of the Israelites with their idolatry. (Deut. vii. 4.) But if these devoted nations renounced their idolatry, and came heartily into the interest of Israel, the danger was effectually prevented, the reason of the law ceased, and consequently, we may suppose, the obligation ceased also. But the Canaanites in general were not in the least disposed to do this, nor did they so much as propose terms of accommodation. Of the cause or occasion rather, of this utter infatuation, we are informed in the ensuing verse. *All other they took in battle*—That is, all whom they did take, they took in battle. They received none upon submission. It is certain from other parts of the sacred narrative that the Canaanites were neither utterly exterminated, nor absolutely driven from their settlements either by Joshua or his immediate successors. On the contrary a large proportion of them fled, it is

supposed, to Tyre and Zidon and thence migrated into distant countries, particularly Africa, where they established numerous and flourishing colonies. Procopius relates that the Phœnicians fled before the Hebrews into Africa, and spread themselves abroad as far as the pillars of Hercules, and adds, "In Numidia, where now stands the city Tigris (Tangiers), they have erected two columns, on which, in Phœnician characters, is the following inscription: 'We are the Phœnicians who fled from the face of Jesus (or Joshua) the son of Nave (Nun).'" Numbers, however, yet remained to dispute, for ages, the possession of the land with their invaders.

VER. 20. For <sup>y</sup>it was of the LORD to harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle, that he might destroy them utterly, *and* that they might have no favour, but that he might destroy them, <sup>z</sup>as the LORD commanded Moses.

<sup>y</sup> Deut. ii. 30. Judg. xiv. 4. 1 Sam. ii. 25. 1 Kings xii. 15. Rom. ix. 18. <sup>z</sup> Deut. xx. 16, 17.

*It was of the Lord to harden their hearts.*—On the subject of God's hardening the hearts of men, see note on Exod. iv. 21. The meaning here is simply that having sinned for a long tract of ages against the light of conscience and providence, God was now pleased to leave them to a judicial hardness of heart, to give them up to vain confidence, pride, stubbornness, and malignity, that they might bring upon themselves his righteous vengeance and be utterly destroyed. This result is said to be "of or from the Lord," because he did not interpose to prevent it. *As the Lord commanded Moses.*—This expression occurs here and elsewhere in this connexion, (ver. 15.) "to show that Joshua and Israel did not act out of cruelty, revenge, and avarice; but simply in obedience to God, which alone could induce pious men to make such undistinguishing slaughter of their fellow-creatures: and doubtless many of them did very great violence to their own feelings and inclinations, while engaged in that service."—*Scott.*

VER. 21. And at that time came Joshua, and cut off <sup>a</sup>the Anakims from the mountains, from Hebron, from Debir, from Anab, and from all the mountains of Judah, and from all the mountains of Israel: Joshua destroyed them utterly with their cities.

<sup>a</sup> Numb. xiii. 22, 23. Deut. i. 28. Chap. xv. 13, 14.

*At that time.*—That is, during this war; in the course of these conquests. The words refer to no special point of time, as the work was gradually accomplished during the lapse of a considerable period. Some suppose this to be merely a recapitulation of the military operations detailed, chap. x. 36—41, adding here a memorable circumstance there omitted, viz. the destruction of the Anakims with the rest of the inhabitants of those places. Of this gigantic race, see on Numb. xiii. 33. Their cutting off is particularly mentioned here, because they had been such a terror

to the spies forty years before, to whom their bulk and strength made them appear as absolutely invincible. Even the opposition which they feared the most was overcome. "Never let the sons of Anak be a terror to the Israel of God, for even their day will come to fall. Giants are dwarfs to omnipotence."—*Henry.* Though these Anakims were now for the most part reduced, yet numbers of them escaped and took refuge in the country of the Philistines, and settled there, from whom Goliath, and other giants, descended. After a time some of them returned with followers, and rebuilt the cities from which they had been expelled; and Caleb and Othniel, to whom that region was assigned, vanquished and destroyed them after the division of the land. (Chap. xiv. 6—15; xv. 13—17.)

VER. 22. There was none of the Anakims left in the land of the children of Israel: only in Gaza, in <sup>b</sup>Gath, <sup>c</sup>and in Ashdod, there remained.

<sup>b</sup> 1 Sam. xvii. 4.

<sup>c</sup> Chap. xv. 46.

VER. 23. So Joshua took the whole land, <sup>d</sup>according to all that the LORD said unto Moses; and Joshua gave it for an inheritance unto Israel <sup>e</sup>according to their divisions by their tribes. <sup>f</sup>And the land rested from war.

<sup>d</sup> Numb. xxxiv. 2, &c. <sup>e</sup> Numb. xxxvi. 53. Chap. xiv.—xix. <sup>f</sup> Chap. xiv. 15; xxi. 44; xxii. 4; xxiii. 1.

*So Joshua took the whole land.*—Not absolutely the whole, for in chap. xiii. 1, the Lord himself is represented as saying to Joshua, "There remaineth yet very much land to be possessed," but all the country described here and in the preceding chapter; the greatest and best part of it. *Gave it for an inheritance unto Israel.*—The actual distribution of the land is detailed afterwards.

## CHAPTER XII.

VER. 1. Now these *are* the kings of the land, which the children of Israel smote, and possessed their land on the other side Jordan toward the rising of the sun, <sup>a</sup>from the river Arnou <sup>b</sup>unto mount Hermon, and all the plain on the east:

<sup>a</sup> Numb. xxi. 24.

<sup>b</sup> Deut. iii. 8, 9.

We have in the present chapter a recapitulation of all the victories thus far achieved. As the writer is about to enter upon a particular account of the distribution of the land among the tribes, he here pauses to give previously a general view of the territory to be divided, including the tracts on both sides the Jordan. This he does by specifying the kings, rather than the countries over which they reigned; for the power of a state is concentrated in the person of its sovereign, and such an enumeration presents the subject more vividly to the mind of the

reader. The first six verses contain a list of the kings on the east side of Jordan, conquered by Moses, with their territories, and the remainder of the chapter is occupied with a catalogue of those that were reduced by Joshua. "The enjoyment of present blessings under living benefactors should not be suffered to efface the remembrance of former mercies procured by the instrumentality of God's honoured servants who have entered into their rest. The services and achievements of Joshua, should not eclipse those of Moses."—*Henry*. The passages referred to in the margin give all the useful information that can now be gleaned respecting those places, but recourse to a good map of ancient Canaan is indispensable to obtaining a clear idea of the subject.

*From the river Arnon unto Mount Hermon.*—The small river Arnon was the boundary of all the southern coast of the land occupied by the Israelites beyond Jordan. The mountains of Hermon were the boundaries on the north. The Arnon takes its rise in the mountains of Gilead, and after running a considerable distance from north to south, turns to the north-west and falls into the Dead Sea not very far from the place where the Jordan discharges itself. See Numb. xxi. 13. Deut. ii. 24. *And all the plain on the east.*—Or, "even all the plain;" all the arable champaign country on the east of the Jordan, and called, (Deut. xxxiv. 1.) "The plains of Moab." On the physical features of this country, see note on Numb. iii. 2.

VER. 2. <sup>c</sup> Sihon king of the Amorites, who dwelt in Heshbon, *and* ruled from Aroer, which is upon the bank of the river Arnon, and from the middle of the river, and from half Gilead, even unto the river Jabbok, *which* is the border of the children of Ammon;

<sup>c</sup> Numb. xxi. 24. Deut. ii. 33, 36; iii. 6, 16.

*Ruled from Aroer.*—The kingdom of Sihon was bounded by the Arnon on the south, the Jabbok on the north, the Jordan on the west, and the mountains of Arabia on the east. *And from the middle of the river.*—Heb. רֵוֶחַ הַיַּרְדֵּן "and that which lies between the streams." A line passing along the middle of the stream, and that stream by no means a large one, is so remarkable a boundary to be adopted by ancient barbarous clans, that we are quite satisfied the translation is erroneous. The word "from," introduced by our translators, does not occur in the original, either here or in the ensuing clause, "from half Gilead," and the meaning undoubtedly is, that Sihon ruled from Aroer over the country lying between the rivers, (collect. sing. for plur.) even the half of Gilead, as far north as to the river Jabbok. See on chap. xiii. 9. All the region lying intermediate between the above-mentioned streams, and sometimes called "half Gilead," was subject to his authority. This interpretation is strikingly confirmed by the words of Josephus relative to the territory of Sihon, which he says, "is a country situate between three rivers, and naturally resembling an island; the river Arnon being its southern limit, the river Jabbok determining its

northern side, while Jordan itself runs along by it on its western coast."—(Antiq. b. 41. chap. 5.) The other half of Gilead, as appears from ver. 4, 5, lay beyond the Jabbok, and belonged to the kingdom of Og.

VER. 3. *And* <sup>d</sup> "from the plain to the sea of Chinneroth on the east, and unto the sea of the plain, *even* the salt sea on the east, <sup>e</sup> the way to Beth-jeshimoth; and from the south, under <sup>f</sup> Ashdoth-pisgah:

<sup>d</sup> Deut. iii. 17. <sup>e</sup> Chap. xiii. 20. <sup>f</sup> Deut. iii. 17; iv. 49.

*And from the plain, &c.*—Here again the word "from" is gratuitously, and, as we conceive, erroneously inserted. The design of the writer is merely to give a more distinct view of the position of the tract called "the plain," which embraced, as we suppose, the plain of the Jordan on its eastern side, extending from the sea of Chinneroth or Gennesaret on the north, to the salt or Dead Sea on the south. It is not implied that he reigned to the sea of Chinneroth, but that the plain in question extended that far, the largest part of which fell into his dominions. *Sea of the plain.*—The Dead Sea is so called from its occupying what was once a fertile, luxuriant, and beautiful plain, in which were situated the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, called also the "cities of the plain." *Beth-jeshimoth.*—Situated about ten miles east of the Jordan, and about the same distance from its mouth. *From the south.*—Or, Heb. "from Teman." *Under Ashdoth-pisgah.*—Seated in the plains or rather the slopes at the foot of mount Pisgah. The original word "Ashdoth" probably signifies the low places at the foot of a mountain. Comp. Deut. iii. 17; iv. 49.

VER. 4. *And* <sup>g</sup> the coast of Og king of Bashan, *which* was of <sup>h</sup> the remnant of the giants, <sup>i</sup> that dwelt at Ashtaroth and at Edrei,

<sup>g</sup> Numb. xxi. 35. Deut. iii. 4, 10.

<sup>h</sup> Deut. iii. 11. Chap. xiii. 12. <sup>i</sup> Deut. i. 4.

*And the coast of Og king of Bashan.*—Supply here from ver. 1, "And the children of Israel smote, and possessed the coast," &c. Varying a little the phraseology with which he commenced, the writer here speaks first of the country of the king of Bashan, instead of enumerating the king himself. *Of the remnant of the giants.*—See on Deut. iii. 11. *That dwelt at Ashtaroth and Edrei.*—Referring to Og and not to the giants. Probably both were royal cities, and he resided sometimes in one, and sometimes in the other. The reader will find their position on the map, as also that of the places mentioned in the ensuing verse.

VER. 5. *And* reigned in <sup>k</sup> mount Hermon, <sup>l</sup> and in Salcah, and in all Bashan, <sup>m</sup> unto the border of the Geshurites, and the Maachathites, and half Gilead, the border of Sihon king of Heshbon.

<sup>k</sup> Deut. iii. 8.

<sup>l</sup> Deut. iii. 10. Chap. xiii. 11.  
<sup>m</sup> Deut. iii. 14.

VER. 6. <sup>a</sup> Them did Moses the servant of the LORD and the children of Israel smite: and <sup>o</sup> Moses the servant of the LORD gave it for a possession unto the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh.

<sup>n</sup> Numb. xxi. 24, 33.

<sup>o</sup> Numb. xxxii. 29, 33. Deut. iii. 11, 12. Chap. xiii. 8.

*Gave it for a possession.*—The word “it” has no antecedent expressed, but it is easily referred to the whole extent of country here spoken of, which was taken by Moses and given to the two tribes and a half as an inheritance.

VER. 7. And these *are* the kings of the country <sup>p</sup> which Joshua and the children of Israel smote on this side Jordan on the west, from Baal-gad in the valley of Lebanon even unto the mount Halak, that goeth up to <sup>q</sup> Seir; which Joshua <sup>r</sup> gave unto the tribes of Israel for a possession according to their divisions;

<sup>p</sup> Chap. xvi. 17. <sup>q</sup> Gen. xiv. 6; xxxii. 3. Deut. ii. 1, 4. <sup>r</sup> Chap. xi. 23.

*From Baal-gad.*—A repetition of what is mentioned, chap. xi. 17.

VER. 8. <sup>s</sup> In the mountains, and in the valleys, and in the plains, and in the springs, and in the wilderness, and in the south country; <sup>t</sup> the Hittites, the Amorites, and the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites:

<sup>s</sup> Chap. x. 40; xi. 16.

<sup>t</sup> Ex. iii. 8; xxxiii. 23. Chap. ix. 1.

*In the mountains, and in the valleys, &c.*—The meaning probably is, that he smote the nations dwelling in the mountains, valleys, &c., even the Hittites, the Amorites, &c. The words convey at the same time a striking intimation of the general features of the country, its rich variety of soils, contributing at once to its fruitfulness and its pleasantness.

VER. 9. <sup>u</sup> The king of Jericho, one; <sup>v</sup> the king of Ai, which is beside Beth-el, one;

<sup>u</sup> Chap. vi. 2.

<sup>v</sup> Chap. viii. 29.

VER. 10. <sup>w</sup> The king of Jerusalem, one; the king of Hebron, one;

<sup>w</sup> Chap. x. 23.

VER. 11. The king of Jarmuth, one; the king of Lachish, one;

VER. 12. The king of Eglon, one; <sup>x</sup> the king of Gezer, one;

<sup>x</sup> Chap. x. 33.

VER. 13. <sup>y</sup> The king of Debir, one; the king of Geder, one;

<sup>y</sup> Chap. x. 38.

VER. 14. The king of Hormah, one; the king of Arad, one;

VER. 15. <sup>z</sup> The king of Dibnah, one; the king of Adullam, one;

<sup>z</sup> Chap. x. 29.

VER. 16. <sup>aa</sup> The king of Makkedah, one; <sup>ab</sup> the king of Beth-el, one;

<sup>aa</sup> Chap. x. 28. <sup>ab</sup> Chap. viii. 17. Judg. i. 22.

VER. 17. The king of Tappuah, one; <sup>ac</sup> the king of Hopher, one;

<sup>ac</sup> 1 Kings iv. 10.

VER. 18. The king of Aphek, one; the king of Lasharon, one;

VER. 19. The king of Madon, one; <sup>ad</sup> the king of Hazor, one;

<sup>ad</sup> Chap. xi. 10.

VER. 20. The king of <sup>ae</sup> Shimrom-meron, one; the king of Achshaph, one;

<sup>ae</sup> Chap. xi. 1; xix. 15.

VER. 21. The king of Taanach, one; the king of Megiddo, one;

VER. 22. <sup>af</sup> The king of Kedesh, one; the king of Jokneam of Carmel, one;

<sup>af</sup> Chap. xix. 37.

VER. 23. The king of Dor in the <sup>ag</sup> coast of Dor, one; the king of <sup>ah</sup> the nations of Gilgal, one;

<sup>ag</sup> Chap. xi. 2. <sup>ah</sup> Gen. xiv. 1, 2. Isa. ix. 1.

VER. 24. The king of Tirzah, one: all the kings thirty and one.

*All the kings, thirty and one.*—From the number of these kings, we may learn how numerous and yet how small were the petty principalities into which the land of Canaan was divided. The extent of this country from north to south was not more than one hundred and fifty miles, and not more than fifty from east to west. In like manner were nearly all the different nations of the world divided. The consequence was, that civil wars and border feuds continually prevailed, making them an easy prey to foreign invaders. Thus history informs us, that when Cæsar invaded Britain, there were no less than four kings in the single county of Kent.

## CHAPTER XIII.

VER. 1. Now Joshua <sup>a</sup> was old and stricken in years; and the LORD said unto him, Thou art old and stricken in years, and there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed.

<sup>a</sup> Chap. xiv. 10; xxiii. 1.

*Joshua was old.*—In all probability about a hundred, as he employed not far from seven years in the conquest of the land, and is supposed to have spent about one in dividing it, and he died about ten years after, aged one hundred and ten years. Chap. xxiv. 29. *Stricken in years.*—Heb. “coming or entering into days.” See Gen. xviii. 11. *There remaineth*

yet very much land to be possessed.—Heb. “to possess it.” This is mentioned to Joshua not as a reason for his continuing the war, but for suspending it, though to the Israelites the intimation would answer a different purpose. They were admonished by it that they were still to hold themselves in readiness for prosecuting the war in due time, and not to think of putting off the harness as long as there remained any land to be possessed. But as to Joshua, at his advanced age he could not expect to see an end of the war, and therefore it was expedient that he should lay aside other cares, and make preparation at once for dividing the land among those tribes which had not yet received their inheritance. This work was to be done, and done speedily, and done moreover under the superintendence of Joshua. Consequently as he was now old, and not likely to continue long, he was to lose no time in setting about it. “All people, but especially the aged, should set themselves to do that quickly which must be done before they die, lest death prevent them.” Eccl. ix. 10.—Henry.

VER. 2. <sup>b</sup> This is the land that yet remaineth :

<sup>c</sup> all the borders of the Philistines, and all

<sup>d</sup> Geshuri,

<sup>b</sup> Judg. iii. 1.    <sup>c</sup> Joel iii. 4.    <sup>d</sup> Ver. 13.

*The land that yet remaineth.*—That yet remaineth to be conquered. *All the borders of the Philistines.*—Lying on the southern coast of the Mediterranean. The Philistines are nowhere else mentioned among the devoted nations of Canaan, and the reason of their being enumerated here probably is, that their territories formerly belonged to the Canaanites, who were driven away and supplanted by them. (Deut. ii. 23.) Viewed in this light, therefore, as being originally and legitimately the country of the Canaanites, the possessions of the Philistines were appointed to come into the hands of Israel. *And all Geshuri.*—There were two places of this name. The one probably intended here was situated in the half tribe of Manasseh, on the east of Jordan, and in the north-eastern quarter of the promised land. As the Geshurites were not extirpated by the Israelites, they continued, even in the time of Absalom, to be governed by their own princes, one of whom, Talmai, had a daughter married to David. (2 Sam. xiii. 37.)

VER. 3. <sup>a</sup> From Sihor, which is before Egypt, even unto the borders of Ekron northward, which is counted to the Canaanite : <sup>f</sup> five lords of the Philistines ; the Gazathites, and the Ashdathites, the Eshkalonites, the Gittites, and the Ekronites ; also <sup>g</sup> the Avites :

<sup>e</sup> Jer. ii. 18.    <sup>f</sup> Judg. iii. 3.    <sup>g</sup> 1 Sam. vi. 4, 16.    Zeph. ii. 5.  
<sup>g</sup> Deut. ii. 23.

*Sihor.*—Frequently taken for the Nile, but probably more correctly understood of a stream forming the southern boundary of Canaan towards Egypt, and falling into the sea on the south of Gaza. Dr. Richardson describes a rivulet, in this region, thirty yards wide, but nearly, if not alto-

gether, dry in the summer. It, or rather its channel, is called Wady Gaza. *Unto the borders of Ekron.*—One of the five lordships—Gaza, Ashdod, Askalon, Gath, and Ekron—belonging to the Philistines, and the most northern of all the districts they possessed, its territory being the border of the land of Judah. The city of Ekron was situated about thirty-four miles west of Jerusalem, ten miles north-east of Ashdod, nine miles west by north of Gath, and ten miles east of the shore of the Mediterranean. It is particularly mentioned in Scripture as the seat of the idolatrous worship of Baal-zebub, or “the lord of flies,” (2 Kings i. 2,) but the Divine prediction against it, that “Ekron should be rooted up,” (Zeph. ii. 4,) has long since been accomplished, not even a single ruin of it remaining to mark the place where it stood. (Amos i. 8.) *Which is counted to the Canaanite.*—Because the original possessors of this country were the descendants of Canaan, the youngest son of Ham. The Philistines sprung from Mizraim, the second son of Ham, and having dispossessed the Avites, or Avim, from the places they held in this land, dwelt in their stead. See Gen. x. 13, 14. *Five lords.*—Petty princes. The term is put for the lordships themselves, just as king is often used for kingdom. The original *sarnaim*, “princes,” literally signifies axes; and so the Arab for chief magistrate is *katban*, axis; because public affairs and the people did, as it were, revolve round and depend upon him, as the parts of a wheel upon its axis. *Also the Avites.*—The remnant of the tribe or clan of the Avims, said, in Deut. ii. 23, to be expelled by the Caphthorim. The scattered relics of this people remained mixed up with the five Philistine lordships above mentioned.

VER. 4. From the south all the land of the Canaanites, and Mearah that is beside the Sidonians, <sup>h</sup> unto Aphek, to the borders of <sup>i</sup> the Amorites :

<sup>h</sup> Chap. xix. 30.

<sup>i</sup> See Judg. i. 34.

*From the south, &c.*—The whole maritime country from the southern limits here mentioned, as far north as to Sidon and some of the Amoritic possessions in that quarter, is hereby made over in promise to Israel. Joshua himself does not appear to have made any conquests on the sea-coast. *Mearah.*—Or, Heb. “the cave;” by which Le Clerc understands the mountainous tract of Upper Galilee, sometimes called the cave-country of the Sidonians, abounding in caves and fastnesses, which served as sheltering places in time of war, and as asylums also for roving bands of marauders. Josephus often speaks of such places in the bounds of the holy land; and the Maronite monks of Canobin assured M. de la Roque, that among the mountains between which the river Kadisho runs, there were not less than eight hundred caves or grottos. Others suppose it to have been a single large and remarkable cave between Sarepta and Sidon, described by William, Bishop of Tyre. This, however, is less likely.

VER. 5. And the land of <sup>k</sup> the Gibletes, and all Lebanon toward the sunrising, from <sup>l</sup> Baal-gad

under mount Hermon unto the entering into Hamath.

‡ 1 Kings v. 18. Psal. lxxxiii. 7. Ezek. xxvii. 9.  
 † Chap. xii. 7.

*The land of the Glibites.*—The name of a people dwelling in Gebal, near Sidon. (1 Kings v. 18. Ezek. xxvii. 9.) Their land was not given to the Israelites, because it lay without the precincts of Canaan. From among this people Solomon employed a number of artists in the erection of the temple. (1 Kings v. 18.) They were also famed for ship-building. (Ezek. xxxvii. 9.) It is supposed by many that the modern Byblus is the same as the ancient Gebal. They were certainly situated in the same region.

VER. 6. All the inhabitants of the hill-country, from Lebanon unto <sup>m</sup>Misrephoth-maim, and all the Sidonians, them <sup>n</sup>will I drive out from before the children of Israel: only <sup>o</sup>divide thou it by lot unto the Israelites for an inheritance, as I have commanded thee.

<sup>m</sup> Chap. xi. 8. <sup>n</sup> See Chap. xxiii. 15. Judg. ii. 21, 23.  
<sup>o</sup> Chap. xiv. 1, 2.

*Them will I drive out.*—The original is emphatic: "It is I that will do it; I who have all power, and am ever faithful; I who have promised, and can and will perform." Chald. "I will do it by my Word;" *i. e.* by my eternal Word, the Captain of the Lord's hosts. This, however, like other similar declarations, is to be understood conditionally. God never promised to put them in possession of the whole land, but on condition of their fidelity to him. If they failed in obedience, they would fail in becoming masters of the country. Accordingly, we find that they never did actually possess the whole land here assigned to them. The Sidonians were never expelled by the Israelites, and were only brought into a state of comparative subjection in the days of David and Solomon. Joshua, however, notwithstanding the cavils of infidels, actually did all that it was promised he should do. God never said that he should conquer all the land, but simply that he should bring Israel into it, and divide it among them, both which he did, and procured them footing by his conquests sufficient to have enabled them to establish themselves in it for ever. Their failure to do so was owing wholly to themselves. So we must work out our salvation, depending upon God to work in us, and to work with us. We must resist our spiritual enemies, and look to God to trample them under our feet. *Only divide thou it by lot.*—Heb. "cast it, cause it to fall." See note on Gen. xxv. 18. A phraseology derived from the casting of the lots, by which its distribution was governed. Joshua, no doubt, supposed that the land was first to be conquered, before it was divided, but here his mistake is corrected. The great Proprietor would have his people consider the country as even now theirs, and, as a pledge of his purpose to give it them, directs that without further delay it be forthwith apportioned out among the tribes. This order would not only strengthen their assurance of the final possession

of the land, but serve also as an incentive to prosecute the work of conquest with fresh vigour, and to keep themselves from all leagues, and every kind of entangling connexion, which might obstruct the attainment of their ultimate object. So the exercise of a lively faith puts the Christian even now in possession of the heavenly Canaan, the land of his eternal inheritance. Of all such it may be truly said,—

"They view the triumph from afar,  
 And seize it with their eye."

VER. 7. Now, therefore, divide this land for an inheritance unto the nine tribes, and the half-tribe of Manasseh,

VER. 8. With whom the Reubenites and the Gadites have received their inheritance, <sup>p</sup>which Moses gave them, beyond Jordan eastward, even as Moses the servant of the Lord gave them;

<sup>p</sup> Numb. xxxii. 33. Deut. iii. 12, 13. Chap. xxii. 4.

*With whom.*—Heb. "with him," *i. e.* with the other half tribe of Manasseh, who were to have no part in Canaan Proper, as their inheritance had already fallen to them on the other side of Jordan. The relative is put for an antecedent, which is to be supplied from the general tenor of the narrative, as in Num. vii. 89. Ps. cxiv. 2. Isa. viii. 21. Jer. i. 3. The speaker here and henceforward is not God, whose words terminate with ver. 7, but the historian, who takes occasion to rehearse the allotment made by Moses to the two tribes and a half on the other side Jordan, in order that the reader might understand the reason why nothing is said of them, in the distribution now to be made by Joshua; but the whole land on this side the river is ordered to be given to the nine tribes and a half. The other two and a half had been already provided for; and the re-statement of the fact here, in the formal record of the division of the land, would serve to ratify, in the strongest manner, the grant formerly made by Moses. As he had settled the affair, so Joshua would leave it. He would not alter what Moses had done; and the reason why he would not, is intimated in the fact, that Moses was "the servant of the Lord," faithful in all his house, and acting in this matter by a secret direction from him.

VER. 9. From Arcoer, that is upon the bank of the river Arnon, and the city that is in the midst of the river, <sup>q</sup>and all the plain of Medeba unto Dibon;

<sup>q</sup> Ver. 16. Numb. xxi. 30.

*The city that is in the midst of the river.*—For the true meaning of the expression, "in the midst of the river," see note on chap. xii. 2. Judging from the reports of travellers, we see no reason to believe that such an inconsiderable stream as Arnon, a mere rivulet, contained an island large enough for the site of a city. These verses, from vers. 9 to 14, comprise a general description of the whole country given to the two tribes and a half. The remainder of the chapter is occupied with a detailed account of the several districts allotted to each. Here in

ver. 9, taking "city" and "river," according to the common Hebrew idiom, as the collect. sing. for the plur. we conceive the writer's drift is to say, that beginning at Aroer, Moses gave to the two tribes and a half all the cities lying between the several rivers mentioned chap. xii. 1, 2, together with all the plain or champain country of Medeba, even to Dibon. These, in the next verse, are called the cities of Sihon, because they lay within his territories.

VER. 10. And <sup>r</sup> all the cities of Sihon king of the Amorites, which reigned in Heshbon, unto the border of the children of Ammon ;

<sup>r</sup> Numb. xxi. 24, 25.

VER. 11. <sup>r</sup> And Gilead, and the border of the Geshurites and Maachathites, and all mount Hermon, and all Bashan unto Salchah ;

<sup>r</sup> Chap. xii. 5.

VER. 12. All the kingdom of Og in Bashan, which reigned in Ashtaroth and in Edrei, who remained of <sup>r</sup> the remnant of the giants. <sup>r</sup> For these did Moses smite, and cast them out.

<sup>r</sup> Deut. iii. 11. Chap. xii. 4. <sup>r</sup> Numb. xxi. 34, 35.

VER. 13. Nevertheless, the children of Israel expelled <sup>r</sup> not the Geshurites, nor the Maachathites : but the Geshurites and the Maachathites dwell among the Israelites until this day.

<sup>r</sup> Ver. 11.

*The children of Israel expelled not the Geshurites, &c.*—Spoken apparently by way of reflection upon the Israelites who succeeded Moses, for their remissness in driving out these nations. The failure of Moses to make a clean riddance of them at his first conquest might be entirely excusable, as he was intent upon reaching Canaan, and could not well subject himself to the delay necessary for their complete extermination. But this plea would not hold after Canaan was entered. The tribes ought to have gone forward at once, and finished the work which Moses had begun. Instead of this, it is related to their disgrace, that they still suffered these people to dwell among them, down to the time when this history was written. The spirit of inspiration discovers, if we may so speak, a wonderful tact both in administering censure and bestowing praise. Instances of both, managed with the most consummate skill, abound in the compass of the sacred Scriptures.

VER. 14. <sup>r</sup> Only unto the tribe of Levi he gave none inheritance ; the sacrifices of the LORD God of Israel made by fire *are* their inheritance, <sup>r</sup> as he said unto them.

<sup>r</sup> Numb. xviii. 20, 23, 24. Chap. xiv. 3, 4. <sup>r</sup> Ver. 33.

*Unto the tribe of Levi he gave no inheritance.*—See on Numb. xviii. 20—24. *The sacrifices made by fire.*—The term is to be understood in a large sense, including not only all the oblations of which any part was burnt, but also the first fruits and tithes assigned to the Levites for their support. This is repeated again ver. 43, to inti-

mate that the Levites had as good a title to their tithes and perquisites as the rest of their brethren had to their estates, and also to enjoin upon the tribes a cheerful and conscientious compliance with the will of God in this respect. Withholding their dues from the Levites he considered as no less than actually robbing himself.

VER. 15. And Moses gave unto the tribe of the children of Reuben *inheritance* according to their families.

*Moses gave unto the tribe of the children of Reuben.*—The writer now enters upon a minute specification of the portions assigned by lot to the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh. This is very fully and exactly detailed. On this mode of assigning to the children their inheritances, and on this account of it, it may be remarked, (1.) That it was the most equitable and satisfactory method that could be adopted. Had the distribution been made by arbitrary appointment, as all could not receive portions equally good, some would probably have complained that their brethren were better dealt by than themselves. Dividing the land by lot, therefore, by cutting off all pretence for the charge of favouritism on the part of Moses, was the readiest way of satisfying all parties, and preventing discontent and discord. (2.) The several allotments are here very minutely detailed, in order that litigation growing out of disputed boundaries might ever after be prevented. When the limits of each tribe were so clearly settled, there could be little room for contending claims, or if there were, an authentic register of the lot of each tribe would be at hand to be appealed to for a decision, and there is no doubt that it was often made use of in after ages for this purpose. We cannot but learn from this the great importance of devising every prudent method to prevent litigations about property. (3.) The reading of this account by succeeding generations would tend to excite a very deep and lively impression of the goodness of God in bestowing upon their ancestors, for the benefit of their posterity, such a large and fertile country, an inheritance so replete with all the worldly blessings which heart could wish. "God's grants look best when we descend to particulars."—*Henry. According to their families.*—As every tribe had its inheritance divided by lot, so it is probable that afterwards the subdivisions to every family and each individual were regulated in the same manner. Thus their estates would descend to posterity, not so much the inheritance of their fathers, as that which the Lord had immediately assigned them. They could thus say with the Psalmist, (Psal. xvi. 5, 6.) "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup : thou maintainest my lot. The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places ; I have a goodly heritage."

VER. 16. And their coast was <sup>r</sup> from Aroer, that is on the bank of the river Arnon, <sup>r</sup> and the city that is in the midst of the river, <sup>r</sup> and all the plain by Medeba ;

<sup>r</sup> Chap. xii. 2. <sup>r</sup> Numb. xxi. 28.  
<sup>r</sup> Numb. xxi. 30. Ver. 9.

VER. 17. Heshbon, and all her cities that *are* in the plain; Dibon, and Bamoth-baal, and Beth-baal-meon,

VER. 18. <sup>d</sup>And Jahaza, and Kedemoth, and Mephaath,

<sup>d</sup> Numb. xxi. 23.

VER. 19. <sup>e</sup>And Kirjathaim, and <sup>f</sup>Sibmah, and Zareth-shabar in the mount of the valley,

<sup>e</sup> Numb. xxxii. 37. <sup>f</sup> Numb. xxxii. 38.

VER. 20. And Beth-peor, and <sup>g</sup>Ashdoth-pisgah, and Beth-jeshimoth,

<sup>g</sup> Deut. iii. 17. Chap. xii. 3.

VER. 21. <sup>h</sup>And all the cities of the plain, and all the kingdom of Sihon king of the Amorites, which reigned in Heshbon, <sup>i</sup>whom Moses smote <sup>k</sup>with the princes of Midian, Evi, and Rekem, and Zur, and Hur, and Reba, *which were* dukes of Sihon, dwelling in the country.

<sup>h</sup> Deut. iii. 10. <sup>i</sup> Numb. xxi. 24. <sup>k</sup> Numb. xxxi. 8.

*Dukes of Sihon.*—Probably so called because they had been his tributaries, subject to his jurisdiction. They are indeed called “kings of Midian” in Numb. xxxi. 8, but by “kings” in the sacred writings we are often to understand no more than mere petty chieftains, who might be at the same time subject to some more potent sovereign. See Gen. xiv. 1, 2.

VER. 22. <sup>l</sup>Balaam also the son of Beor, the soothsayer, did the children of Israel slay with the sword, among them that were slain by them.

<sup>l</sup> Numb. xxii. 5; xxxi. 8.

*Balaam also—did the children of Israel slay.*—He fell with those who instigated him to his wickedness. “This was recorded before, (Numb. xxxi. 8,) but is repeated here, because the defeating of Balaam’s purpose to curse Israel was the turning of that curse into a blessing, and was such an instance of the power and goodness of God as was fit to be had in everlasting remembrance.”—Henry.

VER. 23. And the border of the children of Reuben was Jordan, and the border *thereof*. This *was* the inheritance of the children of Reuben, after their families, the cities and the villages thereof.

VER. 24. And Moses gave *inheritance* unto the tribe of Gad, *even* unto the children of Gad according to their families.

VER. 25. <sup>m</sup>And their coast was Jazer, and all the cities of Gilead, <sup>n</sup>and half the land of the children of Ammon, unto Aroer, that *is* before <sup>o</sup>Rabbah;

<sup>m</sup> Numb. xxxii. 35. <sup>n</sup> Compare Numb. xxi. 26, 23, 29, with Deut. ii. 19, and Judg. xi. 13, 15, &c. <sup>o</sup> 2 Sam. xi. 1, and xii. 26.

VER. 26. And from Heshbon unto Ramath-mizpeh, and Betonim; and from Mahanaim unto the border of Debir;

VER. 27. And in the valley, <sup>p</sup>Beth-aram, and Beth-nimrah, <sup>q</sup>and Succoth, and Zaphon, the rest of the kingdom of Sihon king of Heshbon. Jordan and *his* border, *even* unto the edge <sup>r</sup>of the sea of Chinnereth, on the other side Jordan eastward.

<sup>p</sup> Numb. xxxii. 36. <sup>q</sup> Gen. xxxiii. 17. 1 Kings vii. 46. <sup>r</sup> Numb. xxxiv. 11.

VER. 28. This *is* the inheritance of the children of Gad after their families, the cities, and their villages.

VER. 29. And Moses gave *inheritance* unto the half-tribe of Manasseh: and *this* was the *possession* of the half-tribe of the children of Manasseh by their families.

VER. 30. And their coast was from Mahanaim, all Bashan, all the kingdom of Og king of Bashan, and <sup>s</sup>all the towns of Jair, which *are* in Bashan, threescore cities:

<sup>s</sup> Numb. xxxii. 41. 1 Chron. ii. 23.

VER. 31. And half Gilead, and <sup>t</sup>Ashtaroth, and Edrei, cities of the kingdom of Og in Bashan, *were pertaining* unto the children of Machir the son of Manasseh, *even* to the one half of the <sup>u</sup>“children of Machir by their families.

<sup>t</sup> Chap. xii. 4. <sup>u</sup> Numb. xxxii. 39, 40.

VER. 32. These *are the countries* which Moses did distribute for inheritance in the plains of Moab, on the other side Jordan by Jericho eastward.

VER. 33. <sup>v</sup>But unto the tribe of Levi, Moses gave not *any* inheritance: the LORD God of Israel *was* their inheritance, <sup>w</sup>as he said unto them.

<sup>v</sup> Ver. 14. Chap. xviii. 7. <sup>w</sup> Numb. xviii. 20. Deut. x. 9. xviii. 1, 2.

## CHAPTER XIV.

VER. 1. AND these *are the countries* which the children of Israel inherited in the land of Canaan, <sup>x</sup>which Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun, and the heads of the fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel distributed for inheritance to them.

<sup>x</sup> Numb. xxxiv. 17, 18.

*These are the countries, &c.*—The historian having, in the preceding chapter, given an account of the disposal of the countries on the other side of Jordan, comes now to state the allotments made to the remaining nine tribes and a half in the bounds of Canaan Proper. The directions which Moses had formerly given (Numb. xxxvi. 53—56) respecting the mode of making this dis-

tribution are now to be punctually observed. Previously to entering upon the account of this division, the writer premises two or three things which fall in here more properly than any where else, as that the Levites were not comprehended in the grant made to the tribes; that the tribe of Joseph was reckoned as two; and that Caleb had given to him at his request a certain tract of country which had before been promised by Moses. *The heads of the fathers of the tribes.*—That is, heads or chief men among the fathers of the tribes. These were twelve in number, including Joshua and Eleazar. They had been before expressly appointed by Moses. (Numb. xxxiv. 19.) This was done, that every tribe, having a representative of its own, might be satisfied that there was fair dealing, and might consequently abide more contentedly by its lot.

VER. 2. <sup>b</sup> By lot was their inheritance, as the LORD commanded by the hand of Moses, for the nine tribes, and for the half-tribe.

<sup>b</sup> Numb. xxvi. 55; xxxiii. 54; xxxiv. 13

*By lot was their inheritance.*—This distribution by lot was overruled by a special providence, so as to correspond with the inspired predictions of Jacob and Moses, respecting the allotment of each tribe. The fact is very remarkable, yet unquestionable, that the tribes found themselves placed by lot in the very sections of the country, which Jacob had foretold two hundred and fifty years before, and Moses shortly before his death. Comp. Gen. xlix. and Deut. xxxiii. To Judah fell a country abounding in vineyards and pastures; to Zebulun, sea-coasts; to Issachar, a rich plain between ranges of mountains; to Asher, one abounding in plenty of oil, wheat, and metals; and so of the others. See Masius and Calmet for more particular details.

VER. 3. <sup>c</sup> For Moses had given the inheritance of two tribes and a half-tribe on the other side Jordan: but unto the Levites he gave none inheritance among them.

<sup>c</sup> Chap. xiii. 8, 32, 33.

VER. 4. For <sup>d</sup> the children of Joseph were two tribes, Manasseh and Ephraim: therefore they gave no part unto the Levites in the land, save cities to dwell in, with their suburbs for their cattle, and for their substance.

<sup>d</sup> Gen. xlvi. 5. 1 Chr. v. 1, 2.

*The children of Joseph were two tribes.*—That is, had a double portion or the portion of two tribes. By Joseph's being reckoned two tribes, the nation was made to consist of twelve tribes, though Levi was excluded.

VER. 5. <sup>e</sup> As the LORD commanded Moses, so the children of Israel did, and they divided the land.

<sup>e</sup> Numb. xxxv. 2. Chap. xxi. 2.

*And they divided the land.*—They entered upon the business of dividing it; they took the pre-

liminary measures; they consulted together and settled the manner in which it should be done. The actual dividing took place afterwards. It must have required a considerable time to make all the geographical arrangements necessary for this purpose.

VER. 6. Then the children of Judah came unto Joshua in Gilgal: and Caleb the son of Jephunnah the Kenezite said unto him, Thou knowest <sup>f</sup> the thing that the LORD said unto Moses the man of God concerning me and thee <sup>h</sup> in Kadesh-barnea.

<sup>f</sup> Numb. xxxii. 12. Chap. xv. 17. <sup>g</sup> Numb. xiv. 24, 30. Deut. i. 36, 38. <sup>h</sup> Numb. xiii. 26.

*Then the children of Judah came.*—"Then" while they were at Gilgal preparing to make the division, which it seems was finished at Shiloh. (chap. xviii. 1.) The thread of the narration is again interrupted to introduce the digression concerning the allotment of Caleb. The children of Judah, that is, probably, the heads and chief men, accompanied Caleb, who belonged to the same tribe, in order to testify their consent to the measure, and to aid and countenance him in obtaining the object of his request. As Caleb was one of the twelve whom God had chosen to superintend the partition of the land, (Numb. xxxiv. 12.) it might seem, if he came unattended, that he designed to take advantage of his authority as a commissioner to promote his private interest; he therefore takes his brethren along with him to preclude any such imputation. Some suppose that this transaction took place previous to the siege and capture of Hebron, related chap. x. 36, 37, and that the expedition detailed in its minute particulars in chap. xv. 13—15, is there barely touched upon, or described in the most general manner. The fact, however, that the application of Caleb, was made to Joshua at Gilgal, and not while he was pursuing his conquests over the south of Canaan, seems decisive against this opinion. *Thou knowest the thing, &c.*—Caleb probably alludes to what is said Numb. xiv. 24, "But my servant Caleb, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it." (Deut. i. 36.) "Caleb the son of Jephunnah, to him will I give the land that he hath trodden upon, and to his children, because he hath wholly followed the Lord." This seems to be spoken, not of the land of promise in general, but of some particular district to which he had penetrated when sent out by Moses. This, undoubtedly, was Hebron, (Numb. xiii. 22,) and was so understood by all parties at the time. The promise then made by God to Moses he now pleads; and what can be more confidently expected than the fulfilment of his gracious word? There is more presumption in declining and neglecting his promises, than in urging their performance.

VER. 7. Forty years old was I when Moses the servant of the LORD <sup>i</sup> sent me from Kadesh-barnea to spy out the land; and I brought him word again as *it was* in mine heart.

<sup>i</sup> Numb. xiii. 6; xiv. 6.

*Brought him word again as it was in mine heart.*

—Made a true and honest statement; spake sincerely; uttered the real sentiments of my heart. His conscience bore him witness and now enabled him to say, that neither fear nor favour influenced him on the occasion; he told what he believed to be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. It has been remarked in this connexion, that Caleb's name signifies, "according to the heart."

VER. 8. Nevertheless, <sup>k</sup> my brethren that went up with me made the heart of the people melt; but I wholly <sup>l</sup> followed the LORD my God.

<sup>k</sup> Numb. xiii. 31, 32. Deut. i. 28.

<sup>l</sup> Numb. xiv. 24. Deut. i. 35.

*I wholly followed the Lord.*—Heb. "fulfilled after the Lord." Arab. "I perfected my obedience before the Lord my God." On the import of this expression, see note on Numb. xiv. 24. As he had obtained this testimony from God himself, it was not vain glory for him to speak of it, especially as this was the main ground on which he had become entitled to the object of his petition. It is not pride, but simply a tribute of due acknowledgment, to declare what a gracious God has done for us and by us. "They that follow God fully when they are young, shall have both the credit and comfort of it when they are old, and the reward of it for ever, in the heavenly Canaan."—Henry. It was peculiarly to the honour of Caleb that he maintained such an unbending fidelity to God when his brethren and associates in that service, except Joshua, proved so faithless and fainthearted. "It adds much to the praise of following God, if we adhere to him when others desert and decline from him."—Henry.

VER. 9. And Moses swore on that day, saying, Surely the land <sup>n</sup> whereon thy feet have trodden shall be thine inheritance, and thy children's for ever; because thou hast wholly followed the LORD my God.

<sup>m</sup> Numb. xiv. 23, 24. Deut. i. 35. Chap. i. 3.

<sup>n</sup> See Numb. xiii. 22.

*Moses swear on that day.*—See Numb. xiv. 24. Deut. i. 36. In these passages God himself is the speaker; and it is he that swears according to the words here recited. But as Moses was the organ through whom the assured promise was conveyed, the swearing is attributed to him. *The land whereon thy feet have trodden.*—Not the land of Canaan in general, but this particular, this identical district. See on ver. 6.

VER. 10. And now, behold, the LORD hath kept me alive, <sup>o</sup> as he said, these forty and five years, even since the LORD spake this word unto Moses, while the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness: and now, lo, I am this day fourscore and five years old.

<sup>o</sup> Numb. xiv. 30.

*Hath kept me alive.*—Heb. "hath vivified me." See on chap. vi. 25. According to our previous

interpretation, it implies that he was kept alive, when, in the ordinary course of things, he would have been dead; that it was in despite of the tendencies of nature to decay and dissolution, that he now stood among the living in so much health and strength. His present existence was a kind of resurrection from the dead. The longer we live, the more sensible should we be of the special upholding hand of Providence in prolonging our frail and forfeited lives. *These forty and five years.*—Of which thirty-eight were spent in the wilderness, and seven in the prosecution of the wars in Canaan. *Wandered in the wilderness.*—Heb. "walked." As a punishment for their unbelief and rebellion. *Lo, I am this day fourscore and five years old.*—Heb. "a son of fourscore and five years." Caleb was now, with the exception of Joshua, not only the oldest man in all Israel, but was twenty years older than any of them; for all that were above twenty when he was forty, had died in the wilderness. "It was fit, therefore, that this phoenix of his age should have some particular marks of honour put upon him in the dividing of the land."—Henry.

VER. 11. <sup>p</sup> As yet I am as strong this day, as I was in the day that Moses sent me: as my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, both <sup>q</sup> to go out, and to come in.

<sup>p</sup> See Deut. xxiv. 7. <sup>q</sup> Deut. xxxi. 2.

*As my strength was then, so is my strength now.*—My ability not only for counsel, but for action, remains unimpaired; I am as competent as ever for the hard services and difficult exploits of war. He mentions this, both to give glory to God, who was the strength as well as the length of his days, and also to intimate to Joshua that it would not be throwing away a portion upon a weak old man who was unequal to the task of either taking or retaining it. On the contrary, even if it were to be taken from the hands of giants, and should require the utmost prowess, energy, and nerve of the youthful warrior, he was still able to put it forth. He was not afraid to cope at eighty with the same power which he would readily have encountered at forty.—If we would make sure of a "green old age," let us begin early to follow the Lord fully. It is usually the excesses of youth which bring on the premature decay of the bodily and mental powers. It is precisely that sobriety, temperance, and moderation which religion enjoins, that secures to us the longest continuance and the highest enjoyment of life, health, and strength; and these habits cannot begin to be practised too early. *Both to go out and to come in.*—A proverbial phrase, equivalent to performing all the duties belonging to an official station. See on Numb. xxvii. 17.

VER. 12. Now therefore give me this mountain, whereof the LORD spake in that day; for thou heardest in that day how <sup>r</sup> the Anakims were there, and that the cities were great and fenced: <sup>s</sup> if so be the LORD will be with me, then <sup>t</sup> I

shall be able to drive them out, as the Lord said.

† Numb. xiii. 28, 33. † Ps. xviii. 32, 34; lx. 12. Rom. viii. 31. † Chap. xv. 14. Judg. i. 20.

*Give me this mountain.*—Not any particular mountain, but this mountainous tract or region; for such was eminently the country about Hebron. He does not mention, and cannot mean, the city of Hebron alone, which had been before taken by Joshua, but he included in his request all the adjacent country, to the caves and strong holds of which the Anakim had retired, and where they were now abiding in considerable force. The city itself fell afterwards to the lot of the Levites, (chap. xxi. 13.) and became a city of refuge, (chap. xx. 7.) “When Caleb had it, he contented himself with the country about it, and cheerfully gave the city to the priests, the Lord’s ministers; thinking it could not be better bestowed, no, not upon his own children, nor that it was the less his own for being thus devoted to God.”—*Henry.* Hebron, at a still later period, became a royal city, being made in the beginning of David’s reign the metropolis of the kingdom of Judah. *For thou heardest—how the Anakims were there.*—This, it would seem, was the place from which, more than any other, the spies took their unfavourable report; for here they met with the sons of Anak, the sight of whom so much intimidated them. “We may suppose that Caleb, observing what stress they laid upon the difficulty of conquering Hebron, a city garrisoned by the giants, and how from thence they inferred that the conquest of the whole land was utterly impracticable, bravely desired to have that city which they called invincible assigned to himself for his own portion; ‘I will undertake to deal with that, and if I cannot get it for my inheritance, I will do without.’ ‘Well,’ said Moses, ‘it shall be thine own then, win it and wear it.’”—*Henry.* Such is the spirit of the true Christian hero. All indeed are not such, but some are; and he who is, is not only willing, but forward, in the strength of God, to encounter the most formidable enemies and the most apparently insuperable obstacles in working out the will of his heavenly Master. If there is any enterprise of peculiar difficulty to be undertaken, or any post of especial danger to be occupied, he is prompt to volunteer his services for the occasion. Not that he courts the perilous work, merely for the purpose of a vain-glorious display of courage or skill, but because he wishes to honour God by his faith; to give him an opportunity, through such an humble instrument, to glorify his great name, and confound the infidelity of his enemies and his timorous friends. In one who feels the missionary impulse, this Caleb-like spirit will prompt to a fearless survey of the whole field, and if there be any spot which is at once promising and yet appalling, desirable and yet dreadful; a spot where the greatest force of heathen opposition is concentrated; that is the spot which will be really most attractive in his eye. Its difficulties and dangers will be among its highest recommendations. This spirit shone conspicuously in Paul in the whole course of his life and labours, and on one occasion we see it

nobly expressing itself in so many words, when he says of Ephesus, “A great and effectual door is opened unto me, and many adversaries.” The “adversaries” were no doubt among the special inducements that prompted him to enter that field. It is cause of gratitude to God that there are such spirits still to be found in the world, and that as long as there shall be sons of Anak on earth to intimidate the fearful, there shall be also sons of Caleb to grapple with and destroy them. *If so be the Lord will be with me, &c.*—Chal. “perhaps the word of the Lord will be for my help.” The ardour of a bold native temperament is here moderated by the workings of a spirit of conscious unworthiness and of humble dependence on the divine blessing. Caleb in these words virtually acknowledges that the battle is not to the strong, nor the race to the swift, and that the favourable presence of God with us in our undertakings, is all in all to our success. The expression is not to be understood as implying any doubt in his mind of God’s readiness to assist him, but simply as a disclaimer of exclusive reliance on his own unaided prowess. It is the language of one who feels that an arm of flesh, even all the forces of Israel combined, without the blessing of Heaven, would be powerless to accomplish the desired result.

VER. 13. And Joshua “blessed him, and gave unto Caleb the son of Jephunneh, Hebron for an inheritance.

u Chap. xxii. 6. † Chap. x. 37; xv. 13. Judg. i. 20. See Chap. xxi. 11, 12. 1 Chron. vi. 55, 56.

*And Joshua blessed him.*—That is, not only granted his request, but applauded his brave and enterprising spirit, and implored the blessing of God upon him in reference to his proposed undertaking.

VER. 14. † Hebron therefore became the inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenazite unto this day; because that he “wholly followed the Lord God of Israel.

† Chap. xxi. 12. † Ver. 8, 9.

*Because that he wholly followed the Lord God of Israel.*—“Singular piety shall be crowned with singular favours.”—*Henry.*

VER. 15. And “the name of Hebron before was Kirjath-arba; which Arba was a great man among the Anakims. † And the land had rest from war.

a Gen. xxiii. 2. Chap. xv. 13. b Chap. xi. 23.

*Kirjath-arba.*—That is, the city of Arba, the name of an individual distinguished either for his remarkable bodily stature and strength, or his power and authority, or perhaps both, among the Anakims. *And the land had rest from war.*—There were no more general wars. The inhabitants of Canaan could make no longer any head against the power of Israel. Being disjointed and broken they could no longer rally in such force as to make it necessary for the whole Israelitish body to go against them in a general campaign.

This may be considered as the genuine sense of the expression, though it be admitted that there were afterwards particular wars, arising from the attempts of each tribe to expel the ancient inhabitants still remaining in their respective territories.

### CHAPTER XV.

VER. 1. *This* then was the lot of the tribe of the children of Judah by their families; *even* to the border of Edom, the *b* wilderness of Zin southward *was* the uttermost part of the south coast.

*a* Numb. xxxiv. 3.      *b* Numb. xxxiii. 36.

*This then was the lot, &c.*—The account of the partition of the land which was commenced chap. xiv. 1—5, was interrupted by the mention of Caleb's application to Joshua for Hebron as his inheritance, and that being dispatched, the writer here returns from the digression, and resumes the thread of his narrative respecting the allotment of the tribes. On this part of the history it may be remarked, (1.) That the business of casting lots on this occasion was undoubtedly conducted with great seriousness and solemnity, and with devout prayer to God, whose is the disposal of the lot, that he would overrule it all to his own glory and the accomplishment of his wise purposes. (2.) That although an exact survey of the land was not taken till some time after this, (chap. xviii. 4, 5,) yet some general view of it must have been obtained, and some rude draught have been spread before them, sufficient at least to have enabled them to divide the land into nine and a half portions, with more or less accuracy. (3.) That the respective lots did not, at this time, so peremptorily and unchangeably determine the bounds of each tribe, that they could not subsequently be either contracted or enlarged, or otherwise altered; for it is evident from what follows, (chap. xix. 9,) that after Judah's lot was fixed, Simeon's was taken out of it. It would seem, in fact, that the first designation of the portions of the several tribes was quite vague and general, but that the limits of each were afterwards adjusted and settled by Joshua and the elders, with as much precision as the nature of the case would admit. (4.) As to the manner in which the casting of lots took place on this occasion, though we are not expressly informed, yet the probability is, that after the land was geographically divided into the requisite number of portions, these portions properly labelled, or otherwise distinguished, were put into one urn or pot, and the name of the several tribes into another; that then Joshua, for example, put his hand into the vessel containing the names of the tribes, and took out one slip, while Eleazer took out one from the other vessel, in which the names of the portions were put; whereupon the name drawn and the portion drawn being read, it was at once determined what portion was to be appropriated to such a tribe; and so of the rest. It is probable, however,

that this plan was adopted, on the present occasion, only in respect to the two large and principal tribes of Judah and Joseph, as they were now at Gilgal, and the division certainly was not completed till after they arrived at Shiloh, (chap. xviii. 1, 2.) In reference, therefore, to this mode of drawing out the lots from the bottom of the urns, the phraseology of a lot's "coming up," or "coming forth," became established. *The lot of the tribe of the children of Judah.*—By the special disposition of Providence the lot of Judah came up first, in token of the pre-eminence of that tribe over the rest. This distinction hereby received the divine sanction. *Even to the border of Edom.*—The geography of the sacred writings presents many difficulties, occasioned by the many changes which the civil state of the promised land has undergone, especially for the last two thousand years. Many of the ancient towns and villages have had their names so totally changed, that their former appellations are no longer discernible; several lie buried under their own ruins; and others have been so long destroyed that not one vestige of them remains. On these accounts, it is very difficult to ascertain the situation of many of the places, mentioned in this and the following chapters. Yet the ancient appellations of many of these localities may still be detected in modified forms under the modern names, and the sites of a greater number of them satisfactorily determined, than would at first seem practicable. This portion of the sacred story cannot of course be so interesting, or so profitable to the general reader as details of another character, and we shall not therefore enlarge upon it in our remarks, but as many of the places here mentioned are frequently alluded to in the subsequent history and the prophets, this enumeration is important, as enabling us oftentimes to determine their situation; and it need not be observed, that the geography of a country is of the utmost importance in illustrating its history. The quaint remark of Henry, therefore, on this subject, is deserving of attention, that "we are not to skip over these chapters of hard names, as useless and not to be regarded; where God has a mouth to speak and a hand to write, we should find an ear to hear and an eye to read." As it respects the lot of Judah, as here marked out, it was bounded on the south by the wilderness of Sin, and the southern coast of the Salt Sea; on the east by that sea, reaching to the place at which it receives the waters of the Jordan; on the north, by a line drawn nearly parallel to Jerusalem, across from the northern extremity of the Salt Sea to the south boundary of the Philistines and to the Mediterranean Sea; which sea was its western boundary, as far as the river of Egypt. Joshua is particular in giving the limits of this tribe, as being the first, the most numerous, the most important, that which was to furnish the kings of Judea, that in which pure religion was to be preserved, and that from which the Messiah was to spring. As this portion, however, contained nearly half the southern part of Canaan, it was afterwards found too extensive, and the possessions of Simeon and Dan were taken out of it.

VER. 2. And their south border was from the

shore of the salt sea, from the bay that looketh southward :

*From the bay that looketh southward.*—Heb. “the tongue,” i. e. gulf, bay, or arm of the sea. The like phrase occurs Isa. xi. 15, “The Lord shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian Sea.” The southern extremity of the Dead Sea, as laid down on the best maps, answers in its form to this description. The term among us is generally applied to a jutting promontory of land.

VER. 3. And it went out to the south side <sup>c</sup> to Maaleh-acrabbim, and passed along to Zin, and ascended up on the south side unto Kadesh-barnea, and passed along to Hezron, and went up to Adar, and fetched a compass to Karkaa :

<sup>c</sup> Numb. xxxiv. 4.

*Maaleh-acrabbim.*—Heb. “the ascent of (the mount of) scorpions:” probably so called from the multitude of those animals found there. *Kadesh-barnea.*—Called En-mishpat, Gen. xiv. 7. It was on the edge of the wilderness of Paran, and about twenty-four miles from Hebron. Here Miriam, the sister of Moses and Aaron, died : and here Moses and Aaron rebelled against the Lord ; whence the place was called Meribah-Kadesh, or “contention of Kadesh.”

VER. 4. *From thence* it passed <sup>d</sup> toward Azmon, and went out unto the river of Egypt ; and the goings out of that coast were at the sea : this shall be your south coast.

<sup>d</sup> Numb. xxxiv. 5.

VER. 5. And the east border *was* the salt sea, *even* unto the end of Jordan : and *their* border in the north quarter was from the bay of the sea, at the uttermost part of Jordan :

*Unto the end of Jordan.*—The mouth of Jordan ; the place where it discharges itself into the Dead Sea.

VER. 6. And the border went up to <sup>e</sup> Beth-hogla, and passed along by the north of Beth-arabah ; and the border went up <sup>f</sup> to the stone of Bohan the son of Reuben :

<sup>e</sup> Chap. xviii. 19.

<sup>f</sup> Chap. xviii. 17.

*Beth-arabah.*—Heb. “house of solitude;” perhaps so called from the loneliness and dreariness of the place. *The stone of Bohan.*—A Reubenite, and probably a distinguished commander of the forces of that tribe which came over the Jordan. It is not unlikely that he died in the camp at Gilgal, and was buried not far off, under the stone here alluded to.

VER. 7. And the border went up toward Debir from <sup>g</sup> the valley of Achor, and so northward looking toward Gilgal, that *is* before the going up to Adummim, which *is* on the south side of the river : and the border passed toward the

waters of En-shemesh, and the goings out thereof were at <sup>h</sup> En-rogel :

<sup>g</sup> Chap. vii. 26. <sup>h</sup> 2 Sam. xvii. 17. 1 Kings i. 9.

*En-shemesh.*—Heb. “fountain of the sun;” a place eastward of Jerusalem, on the confines of Judah and Benjamin. Some conjecture that it was a fountain dedicated by the Canaanites to the sun. *En-rogel.*—Heb. “fountain of the fallen;” supposed by some to have been the same as the Pool of Siloam ; by others placed further down the valley, near the south-east of Jerusalem, and not far from what is now called, the Fountain of the Blessed Virgin.

VER. 8. And the border went up <sup>i</sup> by the valley of the son of Hinnom, unto the south side of the <sup>k</sup> Jebusite ; the same *is* Jerusalem : and the border went up to the top of the mountain that *lieth* before the valley of Hinnom westward, which *is* at the <sup>l</sup> end of the valley of the giants northward :

<sup>i</sup> Chap. xviii. 16. <sup>2</sup> Kings xxviii. 10. Jer. xix. 2, 6. <sup>k</sup> Chap. xviii. 28. Judg. i. 21 ; xix. 10. <sup>l</sup> Chap. xviii. 16.

*The valley of the son of Hinnom.*—A valley in the vicinity of Jerusalem, lying probably on the south of mount Zion, and consequently environing the ancient city on the south side. Who this Hinnom was, or why it was called his valley, is not known. This valley, or, more properly speaking, ravine, is only about one hundred and fifty feet in breadth, and is stated to have been in ancient times exceedingly verdant, and shaded with trees. But from the inhuman practices of the Hebrews, in sacrificing their infants at a place in it called Tophet, the whole valley was denounced by Jehovah, and polluted by Josiah, by ordure and dead men's bones and every kind of filth from the city. After the captivity the Jews regarded this spot with abhorrence, on account of the abominations which had been practised there, and following the example of Josiah, threw into it the carcasses of animals and the dead bodies of malefactors, and every species of refuse. To prevent the pestilence which such a mass would occasion, if left to putrefy, constant fires were kept up in the valley, in order to consume what was thrown into it. It became, therefore, a striking type of hell, or that part of hades where they supposed the souls of wicked men were punished in eternal fire. Under this idea it was often called “Gehenna of fire;” the name Gehenna being formed from the Hebrew גיהנום, *Ghehinom*, “valley of Hinnom.” See Barnes's Notes on Matt. vi. 22. *Valley of the giants.*—Or, Heb. “of the Rephaim;” on which word see on Gen. vi. 4 ; Deut. ii. 7, 11. This valley lay about three miles to the south-west of Jerusalem, and appears to have been so called from its ancient gigantic inhabitants. It was the theatre of several signal victories obtained by David over the Philistines, and was also famed for its fertility and its excellent crops of corn. (Isa. xvii. 5.) The road from Jerusalem, says Maundrell, passes through this valley, and in it are pointed out to the traveller the ruined tower of Simeon, the Greek monastery of Elias, and the tomb of Rachel. The valley

itself is now only partially cultivated, and even those parts which are sown with corn yield but a comparatively scanty crop. "He turneth a fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein."

VER. 9. And the border was drawn from the top of the hill unto <sup>m</sup> the fountain of the water of Nephtoah, and went out to the cities of mount Ephron; and the border was drawn <sup>n</sup> to Baalah, which *is* <sup>o</sup> Kirjath-jearim:

<sup>m</sup> Chap. xviii. 15. <sup>n</sup> 1 Chron. xiii. 6.  
<sup>o</sup> Judg. xviii. 12.

VER. 10. And the border compassed from Baalah westward unto mount Seir, and passed along unto the side of mount Jearim, which *is* Chesalon, on the north side, and went down to Beth-shemesh, and passed on to <sup>p</sup> Timnah;

<sup>p</sup> Gen. xxxviii. 13. Judg. xiv. 1.

VER. 11. And the border went out unto the side of <sup>q</sup> Ekron northward: and the border was drawn to Shicron, and passed along to mount Baalah, and went out unto Jabneel; and the goings out of the border were at the sea.

<sup>q</sup> Chap. xix. 43.

VER. 12. And the west border *was* <sup>r</sup> to the great sea, and the coast *thereof*: this *is* the coast of the children of Judah round about, according to their families.

<sup>r</sup> Ver. 47. Numb. xxxiv. 6, 7.

VER. 13. "And unto Caleb the son of Jephunneh he gave a part among the children of Judah, according to the commandment of the Lord to Joshua, *even* 'the city of Arba the father of Anak, which *city is* Hebron.

<sup>s</sup> Chap. xiv. 13. <sup>t</sup> Chap. xiv. 15.

*And unto Caleb he gave.*—Or, Heb. "had given." The historian seems pleased with every occasion to make mention of Caleb, and to do him honour, because he honoured the Lord by following him fully. Respecting this grant to Joshua, see notes on the preceding chapter, ver. 6—15.

VER. 14. And Caleb drove thence <sup>u</sup> the three sons of Anak, <sup>v</sup> Sheshai, and Ahiman, and Talmai, the children of Anak.

<sup>u</sup> Judg. i. 10, 20. <sup>v</sup> Numb. xiii. 22.

*Drove thence the sons of Anak.*—This is doubtless mentioned here to show, that the confidence he had before expressed of success in this affair, through the presence of God with him, did not deceive him. The event answered all his expectations; and it is here put on record at once to the praise of Caleb, to the glory of God, who never disappoints those that trust in him, and for the encouragement of believers in all ages. On the sense of the phrase "drove out," see on Judges i. 10.

VER. 15. And <sup>y</sup> he went up thence to the inhabitants of Debir: and the name of Debir before *was* Kirjath-sepher.

<sup>y</sup> Chap. x. 38. Judg. i. 11.

*Debir—Kirjath-sepher.*—These names, the former signifying "a word," or "oracle," the latter, "the city of a book," have led some commentators to suppose that this city was a seat of learning, or a repository of the records of the ancient inhabitants. It is not indeed probable that writing and books, in our sense of the words, were very common among the Canaanites; but some method of recording events, and a sort of learning, was doubtless cultivated in those regions.

VER. 16. "And Caleb said, He that smiteth Kirjath-sepher, and taketh it, to him will I give Achsah my daughter to wife.

<sup>z</sup> Judg. i. 12.

*And Caleb said, He that smiteth, &c.*—We cannot think so ill of Caleb as to suppose that this proposition proceeded either from cowardice or sloth. He did not invite another to achieve a difficult and dangerous exploit, because he shrunk from it himself. He had already evinced too much valour to allow of the supposition. But his generous spirit would not allow him to monopolise all the glory of these victories. He would give occasion to some of his younger brethren to signalize their prowess also; and to strengthen the inducement, he makes a proffer of his daughter in marriage to the successful combatant. Such an achievement would be presumptive evidence that the man was worthy of her, and one who was likely to deserve well of his country. So Saul, in like manner, promised his daughter in marriage to him who should kill Goliath. (1 Sam. xvii. 25.) Fathers, in ancient times, appear to have had nearly an absolute power in the disposal of their daughters in marriage, as we learn from the case of Laban, and numerous other instances mentioned in the Scriptures. Caleb, however, could no doubt safely presume upon his daughter's preference coinciding with his, especially when such recommendations existed as were supposed in the very nature of the case. Deeds of valour have seldom failed, in any age of the world, to prove a powerful passport to the female heart, although it is to be hoped that the force of this attraction will diminish, as the influence of a religion of peace prevails in the world.

VER. 17. And <sup>a</sup> Othniel the <sup>b</sup> son of Kenaz, the brother of Caleb, took it: and he gave him Achsah his daughter to wife.

<sup>a</sup> Judg. i. 13; iii. 9.  
<sup>b</sup> Numb. xxxii. 12. Chap. xiv. 6.

*Othniel, the son of Kenaz, the brother of Caleb, took it.*—It was Kenaz, and not Othniel, who was the brother, and, as appears from Judges i. 13, the younger brother of Caleb; otherwise the marriage would have been unlawful, or at least of questionable propriety. It is not at all improbable that Othniel previously entertained an affection for Achsah, so that he could not brook the thought

that any one else should do more to win her favour than he himself would. This prompted him unhesitatingly to take up the gage which Caleb had thrown down. The result proved that he was worthy both of the work and the wages; for he became afterwards a deliverer and a judge in Israel, the first single person who presided in their affairs after the death of Joshua. "It is good for those who are setting out in the world, to begin betimes with that which is great and good; that, excelling in service when they are young, they may excel in honour when they are old."—*Henry*.

VER. 18. *And it came to pass, as she came unto him, that she moved him to ask of her father a field. And she lighted off her ass; and Caleb said unto her, What wouldst thou?*

c Judg. i. 14. d See Gen. xxiv. 64. 1 Sam. xxv. 23.

*When she came unto him.*—Or, Heb. "in her going," i. e. in going from her father's house to live with her husband. *She moved him to ask.*—Gr. "she took counsel with him, saying, I will ask." Being on the point of leaving the paternal roof, she seized the opportunity, when a parent's heart would naturally be tender and yielding, to persuade her husband to solicit an additional boon of her father. He readily consented to the request's being made, but seems to have preferred that it should come from herself rather than him, as he would do nothing that would appear like taking advantage of Caleb's favourable disposition towards his son-in-law. Accordingly, the petition was made by Achsah, who, in order to manifest more respect and reverence for her father, alighted off the animal on which she rode, and addressed him in the most suppliant posture. On this eastern mode of expressing respect, see "Illustrations of Scripture," pp. 32, 282.

VER. 19. *Who answered, Give me a blessing; for thou hast given me a south land, give me also springs of water. And he gave her the upper springs, and the nether springs.*

e Gen. xxxiii. 11.

*Give me a blessing.*—Do me an act of kindness, grant me a special favour, as a gift is sometimes called a blessing. (Gen. xxxi. 11. 2 Kings v. 15. 2 Cor. ix. 5.) Or, she calls this a blessing, because it would add much to the comfort of her settlement, and she was sure, since she married not only with her father's consent, but in obedience to his command, he would not deny her his blessing. *Hast given me a south land.*—Which by lying exposed to the burning rays of the sun, and to the sultry south winds, was comparatively ill-watered and barren. *Give me also springs of water.*—By which she meant not simply gushing springs of water, but the field or fields in which they were situated, (ver. 18.) Chald. "Give me a place moistened with water." If the fields belonged to one, and the springs to another, she would of course be little benefited by the possession. *He gave her the upper and the nether springs.*—Both higher and lower ground; tracts of hill and dale, well watered. An allusion of

practical bearing is sometimes made to this, when we pray for spiritual and heavenly blessings, which relate to our souls as blessings of the upper springs, and those that relate to the body and the life that now is, as blessings of the nether springs. From this story we may learn, (1.) That a moderate desire for the comforts and conveniences of this life is no breach of the commandment, "Thou shalt not covet." (2.) That mutual consultation and joint agreement between husbands and wives, as touching the things they shall seek pertaining to the common good of themselves and their families, is the surest omen of success. (3.) That parents should never think that lost which is bestowed upon their children, for their advantage. They forget themselves and their relations, who grudge their children what is convenient for them, when they can conveniently part with it.

VER. 20. *This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Judah according to their families.*

*This is the inheritance, &c.*—He now returns to the description of Judah's inheritance, from the digression made concerning Caleb and his family, in the preceding verses.

VER. 21. *And the uttermost cities of the tribe of the children of Judah toward the coast of Edom southward were Kabzeel, and Eder, and Jagur,*

VER. 22. *And Kinah, and Dimonah, and Adadah,*

VER. 23. *And Kedesh, and Hazor, and Ithnan,*

VER. 24. *Ziph, and Telem, and Bealoth,*

VER. 25. *And Hazor, Hadattah, and Keriath, and Hezron, which is Hazor,*

VER. 26. *Amam, and Shema, and Moladah,*

VER. 27. *And Hazar-gaddah, and Heshmon, and Beth-palet,*

VER. 28. *And Hazar-shual, and Beersheba, and Bizjothjah,*

VER. 29. *Baalath, and Iim, and Azem,*

VER. 30. *And Etlolad, and Chesil, and Hormah,*

VER. 31. *And Ziklag, and Madmannah, and Sansannah,*

f 1 Sam. xxvii. 6.

VER. 32. *And Lebaoth, and Shillim, and Ain, and Rimmon: all the cities are twenty and nine, with their villages:*

*All the cities are twenty-nine.*—But upon an exact computation there appears to be thirty-eight. The reason of the discrepancy doubtless is, either that nine of them were afterwards allotted to Simeon, or, as many of them are expressed by compound terms, translators may have combined what should be separated, and in one or two instances have formed the names of cities out of epithets.

VER. 33. *And* in the valley, *s* Eshtaol, and Zoreah, and Ashnah,

*g* Numb. xiii. 23.

VER. 34. *And* Zanoah, and En-gannim, Tappuah, and Enam,

VER. 35. Jarmuth, and Adullam, Socoh, and Azekah,

VER. 36. *And* Sharaim, and Adithaim, and Gederah, and Gederothaim; fourteen cities with their villages :

VER. 37. Zenan, and Hadashah, and Migdal-gad,

VER. 38. *And* Dilean, and Mizpeh, *h* and Joktheel,

*h* 2 Kings xiv. 7.

VER. 39. Lachish, and Bozkath, and Eglon,

VER. 40. *And* Cabbon, and Lahmam, and Kithlish,

VER. 41. *And* Gederoth, Beth-dagon, and Naamah and Makkedah; sixteen cities with their villages :

VER. 42. Libnah, and Ether, and Ashan,

VER. 43. *And* Jiptah, and Ashnah, and Nezeb,

VER. 44. *And* Keilah, and Achzib, and Mare-shah; nine cities with their villages :

VER. 45. Ekron, with her towns and her villages :

VER. 46. From Ekron even unto the sea, all that *lay* near Ashdod, with their villages :

VER. 47. Ashdod, with her towns and her villages; Gaza, with her towns and her villages, unto *the* river of Egypt, and *h* the great sea, and the border *thereof* :

*i* ver. 4.

*h* Numb. xxxiv. 6.

VER. 48. *And* in the mountains, Shamir, and Jattir, and Socoh,

VER. 49. *And* Dannah, and Kirjath-sannah, which *is* Debir,

VER. 50. *And* Anab, and Eshtemoth, and Anim,

VER. 51. *And* Goshen, and Holon, and Giloh; eleven cities with their villages :

*i* Chap. x. 41; xl. 16;

VER. 52. Arab, and Dumah, and Eshean,

VER. 53. *And* Janum, and Beth-tappuah, and Aphekah,

VER. 54. *And* Humtah, and *m* Kirjath-arba (which *is* Hebron) and Zior; nine cities with their villages :

*m* Chap. xiv. 15; ver. 13.

VER. 55. Maon, Carmel, and Ziph, and Juttah,

VER. 56. *And* Jezreel, and Jokdeam, and Zanoah,

VER. 57. Cain, Gibeah, and Timnah; ten cities with their villages :

VER. 58. Halhul, Beth-zur, and Gedor,

VER. 59. *And* Maarath, and Beth-anoth, and Eltekon; six cities with their villages :

VER. 60. *And* Kirjath-baal (which *is* Kirjath-jearim) and Rabbah; two cities with their villages :

*n* Chap. xviii. 14.

VER. 61. In the wilderness, Beth-arabah, Middin, and Secacah,

VER. 62. *And* Nibshan, and the city of Salt, and Engedi; six cities with their villages.

VER. 63. As for the Jebusites, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, *the* children of Judah could not drive them out; *but* the Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah at Jerusalem unto this day.

*o* See Judg. i. 8, 21. 2 Sam. v. 6. *p* Judg. i. 21.

*The Jebusites—the children of Israel could not drive them out.*—Joshua had before taken the king of Jerusalem, but not the city. The part from which the Jebusites could not be dislodged was more particularly the stronghold of Zion, falling within the lot of Benjamin, which was not finally reduced till the time of David. (2 Sam. v. 6—10.) As precisely the same thing is said of the children of Benjamin, (Judg. i. 21,) which is here said of the children of Judah, the inference is inevitable that part of Jerusalem was in the lot of Judah, and part in the lot of Benjamin. The inability of Israel to expel these Jebusites was owing solely to their own remissness and unbelief. If they had attempted it with vigour and resolution, if they had all had the undaunted spirit of Caleb, there is no reason to doubt that God would have been present with them to crown their efforts with success.

## CHAPTER XVI.

VER. 1. *AND* the lot of the children of Joseph fell from Jordan by Jericho, unto the water of Jericho, on the east, to the wilderness that goeth up from Jericho throughout mount Beth-el,

*The children of Joseph.*—Ephraim and the half tribe of Manasseh. Their portion, which was not one, but divided and distinct, lay in the very heart of Canaan, extending from the Jordan on the east to the Mediterranean on the west. See map. *Fell.*—Heb. “came out, went forth,” *i. e.* out of the urn or vessel from which it was drawn. *Unto the water of Jericho.*—The fountain in the immediate vicinity of Jericho, whose waters were healed by Elisha, as mentioned 2 Kings ii. 19—22. *Mount Bethel.*—That is, the mount upon or near which the city of Bethel was situated. There was no mountain so called.

VER. 2. *And* goeth out from Beth-el to *o* Luz, and passeth along unto the borders of Archi to Ataroth,

*a* Chap. xviii. 13. Judg. i. 26.

VER. 3. And goeth down westward to the coast of Japhleti, <sup>b</sup> unto the coast of Beth-horon the nether, and to <sup>c</sup>Gezer: and the goings out thereof are at the sea.

<sup>b</sup> Chap. xviii. 13. <sup>c</sup> 2 Chron. viii. 5. <sup>c</sup> 1 Chron. vii. 28. 1 Kings ix. 15.

VER. 4. "So the children of Joseph, Manasseh and Ephraim, took their inheritance.

<sup>a</sup> Chap. xvii. 14.

VER. 5. And the border of the children of Ephraim according to their families was *thus*: even the border of their inheritance on the east side was <sup>c</sup>Ataroth-addar, <sup>f</sup> unto Beth-horon the upper;

<sup>e</sup> Chap. xviii. 13. <sup>f</sup> 2 Chron. viii. 5.

VER. 6. And the border went out toward the sea to <sup>s</sup>Michmethah on the north side; and the border went about eastward unto Taanath-shiloh, and passed by it on the east to Janohah;

<sup>g</sup> Chap. xvii. 7.

VER. 7. And it went down from Janohah to Ataroth, <sup>h</sup> and to Naarath, and came to Jericho, and went out at Jordan.

<sup>h</sup> 1 Chron. vii. 28.

VER. 8. The border went out from Tappuah westward unto the <sup>r</sup>river Kanah; and the goings out thereof were at the sea. This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Ephraim by their families.

<sup>i</sup> Chap. xvii. 9.

VER. 9. And <sup>h</sup> the separate cities for the children of Ephraim were among the inheritance of the children of Manasseh, all the cities with their villages.

<sup>k</sup> Chap. xvii. 9.

VER. 10. <sup>l</sup> And they drave not out the Canaanites that dwelt in Gezer: but the Canaanites dwell among the Ephraimites unto this day, and serve under tribute.

<sup>l</sup> Judg. i. 29. See 1 Kings ix. 16.

*Drave not out the Canaanites.*—Yet they so far prevailed against them as to subject them to tribute, which shows that with proper exertions they might have extirpated them entirely, and that they were inexcusable for not having done so. The remarks of Josephus undoubtedly furnish the true clue to their remissness. "After this, the Israelites grew effeminate as to fighting any more against their enemies, but applied themselves to the cultivation of the land, which producing them great plenty and riches, they neglected the regular disposition of their settlement, and indulged themselves in luxury and pleasures." "The Benjamites, to whom belonged Jerusalem, permitted its inhabitants to pay tribute; the rest of the tribes, imitating Benjamin, did the same; and contenting themselves with the tributes that were paid them,

permitted the Canaanites to live in peace."—(Antiq. b. v. ch. 2. s. 5, 7.) So it may be suggested that Christians are in danger of putting their own, or the sins of others, under tribute, *i. e.* making them a source of worldly profit, instead of vigorously aiming to eradicate them utterly. It is a serious question, whether the gains of Christian vendors of ardent spirits are not derived from this source. Is it not taking tribute of the Canaanites

## CHAPTER XVII.

VER. 1. THERE WAS also a lot for the tribe of Manasseh; for he *was* the "firstborn of Joseph; *to wit*, for <sup>b</sup>Machir the firstborn of Manasseh, the father of Gilead: because he was a man of war, therefore he had <sup>c</sup>Gilead and Bashan.

<sup>a</sup> Gen. xli. 51; xlvii. 20; xlviii. 18. <sup>b</sup> Gen. i. 23. Numb. xxvi. 29; xxxii. 39, 40. 1 Chron. vii. 14. <sup>c</sup> Deut. iii. 15.

*Also a lot for the tribe of Manasseh.*—It was important to note this, to show that although Jacob, in his blessing, (Gen. xlviii. 19, 20,) did, in a measure, set Ephraim before Manasseh, yet it was not to prejudice his rights of primogeniture. Ephraim, indeed, was to be more numerous and powerful than Manasseh, yet Manasseh was the firstborn, and was to have his distinct inheritance, instead of being incorporated with his brother in possession. *Machir*.—The name of the only son of Manasseh, but here as well as Judg. v. 14, put for his posterity. Indeed, throughout this description of the boundaries of the tribes, the names of fathers stand for their descendants. *The first-born of Manasseh*.—Meaning his only son. It is a scriptural usage to denominate an only son the firstborn. See Matt. i. 24, 25. *The father of Gilead*.—Although it is true, as expressly affirmed, (Numb. xxvi. 29; xxvii. 1,) that Machir was the father of a son named Gilead, yet it is certain that this latter name, when used with the article in Heb. as here, is almost invariably applied to the country so called, and which received its denomination in the time of Jacob, from the incident mentioned Gen. xxxi. 48. It can scarcely be doubted, therefore, that the phrase "father of Gilead" is here properly to be understood of Machir, and that he is so called just as in 1 Chron. ii. 24, 25, 49, 50, Asher is called "father of Tekoa," Maon "father of Beth-zur," Sheva, "father of Gibeon," and Shabal "father of Kirjath-jearim;" all the names of places. The reason of Machir, or rather his posterity, being so called is immediately stated—because being a warlike and valiant race they had conquered Gilead and Bashan, therefore that region was allotted them.

VER. 2. There was also a lot for <sup>d</sup> the rest of the children of Manasseh by their families; <sup>e</sup> for the children of Abiezer, and for the children of Helek, <sup>f</sup> and for the children of Asriel, and for the children of Shechem, <sup>g</sup> and for the children of Hephher, and for the children of

Shemida; these were the male children of Manasseh the son of Joseph by their families.

*d* Numb. xxvi. 29—32. *e* 1 Chr. vii. 18 *f* Numb. xxvi. 31. *g* Numb. xxvi. 32.

*The male children of Manasseh.*—This is mentioned merely to prepare the way for the ensuing digression, concerning the daughters of Zelophehad.

VER. 3. But <sup>a</sup> Zelophehad, the son of Hopher, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, had no sons, but daughters: and these are the names of his daughters, Mahlah, and Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah.

*h* Numb. xxvi. 33; xxvii. 1; xxxvi. 2.

*But Zelophehad the son of Hopher, &c.*—See on Numb. xxvi. 33; xxvii. 1.

VER. 4. And they came near before <sup>1</sup> Eleazar the priest, and before Joshua the son of Nun, and before the princes, saying, <sup>a</sup> The LORD commanded Moses to give us an inheritance among our brethren; therefore according to the commandment of the LORD he gave them an inheritance among the brethren of their father.

*i* Chap. xiv. 1. *k* Numb. xxvii. 6, 7.

VER. 5. And there fell ten portions to Manasseh, besides the land of Gilead and Bashan, which were on the other side Jordan;

VER. 6. Because the daughters of Manasseh had an inheritance among his sons: and the rest of Manasseh's sons had the land of Gilead.

VER. 7. And the coast of Manasseh was from Asher to <sup>1</sup> Michmethath, that lieth before Shechem; and the border went along on the right hand unto the inhabitants of En-tappuah.

*l* Chap. xvi. 6.

VER. 8. Now Manasseh had the land of Tappuah: but <sup>m</sup> Tappuah on the border of Manasseh belonged to the children of Ephraim:

*n* Chap. xvi. 8.

VER. 9. And the coast descended <sup>n</sup> unto the river Kanah, southward of the river. <sup>o</sup> These cities of Ephraim are among the cities of Manasseh: the coast of Manasseh also was on the north side of the river, and the outgoings of it were at the sea:

*n* Chap. xvi. 8. *o* Chap. xvi. 9.

VER. 10. Southward it was Ephraim's, and northward it was Manasseh's, and the sea is

his border; and they met together in Asher on the north, and in Issachar on the east.

VER. 11. <sup>p</sup> And Manasseh had in Issachar, and in Asher, <sup>q</sup> Beth-shean and her towns, and Ibleam and her towns, and the inhabitants of Dor and her towns, and the inhabitants of En-dor and her towns, and the inhabitants of Taanach and her towns, and the inhabitants of Megiddo and her towns, even three countries.

*p* 1 Chr. vii. 29. *q* 1 Sam. xxxi. 10. 1 Kings iv. 12.

*Beth-shean and her towns.*—Heb. "and her daughters." Beth-shean or Beth-san, the Scythopolis of the Greek and Roman writers, was situated in the plain of Jordan, at the east end of the great plain of Jezreel, and not far from the sea of Galilee. It is now called Bisan, eight hours or twenty-four miles from Tiberias, and described by Dr. Richardson, as a collection of miserable hovels, containing about two hundred inhabitants. But the interesting ruins in its vicinity point out to the traveller its former grandeur and importance. *And the inhabitants.*—The phraseology is remarkable, implying that they had or possessed not the places only, but also the people; that is, that having spared them contrary to the divine command, they reduced them to the condition of dependents and menials, and served themselves of them.

VER. 12. Yet <sup>r</sup> the children of Manasseh could not drive out the inhabitants of those cities; but the Canaanites would dwell in that land.

*r* Judg. i. 27, 28.

*The children of Manasseh could not drive out, &c.*—Their inability was wholly of the moral kind. They could not do it, because they were not disposed to do it, just as it is said of Joseph's brethren, (Gen. xxxvii. 4,) that "they could not speak peaceably unto him," so strong was their personal dislike to him. The love of ease, the prospect of gain, and, perhaps, the feelings of humanity, accompanied by a gradual declension of faith and zeal, prevailed over the motives which should have prompted them to action, and so rendered them unable to effect the object. But an inability, arising from this source, was obviously inexcusable, on the same grounds that a drunkard's inability to master his propensity for strong drink is inexcusable. In like manner, the "cannot" of the impenitent sinner, in regard to the performance of his duty, is equally inexcusable. *The Canaanites would dwell in that land.*—Heb. "willed to dwell." A very remarkable expression, indicative of the obstinate determination of the Canaanites to retain possession of the country, and carrying with it a severe reflection upon the supineness, cowardice, and unbelief of the Israelites. The present version, "would," gives a very exact idea of the import of the original, which signifies to will, to determine, especially as the result of complacency, content, or satisfaction in any thing. It implies here, that the Canaanites resolved to

act their own will in remaining, that they would do as they pleased about it. Alas! how often is it the case that our innate lusts, those hidden enemies of the heart, obtain such an advantage over us, that they may be conceived as uttering the same language! Long accustomed to toleration and forbearance, they at length spurn control, and domineer in the most absolute manner. As if they held their place and power by prescription, they seem determined not to be dispossessed, and lord it with all the airs of despotic masters over their too easy and obsequious subjects. But such a base subjection as this, always costs the Christian dear, if, indeed, he be a Christian, over whom it is exercised. He may decline a vigorous contest now when the victory is comparatively easy, but he must prepare for the combat by and by, and must count upon tenfold difficulty in achieving a conquest. If he succeeds at all, he will barely escape with his life. Interest, duty, safety, all combine therefore to require of the believer the most determined and unremitting efforts to obtain and preserve a decided ascendancy over the inbred corruptions of his nature.

VER. 13. Yet it came to pass, when the children of Israel were waxen strong, that they put the Canaanites to tribute; but did not utterly drive them out.

s Chap. xvi. 10.

*Yet it came to pass, &c.*—This might better be rendered, “and” or “for it came to pass,” as the words are not intended to express an opposition to the leading sense of the preceding verse, but rather to point to the reason of the failure of the Israelites to expel their enemies: viz. because they found it more agreeable to put them under tribute, though in direct disobedience of the divine injunction. (Deut. xx. 16.)

VER. 14. ‘And the children of Joseph spake unto Joshua, saying, Why hast thou given me but one lot and one portion to inherit, seeing I am a great people, forasmuch as the Lord hath blessed me hitherto?’

† Chap. xvi. 4.    u Gen. xlviii. 22.    x Gen. xlviii. 19. Numb. xxvi. 34, 37.

*The children of Joseph.*—That is, both the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh conjointly. They speak, however, according to common usage in the Hebrew, as if they were but one person. *One lot and one portion.*—It is not easy to determine whether they complain of having received but one lot, when they considered themselves entitled to two, as being two distinct tribes, or that the district assigned to them was so small as to be no more than sufficient for one tribe of ordinary dimensions. They complain, however, of the narrowness of their bounds, and plead that their great numbers should constitute a claim for a larger portion. *Forasmuch as the Lord hath blessed me hitherto.*—Increased, multiplied me. On this sense of the word “bless,” see on Gen. i. 22.

VER. 15. And Joshua answered them, If thou be a great people, then get thee up to the wood-country, and cut down for thyself there in the land of the Perizzites and of the giants, if mount Ephraim be too narrow for thee.

*If thou be a great people.*—Joshua takes them at their word, and makes their alleged greatness an argument of their being the better able by their own energy and industry to make up any deficiency in their lot. The complete expulsion of the Canaanites from their territories would be a virtual enlargement of their bounds, and to this they ought to hold themselves obliged by the command and the promise of Jehovah. He intimates, if we mistake not, that their lot was in itself sufficiently extensive for their purposes, would they but make it all available, which he now enjoins it upon them to do. “Many wish for larger possessions, who do not cultivate and make the best of what they have; and think they should have more talents given them, when they do not trade with those with which they are intrusted.”—*Henry.* *Get thee up to the wood country.*—That is, to the mountainous parts, which are covered with wood. We suppose he still has in view certain parts of the tract which had not been expressly assigned, but which were at present possessed by the Perizzites and Rephaim, a gigantic and formidable race, whom they seem to have been backward to encounter. *Cut down for thyself.*—That is, prepare a place for thyself. They were to combine the labours of the axe with those of the sword, in obtaining and fitting up for themselves a suitable possession. It is, however, to be remarked that the original word here rendered “cut down,” is applied (Ezek. xxiii. 47) to dispatching with the sword, and that it is not, therefore, absolutely certain that it refers solely to cutting down the trees of a forest. It may mean cutting down enemies in war. Probably the genuine idea is, making a clearance for themselves, whether by felling the forests, or by cutting off the giants, or both. It is worthy of notice, that the original word is from the same root with בָּרָא “to create,” (Gen. i. 1,) and which we there endeavoured to show implied a process of re-forming, or renovating; just as the transforming an uninhabited woodland tract into cultivated fields or populous towns renovates or recreates a country.

VER. 16. And the children of Joseph said, The hill is not enough for us: and all the Canaanites that dwell in the land of the valley have chariots of iron, both they who are of Bethshean and her towns, and they who are of the valley of Jezreel.

y Judg. i. 19; iv. 3.

z Chap. xix. 18. 1 Kings iv. 12.

*The hill is not enough for us.*—Heb. “shall not be found for us.” That is, perhaps, is unattainable by us, cannot be mastered. The grounds of their apprehension they proceed to state in what follows. *And all the Canaanites, &c.*—Rather, for all the Canaanites, &c. It would be impossible, they thought, to make themselves

masters of the mountains, so long as their enemies, with their iron chariots, commanded all the adjacent valleys. Such a formidable defence would effectually preclude all access. *Chariots of iron.*—Not chariots made wholly of iron, but armed with it; chariots with long scythes fastened to their axletrees, as described above, (chap. xi. 4.)

VER. 17. And Joshua spake unto the house of Joseph, *even* to Ephraim and to Manasseh, saying, Thou art a great people, and hast great power: thou shalt not have one lot *only*:

*Thou shalt not have one lot only.*—Thou shalt not be restricted to what thou callest one lot; it is in fact a much larger territory, and thou doest wrong to call it by so diminutive a title. Only possess the whole, and great and powerful as thou art, thou wilt find no reason to complain of too contracted bounds.

VER. 18. But the mountain shall be thine; for it is a wood, and thou shalt cut it down: and the outgoings of it shall be thine: for thou shalt drive out the Canaanites, though they have iron chariots, and though they be strong.

*a* Deut. xx. 1.

*But the mountain shall be thine.*—The same mountainous or hilly tract of which he had spoken before. Seeing that their request proceeded only from pusillanimity and want of faith, he insists upon his first suggestion. He would have them quit themselves like men, and take possession of the fine wooded hills to which he referred before. There was no reason why they should ask any thing more. And as to the Canaanites and their chariots of iron, what were they when set in opposition to the almighty arm of Israel's God? They were not to fear for a moment but that they should drive them out, terrible as they were. *The outgoings of it shall be thine.*—Meaning, probably, the passages and valleys leading to it; *q. d.* "Clear away the wood, occupy the mountain, and you shall soon be able to command all the defiles, all the avenues of approach, and no enemy can make head against you." Otherwise, the meaning may be, The mountainous tract, in all the extent of its boundaries, shall be thine. This is sometimes the sense of "outgoings." We may learn from this petition of the sons of Joseph, (1.) How prone men are to be discontented with their lot. A dissatisfied mind, a disposition to murmur, envy, and covet, rather than to be content, thankful, and liberal, is, alas! too often characteristic of those who are really highly favoured of heaven, would they but survey their blessings in all their length and breadth, and extract the most out of them that they are capable of yielding. (2.) Our complaints of comforts withheld are often no more than testimonies of our own supineness, negligence, and fear of the cross. From an ignoble fear that our enemies are too many, or too mighty for us, and that we can do nothing, we sit down and attempt nothing; and yet we complain of providential allotments. Thus it is

that "the foolishness of man perverteth his way, and (yet) his heart fretteth against the Lord."

## CHAPTER XVII.

VER. 1. AND the whole congregation of the children of Israel assembled together at Shiloh, and set up the tabernacle of the congregation there: and the land was subdued before them.

*a* Chap. xix. 51; xx i. 2; xxii. 9. Jer. vii. 12.  
*b* Judges xviii. 31. 1 Sam. i. 3, 24; iv. 3, 4.

*The whole congregation—assembled at Shiloh.*—The withdrawal of the tribes of Judah, Ephraim, and Manasseh to take possession of their respective lots, would sensibly diminish the body of the people encamped around the tabernacle at Gilead, and make it inconvenient as a place of resort to those who were becoming settled at a distance. The expediency, therefore, of removing the tabernacle itself to a more central position was obvious, though the step, it may be presumed, would not be taken without divine direction, for God expressly retained to himself the prerogative of "choosing the place where he should cause his name to dwell," (Deut. xii. 11.) Shiloh accordingly was selected for this purpose. The name of this city is the same as that by which Jacob predicted the Messiah, (xlix. 10,) and some commentators suppose that it was first called Shiloh on this occasion, when selected for the resting-place of the ark, and the observance of those institutions which pointed to Christ, the great Peace-maker between heaven and earth. It was situated in the tribe of Ephraim, in the very centre of Canaan, about twenty miles north of Jerusalem, twelve north of Bethel, and ten south of Shechem. It was therefore the most convenient location possible for all the tribes, and as Joshua was himself of the tribe of Ephraim, he, as chief magistrate of the nation, would always have a ready access to the sanctuary, when the God of Israel was to be consulted. In this place the ark and the tabernacle remained for upwards of three hundred and fifty years, till taken by the Philistines, in the time of Eli. (1 Sam. iv. 1—11.) It was afterwards removed to Nob, and finally, in the reign of David, to Jerusalem. *And the land was subdued before them.*—Or, Heb. "for the land was subdued," intimating to the reader, how it happened that they were enabled to avail themselves of this favourable location. They were freed from the molestation of their enemies. The Canaanites were so far subdued that they offered no resistance or impediment to the occupation of the spot.

VER. 2. And there remained among the children of Israel seven tribes, which had not yet received their inheritance.

*Seven tribes which had not yet received their inheritance.*—The reasons of this delay are unknown. The probability is, that the original survey, on which the division thus far made was

founded, was so imperfect, that the remaining tribes were unwilling to have it made the basis of their respective allotments. This is to be inferred from the fact that Judah's portion was soon found to be too large, as Joseph's had already been found too small. The dissatisfaction expressed had led therefore to a temporary suspension of the work, till a new and more exact survey could be made. Add to this, that they appear to have become tired of the war. Their former conquests had enriched them with spoil, they were enjoying the ample provisions which had been treasured up for the use of the former inhabitants, and they became self-indulgent, slothful, and dilatory. They were now living at ease in the midst of their brethren; the regions that yet remained to be divided were remote from the station around which they were clustered, and if they went to take possession of them, they must break up their present connexions, drive their flocks and herds, and convey their wives and children to strange places, and undergo new hardships and trials. Besides this, great numbers of the Canaanites still remained in the unappropriated districts, and these, they knew, could not be expelled but at the expense of great effort, fatigue, and peril. Their hearts accordingly sunk within them at the prospect. They knew the work was to be done—they wished it were done—but still they had not spirit to undertake it. "The soul of the sluggard desireth and hath nothing." What a striking picture of the too common apathy and sluggishness of the candidate for the heavenly inheritance! How frequently is he diverted from present duties and debarred from present comforts, by giving way to slothful or timorous apprehensions of the difficulties that beset his path. What attainments might we not have secured, if, from the commencement of our warfare, we had not relaxed our zeal, nor made truces with our enemies, but had followed up our advantages in the spirit of true Christian heroes! May not many look back for years, and yet not be able to point out one foot of ground that they have gained, beyond that which was won in their first conflicts? Yet how certainly are the difficulties increased by delay! Forty years after this time, the tribe of Dan had to fight for their inheritance, and it was four hundred years before the Jebusites were driven from Jerusalem. Had all the tribes proceeded with united vigour to fulfil the divine command in its utmost extent, they would not so long have been annoyed by their remaining enemies, as "scourges in their sides, and thorns in their eyes." And who does not find that corruptions gather strength by indulgence, and that graces decay for want of exercise? Therefore let us look to ourselves, that we lose not the things that we have wrought.

VER. 3. And Joshua said unto the children of Israel, "How long are ye slack to go to possess the land which the LORD God of your fathers hath given you?"

*c* Judges xviii. 9.

*How long are ye slack to go to possess the land, &c.*—This is surely the language of rebuke, and

implies that there had been a criminal remissness among the tribes, in regard to this matter, the probable source of which is explained in the remarks on the preceding verse. It is true, indeed, that they could not well be enjoined to enter immediately, to rush, as it were, upon their inheritance, for the particular assignments were first to be made to each, but the point of the censure is directed to their indifference in this respect. They manifested no interest in, they were taking no steps towards, having the requisite survey and division made. This was the essence of their offence. So in reproving the impenitent for his neglecting to work out his own salvation with fear and trembling, and in pressing upon him the faithful discharge of every Christian duty, it is still to be understood that his first, his immediate business is to become reconciled to God, by unfeigned repentance; and thus to secure a title to eternal life. When this is done, his great concern in life is, like that of the Israelites in Canaan, to labour to enter into possession of his eternal inheritance.

VER. 4. Give out from among you three men for each tribe: and I will send them, and they shall rise, and go through the land, and describe it according to the inheritance of them, and they shall come again to me.

*Give out from among you.*—Heb. "Give ye for yourselves;" *i. e.* appoint, select, ordain. *Three men of each tribe.*—Of each of the seven tribes that yet remained to be provided for, making twenty-one in all. *Go through the land.*—Accompanied, perhaps, by a military guard to prevent the surveyors from being cut off by straggling parties of the Canaanites. Others suppose the Canaanites were supernaturally intimidated and restrained from attacking them. *Describe it.*—See on ver. 9. *According to the inheritance of them.*—Heb. "according to the mouth of their inheritance;" *i. e.*, probably to the value of their inheritance, or the country which they were to inherit; not of their particular inheritances, for these were afterwards to be assigned them by lot, but of the country in general which was to constitute their inheritance. This is frequently the sense of the Heb. term *mouth*, as may be seen by consulting Ex. xii. 4; xvi. 18. Gen. xliii. 7. Prov. xii. 8. The words of Josephus in his account of this affair, gives, as we conceive, very nearly the precise import of the original. "He also gave them a charge to estimate the measure of that part of the land that was most fruitful, and what was not so good." Again, "Joshua thought the land for the tribes should be divided by estimation of its goodness, rather than the largeness of its measure: it often happening that one acre of some sort of land was equivalent to a thousand other acres."—(Ant. b. v. chap. 1. s. 21.) Joshua's instructions, therefore, required the commissioners to have a special eye to the intrinsic value of the different parts of the country, as being more or less fertile and eligible.

VER. 5. And they shall divide it into seven parts; <sup>a</sup>Judah shall abide in their coast on the south,

and "the house of Joseph shall abide in their coast on the north.

d Chap. xv. 1.

e Chap. xvi. 1, 4.

*And they shall divide it.*—Or, Heb. "divide ye it." *Judah shall abide in their coast.*—In their district, in their region. Heb. "shall stand upon his border." The meaning undoubtedly is, that in this survey they were not to take into consideration the tribe of Judah, which was in the south, nor the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, which were on the north of where they now were, but were carefully to divide the remaining territory which was not occupied by these tribes into seven equal parts. The tribes of Judah and Joseph had been already provided for; let them stand by themselves. The terms north and south are here used relatively to Shiloh, rather than to the actual position of these two tribes.

VER. 6. Ye shall therefore describe the land into seven parts, and bring the description hither to me, f that I may cast lots for you here before the LORD our God.

f Chap. xiv. 2; v. 10.

*Before the Lord our God.*—Before the ark or tabernacle, over which the symbol of the divine presence rested. See on chap. iii. 11. The transaction was a solemn one, and he would have it so performed as that the tribes should look upon their possessions, as established to them by divine authority. The pious heart ever delights to look upon God as "determining the bounds of our habitations."

VER. 7. g But the Levites have no part among you; for the priesthood of the LORD is their inheritance. h And Gad, and Reuben, and half the tribe of Manasseh, have received their inheritance beyond Jordan on the east, which Moses the servant of the LORD gave them.

g Chap. xiii. 33.

h Chap. xiii. 8.

*The Levites have no part among you.*—See on chap. xiii. 14.

VER. 8. And the men arose, and went away: and Joshua charged them that went to describe the land, saying, Go and walk through the land, and describe it, and come again to me, that I may here cast lots for you before the LORD in Shiloh.

*And Joshua charged.*—Rather, "Joshua had charged," as we find mentioned ver. 6. These words and the remaining part of the verse should be included in a parenthesis.

VER. 9. And the men went and passed through the land, and described it by cities into seven parts in a book, and came again to Joshua the host at Shiloh.

*Described it in a book.*—Laid it down on a map

or chart, accompanied, perhaps, with a verbal description of the leading features of the country. This is the earliest instance of land surveying on record. The art was perhaps learned from the Egyptians; for their fields being annually overflowed by the Nile, and the landmarks swept away, they would be compelled frequently to re-survey them, in order to adjust their limits. This incident is capable, without a violent application, of yielding an important practical hint to the candidate for the heavenly inheritance. The sacred volume contains, not only the will which makes over to us the grant of this inheritance, but the title deeds themselves, yea a map also of the whole estate, a description of every thing that is valuable in it, and clear directions for securing the everlasting possession of it. We may ask, What would be our employment, if such a document were put into our hands in reference to an earthly inheritance?—especially if required to make out our title by proofs drawn from the record itself? Should we not diligently ponder such a record? Should we not call in professional aid, and use every possible effort to establish our rights? Should we feel at ease while the issue was doubtful? Should we willingly let the decision linger, and pass days and months in heedless indifference how the matter should terminate? Yet, alas! how many act thus in reference to their title to heaven. They are equally listless and negligent in making out their title, and "slack in taking possession" of the promised portion of the saints. They do not enter upon it as they might, by faith, and hope, and holy joy. They do not live in heaven, as they might, by setting their affections on things above, and having their conversation there. We are ready to say, it argued base ingratitude to God, and a virtual contempt of their own interest, in being so remiss in taking possession of that rich land of promise. But what was Canaan, compared to the rest that is above? If, like Paul, we could once be caught up to the third heavens, and behold for a single hour those blest abodes, should we ever be "slack" or lukewarm any more? Should we then think, that the most intense zeal in the service of Christ was being "righteous overmuch," or carrying matters too far, or any more than the very nature of the case required? Wherefore we would say to the cold-hearted and slack-handed followers of Christ, as the spies afterwards said to the neglectful Danites, "We have seen the land, and behold it is very good; and are ye still? Be not slothful to go and to enter to possess the land." *Described it by cities.*—Setting down the most remarkable cities, with their towns and villages, their distances from each other, and the territories adjacent. *And came again to Joshua.*—According to Josephus, at the end of seven months.

VER. 10. And Joshua cast lots for them in Shiloh before the LORD: and there Joshua divided the land unto the children of Israel according to their divisions.

*According to their divisions.*—According to their respective apportionments.

VER. 11. And the lot of the tribe of the children of Benjamin came up according to their families: and the coast of their lot came forth between the children of Judah and the children of Joseph.

*And the lot—came up.*—That is, came forth from the urn or vessel in which the lots were deposited. And so by an easy metaphor it is said immediately after, that “the coast came forth,” because the lot on which it depended came forth. In like manner it is said, (Levit. xvi. 9,) “The goat upon which the Lord’s lot fell, (Heb. upon which the Lord’s lot came up.)” *Between the children of Judah and the children of Joseph.*—See on Deut. xxxiii. 12. The prediction of Moses in regard to the lot of Benjamin was remarkably fulfilled, as may be seen in the note on Deut. xxxiii. 12.

VER. 12. <sup>i</sup> And their border on the north side was from Jordan; and the border went up to the side of Jericho on the north side, and went up through the mountains westward; and the goings out thereof were at the wilderness of Beth-aven.

<sup>i</sup> See chap. xvi. 1.

VER. 13. And the border went over from thence toward Luz, to the side of Luz, <sup>h</sup> which is Beth-el, southward; and the border descended to Ataroth-adar, near the hill that *lieth* on the south side <sup>i</sup> of the nether Beth-horon.

<sup>h</sup> Gen. xxviii. 19. Judg. i. 23. <sup>i</sup> Chap. xvi. 3.

VER. 14. And the border was drawn *thence*, and compassed the corner of the sea southward, from the hill that *lieth* before Beth-horon southward; and the goings out thereof were at <sup>m</sup> Kirjath-baal (which *is* Kirjath-jearim) a city of the children of Judah. This *was* the west quarter.

<sup>m</sup> Chap. xv. 9.

VER. 15. And the south quarter *was* from the end of Kirjath-jearim, and the border went out on the west, and went out to <sup>n</sup> the well of waters of Nephtoah:

<sup>n</sup> Chap. xv. 9.

VER. 16. And the border came down to the end of the mountain that *lieth* before <sup>o</sup> the valley of the son of Hinnom, and which *is* in the valley of the giants on the north, and descended to the valley of Hinnom, to the side of Jebusi on the south, and descended to <sup>p</sup> En-rogel,

<sup>o</sup> Chap. xv. 8. <sup>p</sup> Chap. xv. 7.

VER. 17. And was drawn from the north, and went forth to En-shemesh, and went forth toward Gelliloth, which *is* over against the going up of Adummim, and descended to <sup>q</sup> the stone of Bohan the son of Reuben,

<sup>q</sup> Chap. xv. 6.

VER. 18. And passed along toward the side over against <sup>r</sup> Arabah northward, and went down unto Arabah:

<sup>r</sup> Chap. xv. 6.

VER. 19. And the border passed along to the side of Beth-hoglah northward: and the outgoings of the border were at the north bay of the salt sea at the south end of Jordan. This *was* the south coast.

VER. 20. And Jordan was the border of it on the east side. This *was* the inheritance of the children of Benjamin, by the coasts thereof round about, according to their families.

VER. 21. Now the cities of the tribe of the children of Benjamin according to their families, were Jericho, and Beth-hoglah, and the valley of Keziz.

VER. 22. And Beth-arabah, and Zemaraim, and Beth-el,

VER. 23. And Avim, and Parah, and Ophrah,

VER. 24. And Chephar-haammonai, and Ophni, and Gaba; twelve cities with their villages:

VER. 25. Gibeon, and Ramah, and Beeroth,

VER. 26. And Mizpeh, and Chephirah, and Mozah,

VER. 27. And Rekem, and Irpeel, and Taralah,

VER. 28. And Zelah, Eleph, and <sup>s</sup> Jebusi, (which *is* Jerusalem) Gibeath, and Kirjath; fourteen cities with their villages. This *is* the inheritance of the children of Benjamin according to their families.

<sup>s</sup> Chap. xv. 8.

## CHAPTER XIX.

VER. 1. AND the second lot came forth to Simeon, *even* for the tribe of the children of Simeon according to their families: <sup>a</sup> and their inheritance was within the inheritance of the children of Judah.

<sup>a</sup> Ver. 9.

*The second lot came forth.*—Out of the urn. See on chap. xviii. 11. *For the tribe of the children of Simeon.*—Exegetical of the preceding word “Simeon,” showing that the names of persons are employed, as we have often elsewhere remarked, in a collective sense for the political bodies, the tribes, kingdoms, or countries of which they are the founders. *Their inheritance was within the inheritance of the children of Judah.*—It would seem that the first rude survey had led to an erroneous impression of the extent of the country. They had supposed it to be much larger than it really was. Under this impression they had assigned a large territory to Judah taking it for granted that the lots of the other tribes would be in the same proportion. But

upon closer examination it was found that at that rate of assignment the land would not hold out, and some of the tribes must be very much scantied, or left wholly destitute of their just inheritance. The obvious expedient was to take a part of the territory of Judah and allot it to Simeon. The inheritance of this tribe, therefore, is said to have fallen within the inheritance of Judah, because it was included within the original limits of the latter tribe, and is elsewhere seldom or never spoken of as a distinct district. In this arrangement the providence of God is to be especially noted, as Jacob, in the spirit of prophecy, had foretold that Simeon and Levi should be "divided in Jacob," and scattered in Israel." (Gen. xlix. 7.) This was accordingly most literally fulfilled in the manner in which these tribes were now disposed of. Levi was "scattered" throughout all the land, not having received any distinct inheritance, but only certain "cities to dwell in;" and Simeon, as we here learn, was "divided" or dispersed over the territories of Judah instead of having one of their own. This arrangement brought them into confederacy with the tribe of Judah, (Judges i. 3,) and afterwards was the occasion of the adherence of many of this tribe to the house of David at the time of the revolt of the ten tribes to Jeroboam. 2 Chron. xv. 9, "out of Simeon they fell to Asa in abundance."

VER. 2. And <sup>b</sup> they had in their inheritance, Beer-sheba, and Sheba, and Moladah,

<sup>b</sup> 1 Chron. iv. 28.

*Beer-sheba, Sheba.*—Heb. "Beer-sheba and (or even) Sheba." That one and the same city is designated by both these names, is clear from the fact, that otherwise there would have been fourteen cities instead of thirteen. Besides, in 1 Chron. iv. 28, where Simeon's cities are enumerated, the mention of Sheba is omitted as superfluous. As to the import of these names, see on Gen. xxi. 31, 32. In the description of the lots of Judah and Benjamin, an account is given both of the limits by which they were bounded and of the cities contained in them. In that of Ephraim and Manasseh the boundaries are given, but not the cities. In this chapter Simeon and Dan are described by their cities only, and not by their borders, because they were small, and the former lay within the limits of another tribe. The rest have both their borders described, and their cities named.

VER. 3. And Hazar-shual, and Balah, and Azem,

VER. 4. And Etlolad, and Bethul, and Hormah,

VER. 5. And Ziklag, and Beth-marcaboth, and Hazar-susah,

VER. 6. And Beth-lebaoth, and Sharuben; thirteen cities and their villages:

VER. 7. Ain, Remmon, and Ether, and Ashan; four cities and their villages:

VER. 8. And all the villages that were round about these cities to Baalath-beer, Ramath of the south. This is the inheritance of the tribe

of the children of Simeon according to their families.

VER. 9. Out of the portion of the children of Judah was the inheritance of the children of Simeon: for the part of the children of Judah was too much for them: "therefore the children of Simeon had their inheritance within the inheritance of them.

<sup>c</sup> Ver. 1.

*The part of the children of Judah was too much for them.*—Too large in proportion to the other tribes, and too large for their actual necessities; although, as being the most numerous of all the tribes, it might justly claim a more extensive territory than any of the rest. Yet when it was found that they could not insist upon the original allotment without manifest injustice to the other tribes, the men of Judah submitted without a murmur to relinquish a part of their possession. They will take no advantage of an unintentional error by withholding that which equity and kindness would require them to give up. The same generous principle will operate in like manner with every good man. If he has chanced, through the inadvertency or mistake of another, to gain an undue advantage in a contract, he will cheerfully wave his right, and make all the concessions which, in similar circumstances, he would wish to have made to himself. He will, as the apostle enjoins, look upon the things of others as well as upon his own.

VER. 10. And the third lot came up for the children of Zebulun, according to their families: and the border of their inheritance was unto Sarid:

*The third lot came up for the children of Zebulun.*—Though Zebulun was younger than Issachar, yet both in the prophetic blessing of Jacob and of Moses he came before him, and in like manner he has the precedence here also in the allotment of his inheritance. Providence is wonderful in its correspondence with prophecy. The lot of this tribe was washed by the Mediterranean on the west, and by the sea of Galilee on the east, agreeably to Jacob's prediction, (Gen. xlix. 13,) that Zebulun should be "a haven of ships."

VER. 11. <sup>d</sup> And their border went up toward the sea, and Maralah, and reached to Dabbatheth, and reached to the river that is before Jokneam,

<sup>d</sup> Gen. xlix. 13.

<sup>e</sup> Chap. xii. 22.

VER. 12. And turned from Sarid eastward, toward the sun-rising, unto the border of Chisloth-tabor, and then goeth out to Daberath, and goeth up to Japhia,

VER. 13. And from thence passeth on along on the east to Gittah-hepher, to Ittah-kazin, and goeth out to Remmon-methoar to Neah;

VER. 14. And the border compasseth it on the

north side to Hannathon: and the outgoings thereof are in the valley of Jiphtbah-el:

VER. 15. And Kattath, and Nahallal, and Shimron, and Idalah, and Beth-lehem; twelve cities with their villages.

*Bethlehem.*—A place lying at a great distance to the north of the Bethlehem in Judah, where our Lord was born.

VER. 16. This is the inheritance of the children of Zebulun according to their families; these cities with their villages.

VER. 17. And the fourth lot came out to Issachar, for the children of Issachar according to their families.

VER. 18. And their border was toward Jezreel, and Chesulloth, and Shunem,

VER. 19. And Haphraim, and Shihon, and Anaharath,

VER. 20. And Rabbith, and Kishion, and Abez,

VER. 21. And Remeth, and En-gannim, and En-haddah, and Beth-pazzez;

VER. 22. And the coast reacheth to Tabor, and Shahazimah, and Beth-shemesh: and the outgoings of their border were at Jordan; sixteen cities with their villages.

VER. 23. This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Issachar according to their families, the cities with their villages.

VER. 24. And the fifth lot came out for the tribe of the children of Asher according to their families.

VER. 25. And their border was Helkath, and Hali, and Beten, and Achshaph,

*And their border.*—The word "border" or "boundary," both here and in what follows, is not to be understood simply of the boundary line, but also of all the towns and lands which it embraces. It might be rendered "district" or "territory."

VER. 26. And Alammelech, and Amad, and Misheal; and reacheth to Carmel westward, and to Shihor-libnath;

VER. 27. And turneth toward the sun-rising to Beth-dagon, and reacheth to Zebulun, and to the valley of Jiphtah-el toward the north side of Bethemek, and Neiel, and goeth out to Cabul, on the left hand,

VER. 28. And Hebron, and Rehob, and Hammon, and Kanah, *f even unto great Zidon;*

*f Chap. xi. 8. Judg. i. 31.*

VER. 29. And then the coast turneth to Ramah, and to the strong city Tyre; and the coast turneth to Hosah: and the outgoings thereof are at the sea from the coast to Achzib:

*g Gen. xxxviii. 5. Judg. i. 31. Mic. i. 14.*

VER. 30. Unmah also, and Aphek, and Rehob: twenty and two cities with their villages.

*Twenty and two cities.*—The above enumeration gives us nearly thirty cities instead of twenty-two; but probably several are mentioned which were only frontier towns, sometimes reckoned as belonging to one tribe, and sometimes to another; or perhaps some of the appendant villages are named, as well as the towns.

VER. 31. This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Asher according to their families, these cities with their villages.

VER. 32. The sixth lot came out to the children of Naphtali, *even* for the children of Naphtali according to their families.

VER. 33. And their coast was from Heleph, from Allon to Zaanannim, and Adami, Nekeb, and Jabneel, unto Lakum; and the outgoings thereof were at Jordan:

VER. 34. And then <sup>h</sup>the coast turneth westward to Aznoth-tabor, and goeth out from thence to Hukkok, and reacheth to Zebulun on the south side, and reacheth to Asher on the west side, and to Judah upon Jordan toward the sunrising.

*h Deut. xxxiii. 23.*

*To Judah upon Jordan.*—How this is to be understood is not clear. It is certain that the tribe of Naphtali did not border on the east nor in any other direction upon Judah, for there were several tribes that lay between them. Both tribes, however, were bounded by the Jordan on the east, and they might be considered as in some sort conjoined by the easy communication with each other by means of that river. This we deem the only plausible interpretation of the passage, and thus understood it goes strikingly to illustrate the obscure prediction of Moses, (Deut. xxxiii. 23,) that Naphtali should "possess the west and the south," i. e. that although his settlement should be in the west or north-west, yet by means of the navigation of the Jordan, he should avail himself of the advantages of traffic with all the southern section of the land.

VER. 35. And the fenced cities are Ziddim, Zer, and Hammath, Rakkath, and Chinnereth,

VER. 36. And Adamah, and Ramah, and Hazor,

VER. 37. And Kedesh, and Edrei, and En-hazor,

VER. 38. And Iron, and Migdal-el, Horem, and Beth-anath, and Beth-shemesh; nineteen cities with their villages.

VER. 39. This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Naphtali according to their families, the cities and their villages.

VER. 40. And the seventh lot came out for the tribe of the children of Dan according to their families.

VER. 41. And the coast of their inheritance was Zorah, and Eshtaol, and Ir-shemesh,

VER. 42. And 'Shaalabbin, and Ajalon, and Jethlah,

† Judg. i. 35.

VER. 43. And Elon, and Thimnathah, and Ekron,

VER. 44. And Eltekeh, and Gibbethon, and Baalath,

VER. 45. And Jehud, and Bene-berak, and Gathrimmon,

VER. 46. And Me-jarkon and Rakkon, with the border before Japho.

VER. 47. And <sup>2</sup>the coast of the children of Dan went out *too little* for them; therefore the children of Dan went up to fight against Leshem, and took it, and smote it with the edge of the sword, and possessed it, and dwelt therein, and called Leshem 'Dan, after the name of Dan their father.

\* See Judg. xviii. † Judg. xviii. 29.

*The coast of the children of Dan went out too little for them.*—Heb. "went out from them;" *i. e.* out of their hands, out of their possession. A similar usage of the Hebrew verb occurs Lev. xxv. 28—33, where the lands in the year of jubilee are said to "go out;" *i. e.* out of the hands of the present possessor to the original owner. The meaning here undoubtedly is, that the Danites, being closely pressed upon by their powerful neighbours the Philistines, were forced in considerable numbers to abandon their allotted possessions. In consequence of having their original portion thus wrested out of their hands, they were induced to seek another in a distant quarter of the land, and made an inroad accordingly upon Leshem, lying at the foot of mount Lebanon, and near the sources of the river Jordan. This event, which occurred some time after the death of Joshua, and is more fully recorded Judg. xviii. 1—29; is touched upon here both to complete what is said of the inheritance of the Danites, and to intimate how it happened that a part of the tribe were afterwards found inhabiting a district of the country so remote from their original possessions. This addition to the narrative was perhaps made by Phineas.

VER. 48. This *is* the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Dan according to their families, these cities with their villages.

VER. 49. When they had made an end of dividing the land for inheritance by their coasts, the children of Israel gave an inheritance to Joshua the son of Nun among them:

*The children of Israel gave an inheritance to Joshua.*—As it is said immediately afterwards, (ver. 50,) that Joshua received his inheritance "according to the word of the Lord," it could be considered no otherwise the gift of the people, than as they cheerfully acquiesced in the assignment, and were glad of an opportunity of thus testifying, by their hearty concurrence, their

affection for their venerable leader, and their interest in his comfortable settlement in his old age. On his part, he evinced a striking moderation and disinterestedness, and proposed a noble example to all in public places, in making no provision for himself till he saw all the tribes fixed in their respective inheritances. This was acting in the true spirit of a public servant—to prefer the general welfare to his private convenience, ease, or emolument. So the servants of Christ, while they fully appreciate and ardently covet an inheritance in the Canaan above, will deem it soon enough to enter upon it when they have done all in their power towards bringing others to partake of the same glorious possession.

VER. 50. According to the word of the LORD they gave him the city which he asked, *even* "Timnath-<sup>2</sup>serah in mount Ephraim: and he built the city and dwelt therein.

*m* Chap. xxiv. 30. *n* 1 Chron. vii. 24.

*According to the word of the Lord.*—According to the promise of the Lord; made probably at the same time that a particular inheritance was promised to Caleb. This is to be inferred from Caleb's words, (chap. xiv. 6,) who in speaking to Joshua says, "Thou knowest the things that the Lord said unto Moses the man of God concerning me and thee in Kadesh-barnea." As Joshua had, on the occasion referred to, evinced equal courage and fidelity with Caleb, it is reasonable to suppose that he received the same tokens of the divine approbation. *Timnath-serah.*—Called Timnath-heres, (Judg. ii. 9,) where we learn that the name of the mountain on which it stood was Gaash. It was here that Joshua was buried, (chap. xxiv. 30.) *He built the city.*—Repaired it, put it in order, perhaps enlarged and adorned it. In this sense Nebuchadnezzar is said (Dan. iv. 30) "to have built Babylon."

VER. 51. <sup>o</sup>These *are* the inheritances which Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun, and the heads of the fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel, divided for an inheritance by lot <sup>p</sup>in Shiloh before the LORD, at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. So they made an end of dividing the country.

*o* Numb. xxxiv. 17. Chap. xiv. 1.  
*p* Chap. xviii. 1, 10.

*These are the inheritances, &c.*—This verse is inserted as a general conclusion to all that has been thus far said of the distribution of the land among the several tribes. The writer now turns to another subject.

## CHAPTER XX.

VER. 1. THE LORD also spake unto Joshua, saying,

VER. 2. Speak to the children of Israel, saying,

"Appoint out for you cities of refuge, whereof I spake unto you by the hand of Moses :

<sup>a</sup> Ex. xxi. 13. Numb. xxxv. 6, 11, 14. Deut. xix. 2, 9.

*Appoint out for you cities of refuge.*—Heb. "give for yourselves." No delinquency on the part of Joshua is to be inferred from this command, as if he had neglected, or were likely to neglect, a very important part of the arrangements designed to be carried into effect after the settlement of Israel in Canaan. He was well aware of the divine intention in this respect, and would doubtless have acted upon it, as well as upon every other order with which he was charged; but God saw fit to interpose, to remind him that now was the precise time, when the tribes had just received their inheritances, and while they were yet together, to separate the cities of refuge for the uses for which they were intended, and respecting which such copious instructions had been before given. (Numb. xxxv. 11—34. Deut. xix. 2—10.) To the notes on these passages the reader is referred for a fuller account of the nature and object of this institution. It was an essential appendage to the patriarchal system of government, as far as the avenging of blood was concerned. It has been already remarked, that the nearest of kin to a deceased person had not only the right of redeeming an inheritance that had been forfeited or alienated, but had also authority to slay on the spot the person who had slain his relative. But as a man might casually kill another against whom he had no ill will, and with whom he had no quarrel, and might thus be liable to lose his own life undeservedly, at the hands of the avenger of blood, these privileged cities were wisely and humanely appointed for the protection of those who had committed accidental homicide, till the cause could receive a judicial hearing from the magistrate. They had authority, according as, upon strict examination, they found him guilty or not of wilful murder, to deliver him up to the avenger of blood, or, after the lapse of a certain time, to grant him a discharge. *By the hand of Moses.*—By the agency, by the ministry of Moses, by him as an organ of communication.

VER. 3. That the slayer that killeth any person unawares and unwittingly, may flee thither: and they shall be your refuge from the avenger of blood.

*The slayer that killeth any person.*—Heb. "that smiteth (i. e. fatally) any soul." On this frequent sense of the word "soul," see note on Gen. xii. 5. *Unawares and unwittingly.*—Heb. "through ignorance, error, or mistake, and without knowledge." The conditions are stated with the utmost explicitness, in words amounting almost to repetition, as is evidently proper where a matter of so much consequence as the life of a human being is concerned. In cases of wilful murder, no place whatever could afford protection. A man might be taken even from the temple, or the horns of the altar. (Ex. xxi. 14. 2 Kings ii. 31, 34.)

VER. 4. And when he that doth flee unto one of

those cities shall stand at the entering of <sup>b</sup> the gate of the city, and shall declare his cause in the ears of the elders of that city, they shall take him into the city unto them, and give him a place, that he may dwell among them.

<sup>b</sup> Ruth iv. 1, 2.

*Shall stand at the entering of the gate.*—The usual place of judicature among the people of the East. *Shall declare his cause.*—Shall give a true, honest, and exact statement of all the circumstances under which the accident occurred. *They shall take him into the city.*—Heb. "shall gather him." Provided they are satisfied, from his relation of the facts, that he is innocent. *That he may dwell among them.*—It may be asked, why, if the proper judges were satisfied of his innocence of the crime of wilful murder, he were not at once dismissed from their jurisdiction, and suffered to go at large as usual? The proper reply doubtless is, (1.) That he might still be in danger from the enraged passions of the pursuer. (2.) He was to await the issue of another trial. (Ver. 6.) (3.) His detention was probably designed as somewhat of a punishment for the rashness or heedlessness to which the homicide was owing. Something of a penalty was to be paid for carelessness, as well as for crime.

VER. 5. And if the avenger of blood pursue after him, then they shall not deliver the slayer up into his hand; because he smote his neighbour unwittingly, and hated him not beforetime.

<sup>c</sup> Numb. xxxv. 12.

VER. 6. And he shall dwell in that city, <sup>d</sup> until he stand before the congregation for judgment, and until the death of the high priest that shall be in those days: then shall the slayer return, and come unto his own city, and unto his own house, unto the city from whence he fled.

<sup>d</sup> Numb. xxxv. 12, 25

*Until he stand before the congregation for judgment.*—In order to a still greater security for the interests of justice, and to guard with the utmost vigilance against a wrong decision, another hearing seems to have been appointed, after a considerable interval, and before a larger court, whose verdict was to be final in the case. It is probable that the "congregation" here spoken of was that of his own city, or of the people at large, who were also allowed to constitute a tribunal, and to sit in judgment on the case. Compare notes on Numb. xxxv. 25. *Until the death of the high priest.*—See on Numb. xxxv. 25.

VER. 7. And they appointed <sup>e</sup> Kedesh in Galilee in mount Naphtali, and <sup>f</sup> Shechem in mount Ephraim, and <sup>g</sup> Kirjath-arba, which is Hebron, in the <sup>h</sup> mountain of Judah.

<sup>e</sup> Chap. xxi. 32. 1 Chron. vi. 76. <sup>f</sup> Chap. xxi. 21.  
<sup>g</sup> Chap. xiv. 15; xxi. 11, 13. <sup>h</sup> Luke i. 39.

*And they appointed.*—Heb. “sanctified, consecrated,” a term implying the peculiar sacredness which God would have attached in the minds of his people to this institution. Accordingly they are sometimes, though not perhaps by the sacred writers, called sanctuaries. *In mount Naphtali.*—Or, Heb. “in the mountain,” *i. e.* the mountainous region or district of Naphtali; and so in respect to the two other places mentioned. They were situated on high hills, that they might be more conspicuous at a distance. It may also be remarked of these cities, (1.) That they were located at convenient distances from each other for the benefit of the several tribes. So of those here mentioned, Kedesh was in the northern, Shechem in the central, and Hebron in the southern district of Canaan. (2.) They were all Levitical cities; which appears to have been so ordered, that the cases of manslaughter might come under the cognizance of those who might be presumed to be most thoroughly versed in the law of God, and most competent to give judgment according to it, and who moreover would be less likely than any others to be swayed by private bias in their decisions. Compare Deut. xxi. 5, where it is said of the priests, the sons of Levi, that “by their word shall every controversy and every stroke be tried.” See also to the same purpose Deut. xvii. 8—13, and the notes on Deut. xxxiii. 9, 10.

VER. 8. And on the other side Jordan by Jericho eastward, they assigned <sup>1</sup>Bezer in the wilderness upon the plain out of the tribe of Reuben, and <sup>2</sup>Ramoth in Gilead out of the tribe of Gad, and <sup>3</sup>Golan in Bashan out of the tribe of Manasseh.

<sup>1</sup> Deut. iv. 43. Chap. xxi. 36. 1 Chron. vi. 78.  
<sup>2</sup> Chap. xxi. 38. 1 Kings xxii. 3. <sup>3</sup> Chap. xxi. 27.

*They assigned.*—Or, “had assigned,” for the assignment had been previously made by Moses, (Deut. iv. 41—43;) or the meaning may be, that they formally acknowledged, confirmed, and ratified the selection that Moses had before made of these cities.

VER. 9. <sup>m</sup> These were the cities appointed for all the children of Israel, and for the stranger that sojourneth among them, that whosoever killeth any person at unawares might flee thither, and not die by the hand of the avenger of blood, <sup>n</sup> until he stood before the congregation.

*Until he stood before the congregation.*—The judges and elders of the people, in trying civil and criminal causes, always sat; the persons who came for judgment, or who were tried, always stood. Hence the expressions so frequent in the Scripture, “standing before the Lord, before the judges, before the elders,” &c.

<sup>m</sup> Numb. xxxv. 15. <sup>n</sup> Ver. 6.

## CHAPTER XXI.

VER. 1. THEN came near the heads of the fathers of the Levites unto <sup>a</sup> Eleazar the priest, and unto Joshua the son of Nun, and unto the heads of the fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel;

<sup>a</sup> Chap. xiv. 1; xvii. 4.

*The heads of the fathers of the Levites.*—The most distinguished persons among the fathers, chiefs, or elders of the three families of Kohath, Gershom, and Merari, which constituted the body of the tribe of Levi. They here make their petition precisely at the time when it could be almost conveniently granted, *viz.* just after the allotments had been made to the other tribes. Whether this was prior or subsequent to the designation of the cities of refuge, mentioned in the foregoing chapter, it is not possible to determine.

VER. 2. And they spake unto them at <sup>b</sup> Shiloh in the land of Canaan, saying, ‘The LORD commanded by the hand of Moses to give us cities to dwell in, with the suburbs thereof for our cattle.

<sup>b</sup> Chap. xviii. 1. <sup>c</sup> Numb. xxxv. 2.

VER. 3. And the children of Israel gave unto the Levites out of their inheritance, at the commandment of the LORD, these cities and their suburbs.

*The children of Israel gave unto the Levites.*—They cheerfully obeyed the divine command: they gave them cities out of their several inheritances, without any fear of being impoverished by the appropriation. Nor will men ever find themselves sufferers in their temporal interests, in consequence of a liberal allowance to the ministers of the sanctuary. These cities were assigned by lot, that it might fully appear that God designed the Levites their habitations, as he designed the others their inheritances. The result of this arrangement would naturally be, that the Levites would be dispersed in every part of the land, to instruct the people in the knowledge of the divine law, to edify them by their example, to restrain them from idolatry, and prompt them to a constant adherence to the worship of Jehovah, the only true God. Thus the prophetic sentence of the patriarch, (Gen. xlix. 7,) that they should be “divided in Jacob, and scattered in Israel,” though originally carrying with it a punitive import, was through the special mercy of Heaven converted to a blessing to themselves and to the nation. *These cities.*—Referring to those which are enumerated in the sequel of this chapter.

VER. 4. And the lot came out for the families of the Kohathites: and <sup>d</sup> the children of Aaron the priest, *which were* of the Levites, <sup>e</sup> had by lot out of the tribe of Judah, and out of the

tribe of Simeon, and out of the tribe of Benjamin, thirteen cities.

<sup>a</sup> Ver. 8, 19.

<sup>e</sup> See chap. xxiv. 33.

*And the lot came out.*—It would seem that a certain number of cities were previously designated and set apart *en masse*, as the habitations of the Levites, and that the particular appropriation of them to the several families and their branches was then determined by lot. *The children of Aaron the priest.*—All the Kohathites were children of Aaron, in being lineally descended from him; but they were not all priests; whereas the phrase “children of Aaron,” here, is but another name for the priests, his successors in office: and these had their allotment of cities in the tribes of Judah, Simeon, and Benjamin; the rest, who were merely Levites and not priests, had their lot, as appears from ver. 5, in the tribes of Ephraim, Dan, and the half-tribe of Manasseh. The providence of God in this assignment is very remarkable, as in consequence of it the priestly part of Aaron’s posterity, who were the stated ministers of the sanctuary, the seat of which was afterwards to be fixed at Jerusalem, had their location nearest to that city, so that they were always conveniently situated with reference to the work to which they were appointed. *Thirteen cities.*—This was a large proportion for the present number of priests, which was small, but in view of the prospective increase of this body, and their future wants, it was no more than was requisite. As to the nature of the tenure by which the Levites held these appropriated cities, the probability is, that they had no other property in them than merely the right to certain places of habitation, which they might let or sell, but always with the right of perpetual redemption; and with the understanding that they were to return to them in the year of jubilee. But on this head, see notes on Lev. xxv. 32, 33.

VER. 5. And <sup>f</sup> the rest of the children of Kohath had by lot out of the families of the tribe of Ephraim, and out of the tribe of Dan, and out of the half-tribe of Manasseh, ten cities.

<sup>f</sup> Ver. 20, &c.

*Out of the tribe of Dan, &c. ten cities.*—A less number than was given out of the tribes above mentioned, because their inheritance was less. The law by which the appropriation was to be regulated is contained Numb. xxxv. 8, “And the cities which ye shall give shall be the possession of Israel; for them that have many (cities), ye shall give many; but from them that have few, ye shall give few; every one shall give of his cities unto the Levites, according to his inheritance which he inheriteth.” It may be remarked, that there is no evidence that the priests were bound to live in these, and in no other cities. When the tabernacle was at Nob, both the priests and Levites dwelt there, (1 Sam. xxi. 1—7;) and when the worship of God was established at Jerusalem, multitudes both of priests and Levites resided there, though it was no Levitical city; as did the courses of the priests afterwards at Jericho. This was a circumstance which Moses had foreseen and for which he had

provided. (Deut. xviii. 6, &c.) So, on the other hand, persons belonging to the other tribes were not precluded from living in the Levitical cities; as for instance Gibeah of Benjamin, which is here made a Levitical city, (ver. 17,) was always peopled by the Benjamites, as appears from Judg. xix.

VER. 6. And <sup>g</sup> the children of Gershon had by lot out of the families of the tribe of Issachar, and out of the tribe of Asher, and out of the tribe of Naphtali, and out of the half-tribe of Manasseh, in Bashan, thirteen cities.

<sup>g</sup> Ver. 27, &c.

VER. 7. <sup>h</sup> The children of Merari by their families had out of the tribe of Reuben, and out of the tribe of Gad, and out of the tribe of Zebulun, twelve cities.

<sup>h</sup> Ver. 34, &c.

VER. 8. <sup>i</sup> And the children of Israel gave by lot unto the Levites these cities with their suburbs, <sup>k</sup> as the LORD commanded by the hand of Moses.

<sup>i</sup> Ver. 3.

<sup>k</sup> Num. xxxv. 2.

VER. 9. And they gave out of the tribe of the children of Judah, and out of the tribe of the children of Simeon, these cities which are here mentioned by name,

VER. 10. <sup>l</sup> Which the children of Aaron, being of the families of the Kohathites, who were of the children of Levi, had: for theirs was the first lot.

<sup>l</sup> Ver. 4.

VER. 11. <sup>m</sup> And they gave them the city of Arba the father of <sup>n</sup> Anak (which city is Hebron) <sup>o</sup> in the hill-country of Judah, with the suburbs thereof round about it.

<sup>m</sup> 1 Chr. vi. 55. <sup>n</sup> Chap. xv. 13, 14. <sup>o</sup> Chap. xx. 7.

VER. 12. But <sup>p</sup> the fields of the city, and the villages thereof, gave they to Caleb the son of Jephunneh for his possession.

<sup>p</sup> Chap. xiv. 14. <sup>1</sup> Chr. vi. 56.

*The fields of the city—gave they to Caleb.*—As it would not necessarily involve the exclusion of himself or his family from a residence in the city, he probably gave it to the priests in order to set an example to his brethren of cheerfully contributing to the maintenance of religion. See on chap. xiv. 6—15.

VER. 13. Thus <sup>q</sup> they gave to the children of Aaron the priest, <sup>r</sup> Hebron with her suburbs, to be a city of refuge for the slayer; <sup>s</sup> and Libnah with her suburbs,

<sup>q</sup> 1 Chr. vi. 57, &c. <sup>r</sup> Chap. xv. 54; xx. 7. <sup>s</sup> Chap. xv. 42.

VER. 14. And <sup>t</sup>Jattir with her suburbs, <sup>u</sup>and Esh-temoa with her suburbs,

<sup>t</sup> Chap. xv. 48.      <sup>u</sup> Chap. xv. 50.

VER. 15. And <sup>x</sup>Holon with her suburbs, <sup>y</sup>and Debir with her suburbs,

<sup>x</sup> 1 Chr. vi. 58.      Chap. xv. 51.      <sup>y</sup> Chap. xv. 49.

VER. 16. And <sup>z</sup>Ain with her suburbs, <sup>a</sup>and Juttah with her suburbs, <sup>b</sup>and Beth-shemesh with her suburbs; nine cities out of those two tribes.

<sup>z</sup> 1 Chr. vi. 59.      Chap. xv. 42.      <sup>a</sup> Chap. xv. 55.  
<sup>b</sup> Chap. xv. 10.

VER. 17. And out of the tribe of Benjamin, <sup>c</sup>Gibeon with her suburbs, <sup>d</sup>Geba with her suburbs,

<sup>c</sup> Chap. xviii. 25.      <sup>d</sup> Chap. xviii. 24.

VER. 18. Anathoth with her suburbs, and <sup>e</sup>Almon with her suburbs; four cities.

<sup>e</sup> 1 Chr. vi. 60.

VER. 19. All the cities of the children of Aaron, the priests, *were* thirteen cities with their suburbs.

VER. 20. <sup>f</sup>And the families of the children of Kohath, the Levites which remained of the children of Kohath, even they had the cities of their lot out of the tribe of Ephraim.

<sup>f</sup> Ver. 5.      1 Chr. vi. 66.

VER. 21. For they gave them <sup>g</sup>Shechem with her suburbs in mount Ephraim, *to be* a city of refuge for the slayer; and Gezer with her suburbs,

<sup>g</sup> Chap. xx. 7.

VER. 22. And Kibzaim with her suburbs, and Beth-horon with her suburbs, four cities.

VER. 23. And out of the tribe of Dan, Eltekeh with her suburbs, Gibbethon with her suburbs,

VER. 24. Aijalon with her suburbs, Gath-rimmon with her suburbs; four cities.

VER. 25. And out of the half-tribe of Manasseh, Tanach with her suburbs, and Gath-rimmon with her suburbs; two cities.

*Tanach with her suburbs, and Gath-rimmon.*—In the parallel passage, (1 Chron. vi. 70.) Aner and Bileam are mentioned instead of the above. A careful examination of the two catalogues will discover several other discrepancies of the same kind, which are probably owing to the fact, either that some of the cities were called by different names, or that their names in process of time were changed. Others conjecture that some of the cities here enumerated being at this time in possession of the Canaanites, and not easily to be taken out of their hands, others were given them in their stead.

VER. 26. All the cities *were* ten with their suburbs, for the families of the children of Kohath that remained.

VER. 27. <sup>h</sup>And unto the children of Gershon, of the families of the Levites, out of the *other* half-tribe of Manasseh *they gave* <sup>i</sup>Golan in Bashan with her suburbs, *to be* a city of refuge for the slayer, and Beeshterah with her suburbs; two cities.

<sup>h</sup> Ver. 6.      1 Chr. vi. 71.      <sup>i</sup> Chap. xx. 8.

VER. 28. And out of the tribe of Issachar, Kishon with her suburbs, Dabareh with her suburbs,

VER. 29. Jarmuth with her suburbs, En-gannim with her suburbs; four cities.

VER. 30. And out of the tribe of Asher, Mishal with her suburbs, Abdon with her suburbs,

VER. 31. Helkath with her suburbs, and Rehob with her suburbs; four cities.

VER. 32. And out of the tribe of Naphtali, <sup>k</sup>Kedesh in Galilee with her suburbs, *to be* a city of refuge for the slayer: and Hammoth-dor with her suburbs, and Kartan with her suburbs; three cities.

<sup>k</sup> Chap. xx. 7.

VER. 33. All the cities of the Gershonites, according to their families, *were* thirteen cities with their suburbs.

VER. 34. <sup>l</sup>And unto the families of the children of Merari, the rest of the Levites, out of the tribe of Zebulun, Jokneam with her suburbs, and Kartah with her suburbs,

<sup>l</sup> Ver. 7.      See 1 Chron. vi. 77.

VER. 35. Dimnah with her suburbs, Nahalal with her suburbs; four cities.

VER. 36. And out of the tribe of Reuben, <sup>m</sup>Bezer with her suburbs, and Jahazah with her suburbs,

<sup>m</sup> Chap. xx. 8.

VER. 37. Kedemoth with her suburbs, and Mephaath with her suburbs; four cities.

VER. 38. And out of the tribe of Gad, <sup>n</sup>Ramoth in Gilead with her suburbs, *to be* a city of refuge for the slayer; and Mahanaim with her suburbs,

<sup>n</sup> Chap. xx. 8.

VER. 39. Heshbon with her suburbs, Jazer with her suburbs; four cities in all.

VER. 40. So all the cities for the children of Merari by their families, which were remaining of the families of the Levites, *were by* their lot twelve cities.

VER. 41. <sup>o</sup>All the cities of the Levites within

the possession of the children of Israel *were* forty and eight cities with their suburbs.

o Numb. xxxv. 7.

*All the cities—were forty and eight cities, with their suburbs.*—This was in exact accordance with the direction given by Moses several years before, as we learn from Numb. xxxv. 7. This order of Moses is a direct demonstration that it was given under divine inspiration, as, otherwise, how could he possibly have known that so many cities could be assigned to the Levites, without unduly encroaching on the limits of the other tribes?

VER. 42. These cities were every one with their suburbs round about them. Thus *were* all these cities.

*These cities were every one with their suburbs round about them.*—Heb. “these cities were city, city, and suburbs round about them.” That is, they each and every one had suburbs attached to them; by which is meant the adjacent territory to the extent of two thousand cubits on every side; of which see Numb. xxxv. 5.

VER. 43. And the LORD gave unto Israel *all* the land which he swore to give unto their fathers: and they possessed it, and dwelt therein.

p Gen. xlii. 15; xv. 18; xxvi. 3; xxviii. 4, 13.

*And the Lord gave unto Israel all the land, &c.* The foregoing history is here wound up by a suitable acknowledgment of the faithfulness of God, in the performance of all his promises. The Canaanites, it is true, were yet in possession of some parts of the country, but they were so far subdued, that they gave them no serious molestation, and they were enabled to sit down in their possessions in the enjoyment of comparative rest and quiet. They had as much of the land in actual possession as they could occupy; and as they increased God enabled them, according to his promise, (Exod. xxiii. 30,) to carry forward the work of extermination, and obtain farther room for their settlement. All the assurances given to Joshua, (chap. i. 5,) of a successful tide of victories during his life, were accomplished; and as to the subsequent annoyance and occasional prevalence of their enemies, it was owing solely to the supineness and infidelity of Israel. So long as they were obedient, they were uniformly triumphant and prosperous. See notes on chap. i. 5. “The inviolable truth of God’s promise, and the performance of it to the utmost, is what all the saints have been ready to bear their testimony to; and if in any thing it has seemed to come short, they have been as ready to own that they themselves must bear all the blame.”—*Henry*. “In due season all the promises of God will be accomplished to his true people; and their believing hope, and patient waiting and self-denying obedience, will terminate in joyful songs of triumph, and thankful celebrations of his faithfulness, love, and power. Then it will be universally acknowledged that there hath not failed aught of any good thing

which the Lord had spoken: nay, that he has exceeded their largest expectations, and made them more than conquerors, and brought them to their delightful rest and inheritance. May none of us at that season be found among his enemies, ‘who shall be destroyed for ever.’”—*Secc*.

VER. 44. *And the LORD gave them rest round about, according to all that he swore unto their fathers: and there stood not a man of all their enemies before them; the LORD delivered all their enemies into their hand.*

q Chap. i. 23; xxii. 4. r Deut. vii. 21.

VER. 45. *There failed not aught of any good thing which the LORD had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass.*

s Chap. xxiii. 14.

## CHAPTER XXII.

VER. 1. THEN Joshua called the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh,

*Then Joshua called, &c.*—The war being now, for the present at least, concluded, and their services no longer required.

VER. 2. And said unto them, Ye have kept *all* that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, *and* have obeyed my voice in all that I commanded you:

a Numb. xxxii. 20. Deut. iii. 18. b Chap. i. 16, 17.

VER. 3. Ye have not left your brethren these many days unto this day, but have kept the charge of the commandment of the LORD your God.

*Ye have not left your brethren these many days unto this day.*—Probably for the space of seven years; for the people were occupied for this period of time in subduing the land. Yet it is very possible that in the intervals of action, and when the rest of the army had retired into winter quarters, some of them at least may have visited their families across the Jordan, or been relieved by other detachments, though we have no clear intimation that this was the fact. Certain it is that these two tribes and a half had always their quota of men, originally amounting to 40,000, in readiness at their respective posts, for any service to which they might be called; and after so long a delay we can easily imagine how ardently they must have longed for the period of their release, when they could return to their peaceful homes, to be met with a joyful welcome by their wives and children. But like faithful soldiers they await the full close of the war, and an honourable discharge. Had they departed sooner, they would have been recalled as fugitives or branded as cowards; now they

retire with blessings and applause. So though our home in heaven be ever so attractive, we are required to remain contentedly on earth till our warfare be accomplished, and, instead of anticipating our removal, to wait for a due discharge at the hands of our divine Leader.

VER. 4. And now the LORD your God hath given rest unto your brethren, as he promised them : therefore now return ye, and get you unto your tents, and unto the land of your possession, which Moses the servant of the LORD gave you on the other side Jordan.

*c* Numb. xxxii. 33. Deut. xxix. 8. Chap. xiii. 8.

*Get you unto your tents.*—To your settled habitations, frequently called tents in the Scriptures. (2 Sam. xviii. 17. Hos. ix. 6. Mal. ii. 12.) It is probable, however, that they still retained somewhat of the nomade habits of their ancestors, and that tents were by no means uncommon among them.

VER. 5. But take diligent heed to do the commandment and the law, which Moses the servant of the LORD charged you, to love the LORD your God, and to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and to cleave unto him, and to serve him with all your heart, and with all your soul.

*d* Deut. vi. 6, 17 ; xi. 22. *e* Deut. x. 12.

*Take diligent heed.* &c.—Joshua thinks it not enough merely to dismiss them with the commendations which their zeal and fidelity had so richly merited, but in the spirit of a true servant of God, adds to his encomiums the most pious counsels and exhortations. It is not simply a general admonition relative to their religious duties, in which case one or two brief intimations would have sufficed, but the expressions are remarkably varied and accumulated, to show in the most forcible manner the unspeakable importance to every child of man of a life of devoted obedience. They were to give the most diligent heed to themselves to see that the love of God, as the great ruling principle of action, was deeply seated in their hearts; this must be evinced by the universality of their obedience, extending to every divine precept, and still further illustrated by the constancy, humility, resolution, and affection which were to characterise their walk. Counsel like this can never be unseasonable or superfluous. Even the most established Christian, whose progress in holiness has hitherto been most exemplary, cannot deem himself beyond the need of similar exhortations. As long as he abides in the flesh he needs to be “put in remembrance of these things, though he knows them, and be established in the present truth.” Especially does he need these kindly monitions when settled down, or about to be settled down, in a state of peace and prosperity; for such a state is one of peculiar danger to his spiritual interests. These disbanded soldiers of Israel were now returning to the bosom of their families, and the peaceful prosecution of their worldly

business. They needed, therefore, to be reminded of the danger, of which Moses had long before warned them, of forgetting the Lord their God while enjoying “houses which they built not, wells which they digged not, and vineyards which they planted not.” A constant mindfulness of God accordingly was the great object of Joshua’s solicitude for his departing brethren, and in his example we see the spirit of a Christian parent or guardian, and what kind of counsel he will be most anxious to impart to the children of his charge when about to retire from his immediate control and enter upon the wide stage of action in the world.

VER. 6. So Joshua blessed them, and sent them away : and they went unto their tents.

*f* Gen. xvii. 7. Ex. xxxix. 43. Chap. xiv. 13. 2 Sam. vi. 18. Luke xxiv. 50.

*So Joshua blessed them.*—Spake respectfully of their faithful services, wished them every spiritual and temporal good, and prayed earnestly to God to protect and prosper them. They undoubtedly returned with all convenient expedition. It had been a long absence, and the meeting was, no doubt, proportionably happy. Here below, business, journeys, voyages, and other casualties are continually separating the dearest relatives; but they are glad to get home in peace. How much happier for the Christian pilgrim, when his warfare of life is accomplished, to cross Jordan, and meet his brethren in glory, the family of God!

VER. 7. Now to the one half of the tribe of Manasseh, Moses had given possession in Bashan : but unto the other half thereof gave Joshua among their brethren on this side Jordan westward. And when Joshua sent them away also unto their tents, then he blessed them,

*g* Chap. xvii. 5.

*To the one half of the tribe of Manasseh, &c.*—This appears to come in here as a parenthesis, intimating the reason why the tribe was divided into two parts. Moses had before assigned one half of them their lot on the other side Jordan.

VER. 8. And he spake unto them, saying, Return with much riches unto your tents, and with very much cattle, with silver, and with gold, and with brass, and with iron, and with very much raiment : divide the spoil of your enemies with your brethren.

*h* Numb. xxxi. 27. 1 Sam. xxx. 14.

*Divide the spoil of your enemies with your brethren.*—Your brethren that have remained on the other side of the Jordan, protecting your families, flocks, and goods. It is not implied, however, that those who remained at home were to have an equal share of the spoil, as this would have been manifestly unjust from their superior numbers and inferior claims. See on Numb. xxxi. 27.

VER. 9. And the children of Reuben, and the children of Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh returned, and departed from the children of Israel out of Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan, to go unto 'the country of Gilead, to the land of their possession, whereof they were possessed, according to the word of the LORD by the hand of Moses.

i Numb. xxxii. 1, 26, 29.

VER. 10. And when they came unto the borders of Jordan, that are in the land of Canaan, the children of Reuben, and the children of Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh built there an altar by Jordan, a great altar to see to.

*The borders of Jordan.*—Heb. גְּלִילוֹת "geli-loth," properly the windings, meanderings made by the Jordan in its course, sometimes assuming almost a circular form, in accordance with the sense of the original term, which is used in some cases to signify a ring. The altar was doubtless erected on the eastern side of the Jordan, but it might have been situated upon a projecting tongue or promontory of land, that extended into the borders of Canaan Proper. The reader will observe, moreover, that the word "are," being printed in Italics, does not occur in the original, so that we may as properly render it "is," and understand the relative "that" of the river Jordan. *A great altar to see to.*—Very conspicuous. Heb. "an altar great to the sight." A vast mass of earth, stones, &c., elevated to a commanding height, and visible at a great distance; intended merely as a memorial to all future ages that they belonged to the tribes of Israel, and that they were worshippers of Israel's God, but made in imitation of the altar of burnt-offering at the tabernacle. Their motive in this was an apprehension that at some future period they might be disowned by their brethren on account of their not having their inheritance in the land of Canaan Proper.

VER. 11. And the children of Israel <sup>k</sup>heard say, Behold, the children of Reuben, and the children of Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, have built an altar over against the land of Canaan, in the borders of Jordan, at the passage of the children of Israel.

k Deut. xiii. 12, &c. Judg. xx. 12.

*Had built an altar over against the land of Canaan.*—This may be deemed conclusive proof that the site of the altar was on the east of the Jordan, in the inheritance of the two tribes and a half, and not on the west. There would have been no cause of suspecting it designed for sacrifice, had it been built on the Canaan side of Jordan.

VER. 12. And when the children of Israel heard of it, 'the whole congregation of the children of Israel gathered themselves together at Shiloh, to go up to war against them.

l Judg. xx. 1.

*The whole congregation—gathered themselves together.*—Not, perhaps, in their own persons, but by their representatives the elders, who transacted all affairs of this nature in the name and behalf of the people. *To go up to war against them.*—The case was one that laid a just ground for suspicion. Having no conception of an altar being erected for any purpose but that of sacrifice, the other tribes naturally regarded it as an act of rebellion against God, and determined instantly to go and punish the supposed apostates. By an express command (Exod. xx. 24. Lev. xvii. 8, 9. Deut. xii. 5—13.) the nation had been prohibited from worshipping God except at one altar, and for what other than a religious purpose could this structure have been reared? They, moreover, felt themselves impelled to this course by the tenor of the law, (Deut. xiii. 7—13,) requiring the most summary judgment to be executed upon the individuals or cities that should be found setting up an idolatrous worship. Their zeal for the Lord of hosts under this impression was very commendable. Though these trans-Jordanic tribes are their own brethren, bone of their bone, companions with them in tribulation in the wilderness, and their generous allies in the wars of Canaan, yet if they revolt from the true God and turn to the service of idols, or openly make a breach in the unity of his worship, they are determined to treat them no longer as brethren, but as enemies who were to be cut off as unsparingly as the Canaanites themselves. Their holy jealousy, therefore, in these circumstances, was no more than a proper expression of their intense concern for the glory of God and the honour of his institutions. But their zeal was tempered with the meekness of wisdom, and, before proceeding to extremities, they determined to send an embassy to inquire into the facts, and if their suspicions were confirmed, to see whether they could not be prevailed upon by milder methods to abandon their wicked enterprise and return to their allegiance to the God of Israel. Instead of saying that the case was too clear to admit of doubt, or too gross to allow of apology, they evidently go on the presumption that they may have been mistaken in their construction of the affair, and that at any rate it was proper that they should not condemn their brethren unheard, but should give them the opportunity of justifying themselves in the measure if it were possible. According to the wise man's direction, they will "upon good advice make war." A noble example of moderation, forbearance, and charity, shines forth in this conduct. How many an unhappy strife might be prevented by similar precaution, by simply staying to inquire calmly into that which constitutes the avowed matter of offence! How often would a few words of candid explanation smother in embryo the most angry controversies, violent quarrels, and embittered persecutions! By barely adopting the prudent conduct of Israel on this occasion, individuals, families, churches, and communities might, in a thousand instances, be saved a world of jealousy, enmity, discord, war, and bloodshed.

VER. 13. And the children of Israel <sup>m</sup>sent unto the children of Reuben, and to the children of

Gad, and to the half-tribe of Manasseh, into the land of Gilead, "Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest,

*m* Deut. xiii. 14. Judg. xx. 12.  
*n* Exod. vi. 25. Numb. xxv. 7.

VER. 14. And with him ten princes, of each chief house a prince, throughout all the tribes of Israel; and "each one *was* a head of the house of their fathers among the thousands of Israel.  
o Numb. i. 4.

*Phinehas—and with him ten princes.*—Persons of age, experience, and approved discretion, possessing weight of character in the congregation, and likely to be influenced more by the dictates of cool judgment than of hasty passion, were very properly selected to act in behalf of the people on this occasion. The ardent temperament of younger men could not so safely be trusted on such a trying emergency.

VER. 15. And they came unto the children of Reuben, and to the children of Gad, and to the half-tribe of Manasseh, unto the land of Gilead, and they spake with them, saying,

VER. 16. Thus saith the whole congregation of the LORD, What trespass is this that ye have committed against the God of Israel, to turn away this day from following the LORD, in that ye have builded you an altar, *n* that ye might rebel this day against the LORD?

*p* See Lev. xvii. 8, 9. Deut. xii. 18, 14.

*What trespass is this, &c.*—Without acquitting the ten tribes of the charge of somewhat of an undue precipitancy in taking up their unfavourable impressions, the matter in question was one on which they were justified in feeling strongly, and acting promptly. As it now appeared it was a step fraught with the most momentous consequences to the whole body of Israel. Repeated occasions had arisen wherein the sin of individuals had been visited upon the entire nation. The iniquity of Achan had not long since caused the defeat of Israel's hosts, together with the loss of six and thirty men; and not long before the connexion of many with the Midianitish women had brought destruction on twenty-four thousand Israelites in one day. What then could be expected, but that, if those who had erected the altar should go unpunished, God would punish all the other tribes as partners in their guilt? And if formerly one man's sin wrought so much indignation, what would be the consequences of the apostasy of two tribes and a half? To avert so terrible an evil, therefore, they felt to be their bounden duty at all events; and in order to this nothing could be more effectual than plainly reminding them of the sad effects of past transgression. "It is good to recollect and improve those instances of the wrath of God which have fallen out in our own time, and of which we ourselves have been eye-witnesses. The remembrance of great sins committed formerly, should engage us to stand upon our guard against the least occasions

and beginnings of sin; for the way of sin is down-hill."—*Henry.*

VER. 17. *Is the iniquity of Peor too little for us, from which we are not cleansed until this day, although there was a plague in the congregation of the LORD,*

*q* Numb. xxv. 3, 4. Deut. iv. 3

*Is the iniquity of Peor too little for us?*—The iniquity of our worshipping Peor. (Numb. xxv. 3. Deut. iv. 3.) Does this sin seem so small to us that we cannot be content with that, but must go on adding iniquity to iniquity? *From which we are not cleansed until this day.*—That is, of which we have not ceased to suffer the consequences to this day. The wrath of God was indeed so far appeased on that occasion by the zeal of Phineas, that he stayed the farther ravages of the plague; yet the shame, the disgrace, the infamy of that transaction still remained, and more than this, some tokens of the divine displeasure still continued to linger among the congregation. As we see from the case of David, men may repent of a heinous transgression and be graciously freed from the guilt of it, while at the same time they may continue to suffer from its evil consequences even to the close of life. In the present instance, however, the words may perhaps imply that some measure of that corrupt leaven still remained among them, that the infection was not wholly cured, and that though suppressed for the present, it was still secretly working, and was liable to break out again with fresh violence, as is also intimated in the words of Joshua, chap. xxiv. 23.

VER. 18. But that ye must turn away this day from following the LORD? and it will be, *seeing* ye rebel to-day against the LORD, that tomorrow *r* he will be wroth with the whole congregation of Israel.

*r* Numb. xvi. 22.

VER. 19. Notwithstanding, if the land of your possession *be* unclean, *then* pass ye over unto the land of the possession of the LORD, 'wherein the LORD's tabernacle dwelleth, and take possession among us: but rebel not against the LORD, nor rebel against us, in building you an altar beside the altar of the LORD our God.

*s* Chap. xviii. 1.

*If the land of your possession be unclean.*—If you have any prejudice against the land of your inheritance; if you think it not equally with ours under the divine favour and protection. They imagined that the two tribes and a half might think their land less holy for the want of an altar, and such tokens of the divine presence as pertained to the tabernacle. An opinion was generally prevalent among the ancients, that those countries in which there was no place set apart for the worship of God were unhalloed and unclean. The proposal displayed a very generous and disinter-

ested spirit, a willingness to make sacrifices in order to preserve purity, and consequently peace. Rather than they should set up a separate altar from a groundless dissatisfaction with their inheritance, they would cheerfully welcome them back to the other side of the Jordan, "where the Lord's tabernacle dwelt," though they should straiten themselves by so doing. But what was a little inconvenience to themselves when such an evil was to be averted, and such a good secured? How kind, how conciliating, how self-denying, how eager for accommodation, is the spirit of true piety! *But rebel not against the Lord.*—Implying that a deliberate departure from the instituted mode of worship is nothing short of downright rebellion against the God of heaven. Compare with this the parallel expression of Samuel relative to the conduct of Saul, (1 Sam. xv. 13.) *Beside the altar of the Lord our God.*—In addition to it.

VER. 20. 'Did not Achan the son of Zerah commit a trespass in the accursed thing, and wrath fell on all the congregation of Israel? and that man perished not alone in his iniquity.

† Chap. vii. 1, 5.

*And that man perished not alone in his iniquity.*—The idea expressed in these words of our common translation is unquestionably conveyed by the original; still it is not an exact version. The literal rendering of the Heb. is, "and he, one man, did not perish in his iniquity." That is, though he were but a single individual, and it might have been supposed that his death would have been the winding up of his existence in every respect, yet in reality such was his relation to the whole people as a sinner, such the connexion between his offence and the punishment of the whole nation, that in one sense he may be said to have survived his own death. He still lived in the fearful effects of his transgression, as visited upon the entire congregation. His life and his crime did not terminate together. A strikingly analogous passage occurs Numb. xxvii. 3.

VER. 21. Then the children of Reuben, and the children of Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh answered, and said unto the heads of the thousands of Israel,

*Then the children of Reuben—answered.*—If we find somewhat to blame in each of the opposite parties; in the one an undue precipitation in building the altar, and in the other, an undue hastiness in ascribing it to wrong intentions, we yet behold very much to admire in both. When the accusers found themselves mistaken, they did not shift their ground, and condemn their brethren for imprudence; nor when the accused had evinced their innocence, did they upbraid their accusers with hasty, rash, or unjust surmises. Aware that the measure was easily susceptible of the interpretation their brethren had put upon it, they took their reproofs, severe as they were, in good part, and instead of angry retorts or recriminations, gave them the soft answer which

turneth away wrath, and by a candid and honest declaration of their real intentions at once set themselves right in the opinion of their brethren.

VER. 22. The LORD " God of gods, the LORD God of gods, he " knoweth, and Israel he shall know; if *it be* in rebellion, or if in transgression against the LORD, (save us not this day,)

z Deut. x. 17.  
x 1 Kings viii. 39. Job x. 7; xxiii. 10. Psal. xlv. 21;  
cxxxix. 1, 2. Jer. xii. 3. 2 Cor. xi. 11, 31.

*The Lord God of gods.*—The original words, אֱלֹהִים יְהוָה "El Elohim Yehovah," are exceedingly emphatic, and cannot be easily translated. They are the three principal names by which the supreme God was known among the Hebrews, and may be rendered, "The strong God, Elohim Yehovah," which is nearly the version of Luther, "Der starke Gott, der Herr," the strong God, the Lord. *g. d.* "that almighty and omniscient Jehovah, whom we as well as you acknowledge and adore as the God of gods, infinitely superior to all that are called gods—to him we appeal as knowing our innocence, and that we would shudder at the thought of forsaking or dividing his worship." By this solemn appeal they would convince their brethren that their religious faith was unchanged, and their future conduct, they also intimate, should satisfy all Israel that with clean hands and an upright heart they had engaged in this undertaking. Where there is evidence of a deep and heart-felt reverence for God, there is the best security for pure intentions and a blameless course of conduct. *Save us not this day.*—Let God the Judge cause us to perish by the sword of our enemies or of our brethren, if either in principle or practice we have knowingly departed from him. It is a sudden apostrophe to God, prompted by strong emotion, and frequently occurring in speeches of a very earnest and vehement character, and highly expressive of conscious integrity.

VER. 23. That we have built us an altar to turn from following the LORD, or if to offer thereon burnt-offering, or meat-offering, or if to offer peace-offerings thereon, let the LORD himself \* require it;

g Deut. xviii. 19. 1 Sam. xx. 16.

*Let the Lord himself require it.*—Let him call us to account for it, and punish us as the offence may deserve; as the word "require" often signifies. See on Gen. ix. 5. Deut. xviii. 19. 1 Sam. xx. 16. The trans-Jordanic tribes were accused of erecting an altar prohibited by the law, and that with the design of apostatising from the true religion. They in their answer imply that the law is not violated except by altars intended for sacrifice; but such was not theirs, as they show by specifying the three principal uses of the divinely appointed altar, and denying that they contemplated either of these uses in erecting theirs.

VER. 24. And if we have not *rather* done it for fear of *this* thing, saying, In time to come your children might speak unto our children, saying, What have ye to do with the LORD God of Israel?

*For fear of this thing.*—What this thing was they immediately go on to state. They were apprehensive of certain consequences resulting from their local separation from their brethren, which are fully detailed in the ensuing verses. The original word for “fear” denotes a great perplexity and solicitude of mind bordering upon actual distress. It occurs Prov. xii. 25, where it signifies “affliction.” The amount of their answer is, that they were actuated by motives directly the reverse of those attributed to them. *In time to come.*—Heb. “to-morrow.” See note on chap. iv. 6.

VER. 25. For the LORD hath made Jordan a border between us and you, ye children of Reuben and children of Gad; ye have no part in the LORD. So shall your children make our children cease from fearing the LORD.

*So shall your children make our children cease from fearing the Lord.*—The danger to which they allude was not immediate, but prospective. There was little probability of their being disowned by their brethren of the present generation, but their children might be looked upon in after ages as having no interest in the God of Israel, or his instituted worship. The consequence would be, that, being cut off from public ordinances, the life and power of religion would die out from among them, they would become reckless of their duty and allegiance to God, wickedness would abound, and they would sink to a state of comparative heathenism. This was a prospect of which they could not endure to think: it was a state of things to be by all means averted; and though it would perhaps have been better to have consulted Joshua, or rather to have taken counsel of the Lord, respecting this measure before they carried it into execution, yet this solicitude for the spiritual welfare of their posterity cannot be too highly praised. Nothing weighs more deeply on the truly pious heart, than the transmission to the latest generations of those inestimable religious privileges which have been the comfort and blessing of their fathers. If the outward institutions of piety are wanting in any community, the very existence of piety itself is endangered, and where that is the case, the judgments instead of the mercies of Heaven will descend, as the inheritance of posterity. Yet, alas! how much more anxious are thousands to entail upon their descendants ample worldly possessions, even at the hazard of all their better interests, than to perpetuate among them those invaluable means of grace which take hold on eternal life! God forbid that we should ever be willing that our children should dwell in splendid mansions, or revel in accumulated riches, on which “Ichabod” is written!

VER. 26. Therefore we said, Let us now prepare

to build us an altar, not for burnt-offering, nor for sacrifice:

VER. 27. But *that it may be* a witness between us and you, and our generations after us, that we might do the service of the LORD before him with our burnt-offerings, and with our sacrifices, and with our peace-offerings; that your children may not say to our children in time to come, Ye have no part in the LORD.

<sup>a</sup> Gen. xxxi. 48. Chap. xxiv. 27. Ver. 34.  
<sup>a</sup> Deut. xii. 5, 6, 11, 12, 17, 18, 26, 27.

*That it may be a witness.*—An indelible monument and assurance that we are as truly the Lord’s people as yourselves, and entitled to share unto perpetuity in the same distinguishing services and privileges.

VER. 28. Therefore said we, that it shall be, when they should so say to us or to our generations in time to come, that we may say *again*, Behold the pattern of the altar of the LORD, which our fathers made, not for burnt-offerings, nor for sacrifices; but it is a witness between us and you.

*Say to us, or to our generations in time to come.*—Rather according to the well-known Heb. idiom, “say to us, even to our generations.” It is evident that their fears concerned their offspring, and not themselves. *That we may say again.*—That is, that our posterity, who shall be then living, may say. See on chap. iv. 23. *Behold the pattern.*—Rather the copy; the exact representation and resemblance. This they would have regarded as a sign, a memorial, that they both acknowledged and served the same God, and both made use of one and the same altar.

VER. 29. God forbid that we should rebel against the LORD, and turn this day from following the LORD, <sup>b</sup> to build an altar for burnt-offerings, for meat-offerings, or for sacrifices, beside the altar of the LORD our God that is before his tabernacle.

<sup>b</sup> Deut. xii. 13, 14.

VER. 30. And when Phinehas the priest, and the princes of the congregation, and heads of the thousands of Israel which were with him, heard the words that the children of Reuben, and the children of Gad, and the children of Manasseh spake, it pleased them.

VER. 31. And Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest said unto the children of Reuben, and to the children of Gad, and to the children of Manasseh, This day we perceive that the LORD is <sup>c</sup> among us, because ye have not committed this trespass against the LORD: now ye have delivered the children of Israel out of the hand of the LORD.

<sup>c</sup> Lev. xxvi. 11, 12. 2 Chron. xv. 2.

*This day we perceive that the Lord is among us.*—Rendered in the Targum of Jonathan, “This day we know that the majesty of the Lord dwelleth among us, because ye have not committed this prevarication against the word of the Lord, and thus ye have delivered the children of Israel from the hand of the word of the Lord.” The sense undoubtedly is, that the happy issue of the affair proved conclusively that God was among them by his preventing goodness. Had their motives been less pure and conscientious than they were, the result would have been unquestionably far more disastrous. But as all unhappy consequences had been avoided, the inference was inevitable that God was that day in the midst of them, that he had approved the spirit and motives in which the step originated, and, accordingly, would not suffer a well meant design to be productive of the injurious and mournful effects which they at one time apprehended. The obvious lesson taught by the passage is, that pure and pious motives in our conduct secure the presence of God with us, and consequently an exemption from the evils and disasters that would be sure to follow a contrary course. “When a man’s ways please the Lord, even his enemies shall be at peace with him.” How delightful to recognise the hand of a gracious Providence overruling the most untoward events and brightening the darkest prospects, in reference to his humble servants, who are aiming to walk in his fear! How desirable to afford to others the evidence that God is with us, and smiling upon us by the happy and prosperous results of all our undertakings! *Ye have delivered the children of Israel out of the hand of the Lord.*—As it is a sinful and perverse deportment that delivers us into the hand of God for punishment, so it is only repentance, and a corresponding humble and conscientious walk that will deliver us out of his hand. The effect of our example on the public welfare should operate at once to deter us from transgression, and engage us in the practice of every moral virtue.

VER. 32. And Phineas the son of Eleazar the priest, and the princes, returned from the children of Reuben, and from the children of Gad, out of the land of Gilead, unto the land of Canaan, to the children of Israel, and brought them word again.

*Brought them word again.*—Made a full and faithful report of the whole transaction upon their return to their brethren.

VER. 33. And the thing pleased the children of Israel; and the children of Israel <sup>d</sup> blessed God, and did not intend to go up against them in battle, to destroy the land wherein the children of Reuben and Gad dwelt.

<sup>d</sup> 1 Chr. xxix. 20. Neh. viii. 6. Dan. ii. 19. Luke ii. 28.

*Did not intend to go up.*—Heb. “said not to go up.” So 2 Sam. xxi. 16, “And Ishbi-benob—thought to have slain David;” Heb. “said to have slain;” *i. e.* purposed, intended. They renounced the intention of going up. They had at

first intended it, but the statements of their delegates convinced them there was no necessity for it, and they accordingly abandoned the idea entirely. *To destroy the land.*—To lay waste, to ravage, to make desolate the land.

VER. 34. And the children of Reuben and the children of Gad called the altar *Ed*: for it shall be a witness between us that the LORD is God.

*Called the altar Ed.*—It is remarkable that the last word in this clause, “Ed,” a witness, is not found in the original, at least in the common copies, though others are said to contain it, and it occurs in the Arabic and Syriac versions. Our translators have properly supplied it in italics, as it is the word which the sense evidently requires. How it comes to be lacking in the common editions of the Heb. it is impossible to determine. This altar, upon which there was probably an inscription, was henceforth to be a witness of the relation in which they stood to God and to Israel, and of their concurrence with the rest of the tribes in the great fundamental truth, that “the Lord he is God,” he and no other, and that he was to be worshipped in no other way, and at no other place, than he had himself prescribed. It was, moreover, a witness to posterity of their care to transmit their religion pure and unimpaired to them, and would be a witness against them, if ever they should forsake God and turn to idolatry.—From the incidents above related we may gather, (1.) That the best meant things may afford cause of suspicion. As those are sometimes suspected of aiming to effect a breach in the unity of the church, who are most diligently labouring to heal her divisions, and to preserve to posterity the purity of her doctrines and worship. (2.) It can do our brethren no injury to be jealous over them with a godly jealousy, even when we may be mistaken in our fears. (3.) Nothing will so soon kindle the zeal of a faithful and devoted spirit, as the symptoms of apostasy from God in others, because to such an one nothing is so dear as his glory. (4.) Rising corruptions and dangerous errors should, in the spirit of meekness, be resisted as soon as broached, lest the evil leaven, being permitted to spread, should leaven the whole mass. (5.) The testimony of a good conscience is the most effectual support against the heaviest accusation.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

VER. 1. AND it came to pass a long time after that the LORD “had given rest unto Israel from all their enemies round about, that Joshua <sup>b</sup> waxed old and stricken in age.

<sup>a</sup> Chap. xxi. 44; xxii. 4.

<sup>b</sup> Chap. xiii. 1.

*A long time after, &c.*—This is supposed to have been in the last or one hundred and tenth year of Joshua’s life, about thirteen or fourteen years after the conquest of Canaan, and seven after the division of the land among the tribes. *Old and stricken in years.*—Heb. “old and come, or gone, into days.”

VER. 2. And Joshua <sup>c</sup> called for all Israel, and for their elders, and for their heads, and for their judges, and for their officers, and said unto them, I am old and stricken in age:

<sup>c</sup> Deut. xxxi. 28. Chap. xxiv. 1. 1 Chron. xxvii. 1.

*Called for all Israel and for their elders, &c.*—Or, Heb. “called for all Israel, even for their elders,” &c. clearly indicating that by “all Israel,” is not meant the whole body of the nation assembled in their own persons, but their elders, heads, judges, &c., convened and acting representatively in the name of the people. They could easily communicate the substance of the charge in their several districts, so that all Israel could hear. This appears to have been the usual method of conducting the great and important affairs of the nation. See on Num. xvi. 1. Whether this assembly was held at Timnath-serah, where Joshua dwelt, or at Shiloh, where the ark was, it is not possible to determine. From the solemn object of the meeting we should infer that the latter was the place.

VER. 3. And ye have seen all that the LORD your God hath done unto all these nations because of you; for the “LORD your God *is* he that hath fought for you.

<sup>d</sup> Ex. xiv. 14. Chap. x. xiv. 14, 42.

*Ye have seen, &c.*—Joshua here speaks with characteristic modesty and humility. The scope of his address is to engage the covenant people, and their seed after them, to persevere in upholding the true faith and worship of the God of Israel. In order to this, he begins by putting them in mind of the divine interpositions in their behalf. He appeals to what their own eyes had seen, but so as at once to abase himself and exalt the Most High. He does not say, “Ye have seen what I have done, or what you have done, but what God himself has done.” They were mere instruments in his hand. It was no doubt natural for the Israelites to look upon their veteran general, who had led them on from conquest to conquest, with the most profound respect, and to say, “Had we not had such a commander, we had never succeeded so remarkably in obtaining possession of this goodly land.” But Joshua will leave them no ground for such reflections. He will not divide the glory of their success with God. He shows them that their enemies had been defeated, not by his prowess or theirs, but solely because the Lord their God had fought for them. The battle was the Lord’s, and not his, and he was entitled to all the glory. This sentiment is strikingly reiterated by the Psalmist, Psal. xlv. 3, “For they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them; but thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance, because thou hadst a favour unto them.” The leader of Israel, in these words, speaks the language of every pious heart, in view of every species of worldly success and prosperity.

VER. 4. Behold, <sup>e</sup> I have divided unto you by

<sup>e</sup> Chap. xiii. 2, 6; xviii. 10

lot these nations that remain, to be an inheritance for your tribes, from Jordan, with all the nations that I have cut off, even unto the great sea westward.

*I have divided unto you by lot.*—Heb. “I have caused it to fall unto you.” *Those nations that remain.*—That remain yet unconquered; where “nations” stand for the land, or country which they occupied; as on the contrary, “land” often stands for “nation” or “people.” Remnants of the devoted Canaanites still lingered about the country, though their armies had long since been broken to pieces, and they were disabled from making any effectual head against Israel.

VER. 5. And the LORD your God, <sup>f</sup> he shall expel them from before you, and drive them from out of your sight; and ye shall possess their land, <sup>g</sup> as the LORD your God hath promised unto you.

<sup>f</sup> Ex. xxiii. 30; xxxiii. 2; xxxiv. 11. Deut. xi. 23. Chap. xiii. 6. <sup>g</sup> Numb. xxxiii. 53.

*And drive them out—and ye shall possess.*—The same Heb. word, *וַיִּרְשׁוּ* “*yarash*,” is here used to signify, to expel from an inheritance, and to succeed those thus expelled. Ye shall disinherit them from before you, and ye shall inherit the land in their stead.

VER. 6. <sup>h</sup> Be ye therefore very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, <sup>i</sup> that ye turn not aside therefrom to the right hand, or to the left;

<sup>h</sup> Chap. i. 7. <sup>i</sup> Deut. v. 32; xxviii. 14.

*Be ye therefore very courageous to keep and to do.*—See observations on chap. i. 7—9.

VER. 7. That ye <sup>k</sup> come not among these nations, these that remain among you; neither <sup>l</sup> make mention of the name of their gods, nor cause to swear *by them*, neither serve them, nor bow yourselves unto them:

<sup>k</sup> Ex. xxiii. 33. Deut. vii. 2, 3. Prov. iv. 14. Eph. v. 11. <sup>l</sup> Ex. xxviii. 13. Psal. xv. 4. Jer. v. 7. Zeph. i. 5. See Numb. xxxii. 38.

*That ye come not among these nations.*—That ye have no familiar intercourse, nor form intimate connexions with them; which could not be done without contracting some measure of the defilement which their idolatries and iniquities had brought upon them. “Evil communications corrupt good manners.” The prohibition, as appears from ver. 12, is pointed especially at intermarriages with their heathen neighbours. *Neither make mention of the name of their gods.*—Or, Heb. “cause to be remembered.” Instead of showing the least respect to their idols, they were to endeavour, on the contrary, to bury the remembrance of them in perpetual oblivion; let their very names be forgotten. So David says of false gods, (Psal. xvi. 4,) “Their names will I not take up into my lips.” On the same principle, God says, (Hos. ii. 16, 17,) “At that day

thou shalt call me Ishi; and shalt call me no more Baali. For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name." Though Baali and Ishi signify the same thing, yet as the former was the appropriated name of idols, he would have it no longer employed, even in reference to himself. The habitual mention of the names of idols would go gradually to diminish the abhorrence in which they were bound to hold them, and eventually to introduce the custom of swearing by them in common discourse. This would infallibly tend to the general prevalence, if not to the formal establishment, of idolatrous practices among them. In like manner it may be seriously questioned, whether the paintings, statues, and poems, which abound in Christian countries, replete with allusions to the detestable heathen mythology, have not a most pernicious effect in lessening a just abhorrence of the Greek and Roman idolatry, and thus subserving the cause of scepticism, infidelity, and vice. *Nor cause to swear by them.*—To swear by any god was virtually to acknowledge him as a witness and avenger in the case of the violation of contracts, and so in effect a suitable object of religious worship. It is implied that they were not to make any covenants with idolaters, because in confirming their covenants they would swear by their idols. "Let no Israelite be a party to any transaction which should involve such a consequence. Neither swear by them yourselves, nor cause others by your procurement to do it." By neglecting these slighter occasions of idolatry they might be imperceptibly betrayed into it, and led along by degrees, till they had finally reached its highest step, which was serving false gods, and bowing down to them, in direct transgression of the letter of the second commandment.

VER. 8. But <sup>m</sup> cleave unto the LORD your God, as ye have done unto this day.

<sup>m</sup> Deut. x. 20; xi. 22; xiii. 4. Chap. xxii. 5.

*Cleave unto the Lord your God, &c.*—Delight in him, depend upon him, devote yourselves to his glory, and continue to do so unto the end, as you have done unto this day: ever since arriving in Canaan. For since that time, though there might have been many things more or less amiss among them, yet the nation at large had behaved much better than they did in the wilderness, and had not been guilty of any open or gross apostasy from God, but had followed him with exemplary fidelity.

VER. 9. "For the LORD hath driven out from before you great nations and strong: but as for you, no man hath been able to stand before you unto this day.

<sup>n</sup> Deut. xi. 23. <sup>o</sup> Chap. i. 5.

*For the Lord hath driven out.*—Or, as the original will admit of being rendered, "and the Lord will drive out," &c., and so the whole verse may be rendered in the future instead of the past, in which case it will connect more easily and naturally with the verse ensuing. *No man hath been able to stand before you.*—That is, when

it actually came to an issue. Some of the ancient inhabitants did indeed yet remain unconquered, but in every engagement the Israelites came off victorious. In this sense no man had been able to stand before them. Wherever an enemy had been encountered he had been overcome.

VER. 10. "One man of you shall chase a thousand: for the LORD your God, he *it is* that fighteth for you, <sup>r</sup> as he hath promised you.

<sup>p</sup> Lev. xxvi. 8. Deut. xxxii. 30. See Judg. iii. 31; xv. 15. 2 Sam. xxiii. 8. <sup>q</sup> Exod. xiv. 14; xiii. 27. Deut. iii. 22.

VER. 11. "Take good heed therefore unto yourselves, that ye love the LORD your God.

<sup>r</sup> Chap. xxii. 5.

*Take good heed therefore unto yourselves.*—Intimating the condition on which the foregoing promise should be made good to them. Let not the assurance of the divine favour, presence, and protection, tend to relax your diligence, or weaken the sense of obligation to love and serve him; on the contrary, let it operate as an additional motive to the most intense affection and devotedness towards your heavenly benefactor. As the temptations arising from the presence of your corrupt neighbours, and your own peace and prosperity, are greater than they were in the wilderness, it will require greater watchfulness and diligence to keep yourselves continually approved in the sight of Heaven.

VER. 12. Else if ye do in any wise <sup>s</sup> go back, and cleave unto the remnant of these nations, *even* these that remain among you, and shall <sup>t</sup> make marriages with them, and go in unto them, and they to you:

<sup>s</sup> Heb. x. 38, 39. 2 Pet. ii. 20, 21. <sup>t</sup> Deut. vii. 3.

VER. 13. Know for a certainty that <sup>u</sup> the LORD your God will no more drive out *any* of these nations from before you; <sup>v</sup> but they shall be snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish from off this good land which the LORD your God hath given you.

<sup>u</sup> Judg. ii. 3. <sup>v</sup> Exod. xxiii. 33. Num. xxxiii. 55. Deut. vii. 16. 1 Kings xi. 4.

*Know for a certainty.*—Heb. "knowing thou shalt know." *They shall be snares and traps unto you.*—You will be caught by their wiles; their baits and allurements will seduce you into crime, into a participation of their vile impieties; and as a consequence of this, taking advantage of your weakness, they will vex and harass, torment and oppress you, and as willing, though unconscious, instruments in the hand of a chastising Providence, will be as continual goods, spurs, or scourges in your sides, or as annoying thorns in your eyes. They will kill or drive away your cattle, burn or steal your harvests, lay waste your vineyards, alarm or plunder your houses, and in a thousand ways be a perpetual source of trouble. Nay, so completely shall they at length obtain the ascendancy, that your re-

spective conditions shall be reversed ; instead of exterminating them from the bounds of Canaan, you shall yourselves fall before them, or be utterly driven from your inheritance, from the "good land" which the Lord himself hath given. What could tend more powerfully to arm their spirits against the forbidden alliances than the prospect of such calamities as these? *Scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes.*—"What!" says a wife to her angry husband, "am I a thorn in your eyes?" "Alas! alas! he has seen another; I am now a thorn in his eyes." "Were I not a thorn in his eyes, his anger would not burn so long." "My old friend Tamban never looks at my house now, because it gives him thorns to his eyes."—*Roberts.*

VER. 14. And, behold, this day *I am* going the way of all the earth; and ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that *not* one thing hath failed of all the good things which the LORD your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, *and* not one thing hath failed thereof.

<sup>y</sup> 1 Kings ii. 2. See Heb. ix. 27.  
<sup>z</sup> Chap. xxi. 45. Luke xxi. 33.

*Going the way of all the earth.*—About to die, to go into the grave. To die, is in a sense to go a journey, a journey to our long home; it is the way of all the earth, the way that all mankind must go sooner or later. Joshua felt himself near his end, and he would have his people look upon him, and listen to him, as a dying man, that so his words might sink the deeper into their hearts. He would spend his last breath in taking them to witness that God had been punctiliously faithful to every promise, and in solemnly assuring them that every threatening, however fearful, would receive an equally certain and exact accomplishment. *Ye know—that not one thing hath failed, &c.*—The same appeal which is here made by Joshua to Israel after sixty years' experience, may be made to every believer that ever lived. We may bring forth every promise from the Bible, and then search the annals of the world, and inquire of every creature in it, and one single instance will be sought in vain of God's violating or forgetting a promise. The accomplishment may have been delayed or brought to pass in a way that was not expected, but the whole world may be challenged to impeach his veracity, or contradict the assertion, that "all which he hath promised is come to pass; not one thing hath failed thereof." But let it not be forgotten that the veracity of God is as much pledged for the execution of his threatenings, as for the performance of his promises. The one is a proof of the other. Yet among the world of the impenitent, where is there a mind divested of the floating impression, that mercy will in some way interpose to stay the outgoings of wrath? How many, alas! are now experiencing in hell what they would not believe on earth! The subsequent history of the chosen people abundantly shows that both the apostasy here deprecated, and the threatenings here denounced, did actually take place. Let then every Chris-

tian fear as he reads, "If God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he spare not thee." The worldly, carnal, sensual Christian has no more right to expect indulgence from the justice of God than the disobedient Jew.

VER. 15. "Therefore it shall come to pass, *that* as all good things are come upon you, which the LORD your God promised you; so shall the LORD bring upon you <sup>b</sup> all evil things, until he have destroyed you from off this good land which the LORD your God hath given you.

<sup>a</sup> Deut. xxviii. 63.

<sup>b</sup> Lev. xxvi. 16. Deut. xxviii. 15, 16, &c.

VER. 16. When ye have transgressed the covenant of the LORD your God, which he commanded you, and have gone and served other gods, and bowed yourselves to them; then shall the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and ye shall perish quickly from off the good land which he hath given unto you.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

VER. 1. AND Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to "Shechem, and <sup>b</sup> called for the elders of Israel, and for their heads, and for their judges, and for their officers; and they <sup>c</sup> presented themselves before God.

<sup>a</sup> Gen. xxxv. 4. <sup>b</sup> Chap. xxiii. 2. <sup>c</sup> 1 Sam. x. 19.

*Gathered all the tribes.*—That is, the heads, elders, and chief men of the tribes, though not them exclusively. See on Chap. xxiii. 2. Joshua probably found his life prolonged beyond his expectation, and, like Peter in his old age, thinking it meet "as long as he was in this tabernacle" to do his utmost towards "putting" and keeping his people "in remembrance" of the great things of their duty, embraces one more opportunity of convening the tribes by their representatives, and giving them a solemn parting charge. The pious servants of God may be disabled through age and infirmities from continuing their personal exertions, but they will never relax their zeal in the service of their Divine Master; and what they want in effective labours, they will endeavour to supply by stimulating and confirming the zeal of others. As Moses, at an advanced age, renewed the covenant in the plains of Moab which had been first entered into at Horeb forty years before, so Joshua on this occasion imitates his example, and makes it his last labour to engage the tribes of Israel once more to give themselves up to God in a perpetual covenant. Thus the good effects of his influence would remain when he himself was taken from them. "We must never think our work for God done till our life is done; and if he lengthen out our days beyond what we thought, we must conclude it is because he has some further service for us to do."—*Henry.*  
*To Shechem.*—As it is immediately added that

"they presented themselves before God," the natural inference would be that this transaction took place in the presence of the ark and the tabernacle, the usual meeting place of God and his people, which were now, as far as we know, at Shiloh instead of Shechem. This has occasioned some difficulty to commentators, especially as the Greek of the Sept. has Σηλο, "Shilo," both here and ver. 25, though the Aldine and Complutensian editions have Συχημ, "Sychem," in both places, which leads us to suppose that the former reading is a designed alteration, made with a view to obviate an apprehended discrepancy in the original. At any rate, there is no sufficient ground for questioning the genuineness of the present Hebrew text. The two following solutions, therefore, may be proposed; either, (1.) By Shechem here is meant, not the city so called, but the territory adjacent, extending to the distance of several miles, within the limits of which it is conjectured that Shiloh stood. But this is less likely, as Shiloh was at least ten miles distant from Shechem, and if the meeting had been at Shiloh we can see no reason why it should not have been expressly so stated. Or, (2.) That Shechem was really the place of the convocation, but that the tabernacle was for the present occasion transferred thither, as we learn Judg. xx. 1, 18. 1 Sam. iv. 3. 2 Sam. xv. 24, that it was sometimes on extraordinary emergencies temporarily removed. There were several reasons why Shechem should be considered the most suitable place for the assembling of the tribes on this occasion. It was a Levitical city, and nearer than Shiloh to Timnath-serah, Joshua's residence, whose age and infirmities might at this time have incapacitated him from travelling even a short distance from home. It was the place where the covenant was first made with Abraham ages before, (Gen. xii. 6, 7,) and so would be a peculiarly appropriate place for renewing that covenant, which was one end to be answered by their now coming together. It adds to the force of this reason, that it was in this immediate vicinity, between the two mounts Gerizzim and Ebal, that Joshua had before, on their first entrance into Canaan, convened the nation for a similar object. (Chap. viii. 30—35.) So that all the associations connected with the place would tend eminently to heighten the solemnity and impressiveness of the transaction in which they were about to engage. If, moreover, as from ver. 32 many suppose, it was on this occasion that the bones of Joseph, and perhaps of the other patriarchs, (Acts vii. 15, 16,) were deposited in the piece of ground which his father gave him near Shechem, it would constitute another strong reason for selecting this, in preference to Shiloh, as the place of the present meeting. That such was the fact, however, whatever might have been the reasons, and whatever the imagined difficulties involved in the supposition, there can be no doubt as long as we adhere to the letter of the sacred record. *Presented themselves before God.*—As intimated above, the presumption is that this presentation of themselves was before the ark of the covenant and the tabernacle, the visible residence of God among his people, and now removed to Shechem to give additional solemnity to the pro-

ceedings of the assembly. This impression is confirmed by ver. 62, where it is said, that "a great stone was set up there under an oak that was by the sanctuary of the Lord;" *i. e.* by the place where the sanctuary temporarily stood during the time of that convention. Yet the words do not necessarily demand this construction. The phrase "before God" or "before the Lord," is sometimes equivalent to "religiously, devoutly, as if under the inspection of the Divine eye." Thus Isaac (Gen. xxvii. 7) is said to have blessed Jacob "before the Lord," *i. e.* as in his presence, in his name, in a very solemn and devout manner. So Jephthah is said (Judg. xi. 11) to have uttered all his words "before the Lord," in the same sense. See on chap. iv. 13.

VER. 2. And Joshua said unto all the people, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, "Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and they served other gods.

d Gen. xi. 26, 31.

e Gen. xxxi. 53.

*Joshua said unto all the people.*—All the people now assembled, consisting mainly of the elders, chiefs, &c. (ver. 1,) but in addition to them of such portions of the body of the people as found it convenient to attend. *On the other side of the flood.*—That is, on the other side of the river, the river Euphrates; so called by way of eminence. "Flood" is an unfortunate rendering, as the original word is the common word for "river," and repeatedly and for the most part so translated in our established version. *In old time.*—Heb. "from everlasting;" *i. e.* from an indefinite period of remote antiquity, as the same term often signifies an indefinite period of time future. *Served other gods.*—From this it seems clear that Abraham's grandfather and father, and perhaps himself in the first instance, worshipped the idols of the country in which they lived. By this, however, we are probably not to understand that they had no knowledge of, or reverence for, the true God, but that they did not render to him that exclusive worship which was his due. In fact, we may conclude them to have been much the same in condition as Laban, who at a subsequent period represented that part of the family which remained beyond the Euphrates, and who certainly revered Jehovah, but who also had idols which he called his gods, and the loss of which filled him with vexation and anger. The partial idolatry of their ancestors, however, was humiliating to Israel. Even Abraham, the father of their nation, in whom they gloried, and who was subsequently so highly honoured of God, was born and bred up in the worship of false gods. This fact would cut off all vain boasting in the worthiest of their ancestors, as far as native character or early conduct was concerned. The father of the faithful himself became what he was purely by the grace of God, and not in virtue of his own innate tendencies to good. Indeed, his justification is expressly set forth by the apostle, (Rom. iv. 5,) as an instance of God's "justifying the ungodly."

VER. 3. And I took your father Abraham from the other side of the flood, and led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his seed, and *s* gave him Isaac.

f Gen. xii. 1. Acts vii. 2, 3.  
g Gen. xxi. 2, 3. Psal. cxxvii. 3.

And I took your father Abraham, &c.—I exercised such an influence upon him as induced him to leave that land of idolaters; I prompted him to go. Though no violence was employed, it implies that he would never have gone thence unless God had “taken” him, unless by a divine impulse he had moved him to go. See on Gen. ii. 15, relative to God’s “taking” Adam, and putting him into the garden of Eden. So it is the special grace of God that “takes” a sinner out of a state of impenitence and unbelief, and puts him in the way to eternal life, the road to the heavenly Canaan, that better country where lies the inheritance of the saints. *Led him throughout all the land of Canaan.*—Gave him my gracious guidance and protection during all his wanderings to and fro in that land of promise. *Multiplied his seed, and gave him Isaac.*—That is, multiplied his seed by giving him Isaac. As this “multiplication,” however, could not be said to be accomplished merely by the birth of a single son, it is to be understood, not of Isaac alone, but of the long and spreading line of his posterity, among whom he enumerates Jacob and Esau, including their issue, in the next verse.

VER. 4. And I gave unto Isaac *h* Jacob and Esau: and I gave unto *i* Esau mount Seir, to possess it: *k* but Jacob and his children went down into Egypt.

h Gen. xxv. 24—26.  
i Gen. xxxvi. 8. Deut. ii. 5.  
k Gen. xlv. 1, 6. Acts vii. 15.

I gave unto Esau mount Seir.—See on Gen. xxxvi. 7, 8. In order that the land of Canaan, by the removal of Esau, might be reserved entire to Jacob and his posterity. *But Jacob and his children went down into Egypt.*—Where they suffered a long and grievous bondage, the particulars of which the speaker does not deem it necessary to recite.

VER. 5. I sent Moses also and Aaron, and *m* I plagued Egypt, according to that which I did among them: and afterward I brought you out.

l Ex. iii. 10. m Ex. vii.—xii.

According to that which I did among them.—Heb. “which I did in the midst of him.” A peculiar phraseology, and not capable, perhaps, of being fully reached in any other language. It implies the essential reality of any thing compared with the outward manifestation, sign, or expression of it. Thus it is said of the butler and baker in prison, (Gen. xl. 5,) that they each dreamed a dream, “according to the interpretation of his dream,” i. e. one of which the event answered to the dream itself; a dream capable

of a sound interpretation, which Joseph gave, and which the actual fulfilment confirmed. So here the plagues of Egypt corresponded in fact, in reality, with all that had been predicted of them beforehand, with all that was recorded of them afterwards, and with all that struck the senses at the time of their actual occurrence. There was no illusion about them in any manner or degree. It was all reality. *Afterward I brought you out.*—Spoken of the present generation, though strictly true only of their fathers. Of the *usus loquendi* here involved, see note on chap. iv. 23. So also in the ensuing verses, where the reader will notice that the words, your fathers, and ye, them, and you, are remarkably interchanged.

VER. 6. And I *n* brought your fathers out of Egypt: and *o* ye came unto the sea; *p* and the Egyptians pursued after your fathers with chariots and horsemen unto the Red sea.

n Ex. xii. 37, 51. o Ex. xiv. 2. p Ex. xiv. 9.

*Came unto the sea.*—The Red Sea, as is afterwards expressed.

VER. 7. And when they *q* cried unto the LORD, *r* he put darkness between you and the Egyptians, *s* and brought the sea upon them, and covered them; and *t* your eyes have seen what I have done in Egypt: and ye dwelt in the wilderness *u* a long season.

q Ex. xiv. 10. r Ex. xiv. 20. s Ex. xiv. 27, 28.  
t Deut. iv. 34; xxix. 2. u Chap. v. 6.

*Brought the sea upon them—covered them.*—Heb. “brought the sea upon him—covered him.” Spoken of, according to usual analogy, as one man. *Dwelt in the wilderness a long season.*—A mild term for their being condemned to wander for forty years in the wilderness as a punishment for their sins.

VER. 8. And I brought you into the land of the Amorites, which dwelt on the other side Jordan; *x* and they fought with you: and I gave them into your hand, that ye might possess their land; and I destroyed them from before you.

x Numb. xxi. 21, 33. Deut. ii. 32; iii. 1.

VER. 9. Then *y* Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, arose and warred against Israel, and *z* sent and called Balaam the son of Beor to curse you:

y See Judg. xi. 25. z Numb. xxii. 5. Deut. xxiii. 4.

*Then Balak—arose and warred against Israel.*—From the previous history, (Numb. xxiii. and xxiv.,) and also from Judg. xi. 25, it would appear that Balak did not at any time actually engage in conflict with Israel. He is said, therefore, in this place to have “warred” against them, because he intended it, because he cherished a hostile purpose, and concerted his schemes and made his preparations accordingly.

The Scripture idiom often speaks of men as doing what they fully design and endeavour to do; and it is a very slight stretch of language to denominate him a warring enemy who has all the will, and lacks only the opportunity, to become so. (See Gen. xxxvii. 21. Ezek. xxiv. 13. Matt. v. 28. John x. 32, 33.) A similar phraseology occurs in ver. 11, in reference to the men of Jericho, which is perhaps to be explained on the same principle.

VER. 10. <sup>a</sup> But I would not hearken unto Balaam; <sup>b</sup> therefore he blessed you still: so I delivered you out of his hand.

<sup>a</sup> Deut. xxiii. 5. <sup>b</sup> Numb. xxiii. 11, 20; xxiv. 10.

*I would not hearken unto Balaam.*—Would not comply with his secret wish and purpose, nor allow him to curse you; would not fall in with or favour the ruling desire of his heart. *Delivered you out of his hand.*—Out of the hand of Balak, and all the wicked machinations which he had set on foot against you.

VER. 11. And <sup>c</sup> ye went over Jordan, and came unto Jericho: and <sup>d</sup> the men of Jericho fought against you, the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Gergashites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, and I delivered them into your hand.

<sup>c</sup> Chap. iii. 14, 17; iv. 10—12.  
<sup>d</sup> Chap. vi. 1; x. 1; xi. 1.

*The men of Jericho fought against you.*—Heb. “the masters or lords of Jericho.” This is understood, by many expositors, of the rulers or magistrates of Jericho; but as the ensuing words, “the Amorites, the Perizzites,” &c. seem to stand in immediate opposition with “men” or master, we take it that they are meant by the term, and are called “masters” of Jericho, from the fact that that city belonged to an extensive confederacy composed of the various neighbouring nations here specified, of whom it is obviously true that they “fought” against Israel, and were signally delivered into their hand. If, however, the phrase be understood of the citizens or chief men of the city of Jericho, though they did not actually meet Israel in the field, yet they may be said to have fought against them, inasmuch as they stood upon the defensive, and opposed them by shutting their gates, and probably in making what resistance they could after an entrance had been gained into the city. See on ver. 9.

VER. 12. And <sup>e</sup> I sent the hornet before you, which drave them out from before you, *even* the two kings of the Amorites: *but* <sup>f</sup> not with thy sword, nor with thy bow:

<sup>e</sup> Exod. xxiii. 28. Deut. vii. 20. <sup>f</sup> Psal. xlv. 3, 6.

*I sent the hornet before you.*—Understood by some literally of the insect so called, by others figuratively of the anxieties, perplexities, and pungent terrors which invaded the minds of the Canaanites on the reported approach of the hosts of Israel. For further remarks on the subject,

see on Exod. xxiii. 28, and “Illustrations of the Scriptures,” p. 66. The writer of the apocryphal book, entitled “The Wisdom of Solomon,” seems to have taken the words as literally true. Chap. xii. 8—10, “Nevertheless thou didst send wasps, fore-runners of thine host, to destroy them by little and little. Not that thou wast unable to bring the ungodly under the hand of the righteous in battle, or to destroy them at once with cruel beasts, or with one rough word. But, executing thy judgments by little and little, thou gavest them place of repentance, not being ignorant that they were a haughty generation, and that their malice was bred in them, and that their cogitation would never be changed.” *Not with thy sword, nor with thy bow.*—Not that these implements were not made use of in their wars, but that they would have used them in vain, unless God, by his secret or open judgments, had previously smitten and paralysed the power of the enemy. See the passage before quoted from Psal. xlv. 3.

VER. 13. And I have given you a land for which ye did not labour, and <sup>g</sup> cities which ye built not, and ye dwell in them; of the vineyards and olive-yards which ye planted not do ye eat.

<sup>g</sup> Deut. vi. 10, 11. Chap. xi. 13.

*For which ye did not labour.*—Heb. “thou didst not labour.” The whole body of the nation addressed collectively as one person. *Of the vineyards and olive-yards—do you eat.* That is, of their fruits; a usage of speech of not uncommon occurrence. Thus, (Gen. iii. 11,) “Hast thou eaten of the tree whereof,” &c.; *i. e.* of the fruit of the tree. So also in Rev. ii. 7. “I will give to him to eat of the tree of life.”

VER. 14. <sup>h</sup> Now, therefore, fear the LORD, and serve him in <sup>i</sup> sincerity and in truth; and <sup>k</sup> put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and <sup>l</sup> in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD.

<sup>h</sup> Deut. x. 12. <sup>i</sup> 1 Sam. xii. 24. <sup>j</sup> Gen. xvii. 1; xx. 5. Deut. xviii. 13. Psal. cxix. 1. <sup>k</sup> 2 Cor. i. 12. Eph. vi. 24. <sup>l</sup> Ver. ii. 23. Lev. xvii. 7. Ezek. xx. 18. <sup>m</sup> Ezek. xx. 7, 8; xxiii. 3.

*Now therefore fear the Lord, &c.*—The address of Joshua to Israel thus far has been occupied with a recital of the leading events of their national history, events going to show, in the most striking manner, the interposition of the Divine hand in their behalf. He would thus lay a foundation for that deep sense of obligation and obedience, which he aims, in the remainder of his discourse, to impress upon their minds. From this point, therefore, he begins a practical application of the various facts he had before enumerated, turning the whole into a powerful appeal to the consciences and the hearts of his hearers. *Serve him in sincerity and in truth.*—In uprightness, in integrity—not in pretence and outward semblance only, but in reality and in truth. Do not serve or worship other gods in private, while in public, in the eyes of men, you maintain the form of the worship of the true God. *Put away the gods*

*which your fathers served, &c.*—From the general character of this generation, as evinced by their conduct, and from the commendation bestowed upon them by Joshua, (Chap. xxiii. 8,) it is difficult to conceive that the positive practice of idolatry was now fairly chargeable upon them. If the secret sin of Achan, in stealing certain forbidden articles at the siege of Jericho, brought such fearful tokens of wrath upon the congregation, have we not reason to suppose that the act of paying divine honours to idols, however hidden from human observation, would have incurred at least an equal measure of divine indignation? And if such a sin were actually prevalent among them, how is it to be accounted for that Joshua had not warned them against it before? But perhaps the words of Joshua, in just construction, do not necessarily force upon us such a sense. The phrase, "Put away the gods," &c. may mean simply, "keep away, renounce, repudiate, have nothing to do with," being equivalent to a charge to preserve themselves pure from a contagion to which they were peculiarly liable. We prefer, therefore, to understand the expression of a vigorous and determined purpose of mind to which the speaker exhorts the chosen people, while at the same time we cannot deny that there may have been in solitary instances some lingering relics of actual idolatry, which Joshua would effectually extinguish by this solemn mandate. But that the offence was now prevalent to any considerable extent among the people we have no idea. Not but that there was sufficient corruption in their natures for such a propensity to live and act upon, but the tenor of the narrative does not, we conceive, justify the supposition in respect to them at this time. We are warranted, however, in drawing from Joshua's words the practical inference, that God requires the heart in his worship, without which there is no acceptable service; and that that is still an idol, to which our affections cleave more than they do to God himself. *In Egypt.*—This fact is nowhere else expressly asserted respecting the Israelites in Egypt, although Ezek. xxiii. 3, 8, and Acts vii. 42, 43, go strongly in confirmation of Joshua's words. Considering the idolatrous tendencies of human nature, it is not surprising that they should have suffered themselves to become infected with an evil everywhere so rife around them, and it was, perhaps, in part owing to this that their sufferings were so aggravated and embittered in that "house of bondage."

VER. 15. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, "choose ye this day whom ye will serve, whether "the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or "the gods of the Amorites in whose land ye dwell; " but as for me and my house we will serve the LORD.

*m* See Ruth i. 15. *l* Kin. xviii. 21. Ezek. xx. 39. John vi. 67. *n* Ver. 14. *o* Exod. xxiii. 24, 32, 33; xxxiv. 15. Deut. xlii. 7; xxxix. 18. Judg. vi. 10. *p* Gen. xviii. 19.

*If it seem evil in your eyes.*—Unjust, unreasonable, or attended with too many inconveniences. *Choose ye this day whom ye will*

*serve.*—Not implying that it was previously a matter of indifference, whether they served God or no, or that they were really at liberty to refuse his service if they saw fit; but he adopts this rhetorical mode of speech, in order to impress upon them more forcibly a sense of their duty, and the utter absurdity, as well as impiety, of devoting themselves to any other than the true God. It is a striking way of bringing the matter to an issue. His aim is to bring them to a decided stand; to a free, intelligent, firm, and lasting choice of God as their portion. In effecting this he makes use of a style of address which evidently implies that the service of idols compared with the service of God, is so irrational, absurd, and brutish, that no man in the calm exercise of his understanding could hesitate which to choose. If reason and conscience could but be allowed to speak, they would not fail to speak on the side of God. A similar course having the same object in view, was pursued by Elijah, (1 Kings xviii. 21,) who "came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him." The grand inference to be drawn from this mode of address is,—That the service of God is a matter of voluntary choice, and that it is his will that we should all seriously and solemnly make this choice. He would have us weigh the matter well, compare the respective claims of his service, and the service of sin and the world, and if our candid judgment, as it surely will, pronounces on the side of that which is good, and true, and right, and saving, to resolve at once to embrace it, and adhere to it with a constancy stronger than death. As the evidences in favour of religion are so clear and indisputable, and its infinite advantages so obvious, the man who declines making the choice here enjoined must be considered as deliberately preferring Satan to Christ, death to life, hell to heaven. He who acknowledges the paramount claims of God and the gospel, and yet does not act accordingly, does not sincerely and solemnly choose his service, as that better part which cannot be taken from him, must stand self-condemned both here and hereafter. *As for me and my house we will serve the Lord.*—Ye may act your pleasure in this matter, but whatever may be your election, I am decided as to my own course. As far as myself and my household are concerned, the question whom we shall serve is settled. Whatever halting or wavering there may be in other cases, there is none in mine. This declaration of their venerated leader, while devoid of the least air of dictation, and apparently leaving them the most unrestrained liberty of choice, was in fact the most powerful argument he could have used to influence their minds in the direction he wished. For the force of example is in proportion to the depth of respect and estimation in which an individual is held, and he could not fail to perceive that the reverence with which he was regarded would give to his example a weight and authority almost amounting to absolute law. Gratitude for his services, confidence in his wisdom, and love for his person, would all combine to make his conduct a pattern for theirs; and how blessed is it when those who possess these immense advan-

tages for exerting a salutary influence on others are disposed, like Joshua, to make it available to the salvation of their fellow-men! This noble resolution of the captain of Israel obviously suggests the following reflections; (1.) The service of God is nothing below the most distinguished of men. It is no diminution of their greatness, no disparagement to their rank, reputation, or honour to be decidedly pious, and to be openly and avowedly so. On the contrary, it heightens every other distinction, and makes all honour still more honourable. (2.) In regard to the great interests of religion and the soul, we are to be concerned for others, particularly our households, as well as for ourselves. It should be our earnest aim to unite our families, our wives, children, and servants, those that come under our special care and influence, with us in every pious resolution and labour. Heads of households should feel not only anxiety, but deep responsibility, in respect to those thus intrusted to their charge. (3.) Those that lead and rule in other things should be first in the service of God, and go before in every good work. (4.) We should resolve to do right and to do good, whatever others may do. Though others may desert the cause of God, we should stand by it at all hazards, whatever charge of singularity or expression of popular odium it may bring upon us. "Those that are bound for heaven must be willing to swim against the stream, and must not do as the most do, but do as the best do."—*Henry*.

VER. 16. And the people answered and said, God forbid that we should forsake the LORD, to serve other gods;

*The people answered and said, God forbid, &c.*—Joshua has the pleasure of finding the people ready from their hearts to concur with him in his pious resolution. By an emphatic expression, denoting the greatest dread and detestation imaginable, they show that they startle at the thought of apostatizing from God, as if it would imply their being utterly lost to justice, gratitude, honour, and every generous feeling. At the same time, they give such substantial reasons for their choice, as to show that it was not purely out of compliment to Joshua, highly as they esteemed him, that they made it, but from a full conviction of its intrinsic reasonableness and equity. They professedly and justly found their obligations, first on the consideration of the great and merciful things which God had done for them, in bringing them out of Egypt through the wilderness into Canaan, where they were now planted in peace; and, secondly, of the relation in which they stood to God as a covenant people. "He is our God;" he has graciously engaged himself by promise to us, and we have bound ourselves by solemn vow to him. Woe be to us if we prove false and treacherous to our plighted faith.

VER. 17. For the LORD our God, he *it is* that brought us up, and our fathers, out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and which did those great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way wherein we went,

and among all the people through whom we passed:

VER. 18. And the LORD drave out from before us all the people, even the Amorites which dwelt in the land: *therefore* will we also serve the LORD: for he is our God.

VER. 19. And Joshua said unto the people, 'Ye cannot serve the LORD: for he is a 'holy God: he is 'a jealous God; 'he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins.

*g* Matt. vi. 24. *r* Lev. xix. 2. *l* Sam. vi. 20.  
*Psal.* xcix. 5, 9. *Isa.* v. 16. *s* Ex. xx. 5. *t* Ex. xxxiii. 21.

*Ye cannot serve the Lord, &c.*—It cannot be supposed for a moment that Joshua intended to deter the people from the service of God by representing it as impracticable or dangerous. On the contrary, his design is to enlist them more sincerely and stedfastly in it; but his knowledge of the weakness and corruption of our fallen nature prompted him to do this in a manner that savours of discouragement and repulsiveness. Finding them now animated by a glowing zeal, forward and abundant in their professions, and unconsciously prone to trust to their own strength, Joshua, in these words, designs to administer a wholesome check to their ardour, by setting impressively before them the holy and sin-avenging character of the God with whom they had to do, and the fearful consequences of disobedience and apostasy. This would beat them off from that overweening self-confidence which they were so prone to indulge. It would convince them that it was no light and easy matter to persevere in the strict observance of the divine precepts, and thus they would be more cautious, circumspect, and humble in their professions, and go forward in their walk with more awe upon their spirits, and a more trembling sense of their dependence on a higher power than their own. This Joshua well knew was the only frame of mind which could be trusted to for permanent and happy results, and he therefore aims to have their present lively zeal based upon the only foundation that would ensure its continuance. He would have them count the cost of the engagements into which they proposed to enter, and be fully aware of the temptations, tribulations, conflicts, and self-denials which they would involve; and above all, would have their inmost souls pervaded by a deep and awful reverence of God, the essential principle of all true religion. In like manner, it deserves very serious deliberation whether there is not danger of representing the sincere service of God as a matter of very little difficulty, provided only there be evidence of a present vigorous resolution, and whether it be not better in such cases wisely to repress, chasten, and even dampen the warmth of present zeal by considerations like those which Joshua now pressed upon the children of Israel. The same infallible authority which assures that the yoke of Christ is easy, and his burthen light, assures us also that the gate is strait, and the way narrow, that leads to life, and that there is need of striving as well as seeking to enter in. Certain it is, that great wisdom is requisite in every spiritual guide

in digging deep and laying the foundations sure of a life of consistent, uniform, and devoted piety. Nor are we of opinion that the policy of such eminent servants of God as Moses, Joshua, Samuel, Peter, and Paul, will ever be out of date in the church. The more the sinner despairs of his own sufficiency, the better security will he give for his ultimate stability and perseverance in the faith. *He is an holy God.*—Heb. “he is holy Gods;” the adjective being plural as well as the substantive. The expression is remarkable, and contrary to usual analogy, but whether carrying with it any special implication in regard to the Divine nature, it is perhaps impossible to say. We imagine on the whole, that to a Hebrew ear the phrase would merely convey the idea of more emphasis, solemnity, and awfulness in respect to the attribute here affirmed of Jehovah. *Will not forgive.*—Or, Heb. “will not bear, will not tolerate.” The meaning is, not that God was implacable, or that he would not show mercy to the penitent, however great their sins, but that they could not offend against him with impunity, that he would certainly punish their transgressions. However it might be with others, they would be sure to be visited for their iniquities.

VER. 20. “If ye forsake the LORD, and serve strange gods, then he will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that he hath done you good.

*a* 1 Chron. xxviii. 9. 2 Chron. xv. 2. Ezra viii. 22. Isa. i. 28; lxxv. 11, 12. Jer. xvii. 13. *x* Chap. xxiii. 15. Isa. lxiii. 10. Acts vii. 42.

*Strange gods.*—Heb. “gods of the stranger or foreigner.” *Then he will turn, &c.*—Not in himself or in his dispositions towards his creatures, for we are elsewhere told, that with him there is “no variableness nor the least shadow of turning.” But the character of his dispensations, the course of his providence towards them should be entirely changed, in view of the change in their conduct towards him. He would henceforth be as severe and vindictive, as he had before been kind and gracious. *Consume you after that he hath done you good.*—Nothing so embitters the judgments of God, as the reflection that they have been incurred after the experience of his tender mercies. The fact that we have made him to repent of his past kindnesses to us, and forget all the good he had wrought in our behalf, barbs and envenoms the arrow of remorse beyond the power of language to describe.

VER. 21. And the people said unto Joshua, Nay; but we will serve the LORD.

*We will serve the Lord.*—This shows that they understood the words of Joshua to imply no moral inability on their side, and notwithstanding his statement of difficulties, and the seeming discouragements which he throws in their way, but which are really intended to quicken and invigorate their resolutions, they declare a firm and fixed purpose of obedience. In so saying, they did virtually confirm and ratify, by their own express consent, the covenant which Joshua

would now impose upon them, and by voluntarily engaging, as he intimated would be the case, to be witnesses against themselves, provided they turned aside from God, they did in effect affix their name and seal to that solemn covenant, and bind themselves, under fearful sanctions, to its faithful observance.

VER. 22. And Joshua said unto the people, Ye are witnesses against yourselves that ye have chosen you the LORD, to serve him. And they said, We are witnesses.

*y* Psa. cxix. 173.

VER. 23. Now therefore put away, said he, the strange gods which are among you, and incline your heart unto the LORD God of Israel. *z* Ver. 14. Gen. xxxv. 2. Judg. x. 16. 1 Sam. vii. 3.

VER. 24. And the people said unto Joshua, The LORD our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey.

*Put away the strange gods, &c.*—See above on ver. 14. Rabbi Levi, son of Gerson, a Jewish commentator, remarks upon this passage, that Joshua “says this to them, in order that if their hearts had been enticed by any of the idolatries of the people of that land, they should put away the pernicious thoughts that were in them.” Augustin is of the same opinion in relation to the true meaning of the passage.

VER. 25. So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and set them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem.

*a* See Exod. xv. 25. 2 Kings xi. 17. *b* Ver. 26.

*Joshua made a covenant.*—Heb. “cut a covenant;” alluding to the sacrifice usually offered on such occasions. But whether the ordinary rites were performed at this time is uncertain. The use of this term does not perhaps necessarily imply that they were. The ceremonies usual in forming and renewing a covenant might not have been the same. *Set them a statute and an ordinance.*—That is, as some suppose, on renewing the covenant he formed the whole into a statute and ordinance which was promulgated for all Israel to receive and obey. Both they and their posterity were to regard it in the light of a binding enactment, having all the force of a divine ordinance. Otherwise the phrase, “he set them a statute, &c.” may mean that he declared or propounded to them, he set before them, the sum and substance of the Mosaic statutes, which their covenant obliged them to observe. But from what is said in the next verse of his writing these words in the book of the law, we think the former the most correct interpretation.

VER. 26. And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God, and took a great stone, and set it up there under an oak that was by the sanctuary of the LORD.

*c* Deut. xxxi. 21.

*e* See Gen. xxviii. 18.

*d* See Judg. ix. 6.

*f* Gen. xxxv. 4.

*Wrote these words in the book of the law of God.*—He made a record of the transaction, particularly of the solemn engagements of the people, and inserted it on some blank space of the great roll on which the sacred canon was originally inscribed. There it was written, that their obligation to obedience by the divine precept and by their own promise, might remain on record together. It would thus, as intimated in ver. 25, from its very position serve more effectually as “a statute and an ordinance,” and be in fact an everlasting witness against them in case they should prove unfaithful to the compact, for it was probably transcribed from thence into all the other copies of the law which were multiplied in after ages for the benefit of the nation. *Took a great stone, and set it up there under an oak.*—To insure still more effectually the memory of this solemn transaction, Joshua reared a pillar of stone on the spot, according to the custom of ancient times, (Gen. xxviii. 18. Deut. xxvii. 2,) as an enduring monument of the event which had now occurred. Whether the stone contained an inscription defining the purpose of its erection, is not certain, though not improbable. The “oak” here mentioned is supposed by some to have been the same with that under which Jacob buried the idols and images that were found in his family, (Gen. xxxv. 4,) but in Judges ix. 6, the original term is translated “plain,” and the place where the stone is set up is called “the plain of the pillar.” *That was by the sanctuary of the Lord.* Near the place where the ark and the tabernacle now stood, during their temporary continuance at Shechem. See on ver. 1.

VER. 27. And Joshua said unto all the people, Behold, this stone shall be *g* a witness unto us; for *h* it hath heard all the words of the LORD which he spake unto us: it shall be therefore a witness unto you, lest ye deny your God.

*g* See Gen. xxxi. 48, 52. Deut. xxxi. 19, 21, 26. Chap. xxi. 27, 28, 34. *h* Deut. xxxii. 1.

*It hath heard all the words, &c.*—A strong figure of speech, by which he tacitly upbraids the people with the hardness of their hearts, as if this stone had heard to as good purpose as some of them; and if they should forget what was now done, this stone would so far preserve the remembrance of it, as to reproach them for their stupidity and carelessness, and be a witness against them. Williams very appositely cites from Livy the following instance of a similar phraseology;—“The general of the Æqui informed the Roman ambassadors (sent to complain of a plundering excursion) that they might deliver their message to an oak which shaded his tent. On this one of the ambassadors turning away said: “This venerable oak and all the gods shall know that you have violated the peace; they shall now hear our complaints; and may they soon be witnesses, when we revenge with our arms the violation of divine and human rights.” By a like usage of speech the sacred writers frequently call upon the heavens and the earth to hear their addresses to the people of Israel. (Deut. xxxii. 1. Isa. i. 2.)

VER. 28. So *i* Joshua let the people depart, every man unto his inheritance.

*i* Judg. ii. 6.

*So Joshua let the people depart, every man unto his inheritance.*—Heb. “sent away, or dismissed.” This verse occurs in nearly the same words Judges ii. 6, with the added clause, “to possess the land;” *i. e.* that every one might manfully exert himself to expel the Canaanites and obtain the complete possession of his destined inheritance.—“In this affecting manner Joshua took his leave of Israel, went from this last and perhaps best source to God and them, and was speedily taken to his rest in heaven.”—*Scott.*

VER. 29. *k* And it came to pass after these things, that Joshua the son of Nun the servant of the LORD died, being a hundred and ten years old.

*k* Judg. ii. 8.

*Joshua—died, being an hundred and ten years old.*—Precisely the age of his renowned ancestor Joseph; yet he was not buried in the same place with him, but in his own inheritance, which seems to have been the general practice. How long he lived after the entrance of Israel into Canaan we have no means of determining. Lightfoot thinks it was about seventeen years, but the Jewish chronologers generally fix it at twenty-seven or twenty-eight. There is no mention of any public mourning at his death, as there was for Moses and Aaron, and his only epitaph was, in effect, couched in the brief terms, “THE SERVANT OF THE LORD.” This however comprehended the sum of the highest eulogiums that could be bestowed on his character. Though inferior in many respects to Moses, yet in this he was equal to him, that according as his work was in the sphere in which he was placed, he had approved himself a diligent, devoted, and faithful servant of the Most High; and no man need desire a more honourable testimonial to record his worth to his own or future generations.

VER. 30. And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in *l* Timnath-serah, which is in mount Ephraim, on the north side of the hill of Gaash.

*l* Chap. xix. 50. Judg. ii. 9.

*Buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnath-serah.*—In the compass, in the limits of his inheritance. See the remark on the import of the word “border” in the note on chap. xix. 25. Of Timnath-serah, see on Judges ii. 9.

VER. 31. And *m* Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua, and which had *n* known all the works of the LORD that he had done for Israel.

*m* Judg. ii. 7.

*n* See Deut. xi. 2; xxxi. 13.

*The elders that overlived Joshua.*—Heb. “that prolonged their days after Joshua.” Intimating that the salutary influence of Joshua’s exemplary

life and character extended beyond the term of his natural existence, and served for a number of years to keep the people in a general course of obedience. Whether for good or for evil the effect of our example may be expected to live after us. This shows that this part of the book must have been written a considerable time after the death of Joshua. See on chap. iv. 9. *Which had known all the works of the Lord.*—Who had been eye-witnesses of them, who had profoundly and devoutly regarded them; who had not only seen them, but pondered upon them with those sentiments which they were calculated to excite. Such is the genuine import of “known” in this connexion.

VER. 32. And the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel brought up out of Egypt, buried they in Shechem, in a parcel of ground which Jacob bought of the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for a hundred pieces of silver; and it became the inheritance of the children of Joseph.

o Gen. i. 25. Ex. xiii. 19. p Gen. xxxiii. 19.

*The bones of Joseph buried they in Shechem.*—Joseph's death took place in Egypt about two hundred years before that of Joshua, and we learn, Gen. i. 25, Exod. xiii. 19, that prior to his decease he had given a strict charge that his bones should be conveyed away out of Egypt by his people when they themselves went up from thence. Accordingly they had carried these precious relics with them in all their wanderings through the wilderness, and never attempted to bury them till they were peaceably settled in the promised land. The act of sepulture, though here related after the account of the death of Joshua, undoubt-

edly took place before it, and not improbably at the time of the general convention at Shechem described in the present chapter. The occasion, at any rate, would seem to have been a very suitable one for such a solemn ceremony, although it be true that a considerable interval had now elapsed since the conquest and occupation of Canaan. But reasons unknown may have delayed the event. After all, the point is uncertain and of little moment. If any one prefers to translate the original “had buried” instead of “buried,” implying that the circumstance took place some years before, when the children of Joseph first received their inheritance, which they would naturally be disposed at once to consecrate by depositing within it the remains of their venerated ancestor, we know of nothing to object against it. *Which Jacob bought, &c.*—See on Gen. xxxiii. 19.

VER. 33. And Eleazar the son of Aaron died; and they buried him in a hill that pertained to Phinehas his son, which was given him in mount Ephraim.

q Ex. vi. 25. Judg. xx. 28.

*And Eleazar—died.*—Probably about the same time with Joshua. *In a hill that pertained to Phinehas.*—As the cities assigned to the priests lay in the lots of Judah, Benjamin and Simeon, neither father nor son could properly inherit a portion located in Mount Ephraim. But such a portion might be given them there, and the probability is, that the people voluntarily gave to the high priest a place of residence situated at a convenient distance from Joshua and the tabernacle, and that this was called “the hill of Phinehas,” because he dwelt longer there than his father Eleazar had done.

THE  
BOOK OF JUDGES.

THE

BOOK OF JUDGES.

---

INTRODUCTION.

I.—TITLE, ITS ORIGIN AND IMPORT.

THE seventh book in the received order of the Hebrew Scriptures is termed שופטים *Shophetim*, "Judges;" a name derived from שפח *Shaphat*, "to judge, to determine causes, to do justice, to vindicate," and also, in general, "to rule, govern, regulate," and applied here to the chief rulers who governed the Hebrew republic from the days of Moses till the time of Saul, because ruling and judging are so intimately connected in the East, that sitting in judgment is one of the principal employments of the oriental sovereign. From this it will be seen that the title, as thus applied, is to be taken in a wider sense than the same term conveys with us, viz., persons appointed to determine litigated questions, and to pronounce the sentence of the law in criminal cases. Here, on the other hand, it is used to denote those occasional leaders and chief magistrates of the Israelites, who led out the people to war against their enemies, and after having delivered them from the oppression of the neighbouring nations, exercised each, during peace, the office of chief ruler and judge of Israel. Still the predominant idea conveyed by the term is rather that of military commanders, or more properly avenging deliverers, than of judicial officers, as this latter function came more within the province of the priests.

In order to form a still more distinct idea of the nature of this office, let it be remarked, that the Hebrew constitution made no provision for a permanent and general governor of the nation; and that for obvious reasons. In the first place, God himself was the chief magistrate of that people, and had established an agency, through which his will might be at all times ascertained. Under him there was his visible minister, the high-priest, who was empowered to attend to the general affairs of the nation, where there was no military or civil ruler specially appointed for the purpose. It is also to be remembered that every tribe had its own chief or prince, whose office was permanent, and who, with the subordinate heads of families, wielded the patri-

archal powers, which, in ordinary circumstances, were amply sufficient to keep the affairs of his tribe in proper order. In this state of things the mild authority of the high-priest ought to have been sufficient for the purposes of general government. But this was not the case; the apostasy and rebellion of the Israelites, and the punishment with which such sins were visited, gave occasion for the appointment of extraordinary officers, which the organization of the state did not in itself require. These were the Judges. They arose from time to time as they were wanted; and were sometimes called by God himself to their high work, and were sometimes elected by the people. The judge was commonly a person who, having been instrumental in delivering the people from oppression, continued to administer a government more or less extensive during the remainder of his life. Some, however, appear to have been appointed to govern in time of peace. Deborah ruled in Israel before the war with Jabin; Samuel was not introduced to the government by his military exploits; and of several others, it is at least uncertain whether they held any military command. The oppressions which this book records were not always equally felt over all Israel; and hence the authority of the deliverer sometimes extended only over the tribes he had delivered. Thus Jephthah did not exercise his authority on the west of the Jordan, nor did that of Barak extend to the east of that river. Some of the judges appear to have ruled simultaneously over different tribes; and this is one of the circumstances which render the chronology of the period so perplexing.

The judges did not transmit their dignity to their descendants, neither did they appoint successors. They could not enact laws or impose taxes on the people, though they made peace or war, and in their judicial capacity decided causes without appeal. Yet all this power seems to have been rather the result of character and influence, than of any authority recognised as inherent in the office. No salary or income was attached to it, nor did they receive emoluments

of any kind. They had no external marks of distinction; they were surrounded by no circumstances of pomp or ceremony; they had no courtiers, guard, train, or equipage. They were in general men of moderate desires, and content to deserve well of their country, without seeking to aggrandize or enrich themselves. They always considered and conducted themselves as specially called of God, relying upon him in all their enterprises, and making it their chief care to bring their countrymen to acknowledge, worship, and obey him. Though evincing in some melancholy instances the infirmities of human nature, yet they were on the whole models of true patriotism and of moral worth, and eminently free from the public crimes, which in all ages have so notoriously flown from the possession and the lust of power.

It is worthy of remark, that the Carthaginians, who were descended from the Tyrians, and spoke Hebrew, called their chief magistrates by the same name; but the Latins, whose language lacks the *sh* of the ancient Hebrews and Carthaginians, wrote the word with a sharp *s*, and adding a Latin termination, denominated them *Suffetes*; a class of functionaries very nearly resembling the archons of the Athenians, and the dictators of the Romans.

#### II.—AUTHOR AND AGE.

The authorship of the book cannot be determined with absolute certainty. Some ascribe it to Samuel, some to Hezekiah, and some to Ezra, who is supposed to have compiled it from the memoirs furnished by the respective judges of their own government. This hypothesis is founded mainly on what is said chap. xviii. 30: "He and his son were priests to the tribe of Dan, until the day of the captivity of the land;" from which it has been imagined that it was not written till after the Babylonish captivity. But this conjecture is evidently erroneous; as upon comparing Psal. lxxviii. 60, 61, and 1 Sam. iv. 11, with that passage, it appears that the captivity intended by the historian was a particular captivity of the tribe of Dan, or of that part of it which was settled in the north, and which took place about the time the ark was taken by the Philistines. Besides, the total absence of Chaldee words sufficiently proves the date of the book to have been several centuries anterior to the great Babylonish captivity. Such words are of frequent occurrence in books known to have been written posterior to that event. Most of the Jewish and Christian commentators assign the authorship to Samuel; probably because internal evidence places it pretty clearly about his time, and in his time he is the most likely person to whom the writing of it could be ascribed. That it was written after the establishment of the regal government, appears from the habit the author has of saying, that such and such events happened in the time when "there was no king in Israel;" which renders it evident that there *was* a king when he wrote. But that it was written very soon after the establishment of kingly government is no less clear from other passages. Thus we see from chap. i. 21, that

the Jebusites were still in Jerusalem in the time of the author; but this people were expelled from that city early in the reign of David. (2 Sam. v. 6.) So also in 2 Sam. xi. 21, there is a distinct reference to a fact recorded Judg. ix. 53, which affords another proof that this book was written before the second of Samuel. On the whole, there is little doubt that the book of Judges was composed in its present form, either in the reign of Saul, or during the first seven years of the reign of David; and this renders it more probable that it was compiled from the public registers and records by Samuel, than by any of the other prophets, priests, or kings to whom it has been attributed.

#### III.—STRUCTURE AND DIVISION.

The book is not constructed with reference to the precise chronological order of the events related. It is clearly divisible into two leading parts; the first embracing the history of the Judges from Othniel to Samson, and extending to the end of the sixteenth chapter; the other, occupying the rest of the book, forms a sort of appendix, narrating certain memorable transactions which occurred not long after the death of Joshua, but which are thrown together at the end of the book, that the continued thread of the preceding narrative might not be interrupted. What relates to the two last judges, Eli and Samuel, is related in the following book.

#### IV.—CHRONOLOGY.

The chronology of this book is exceedingly embarrassed and difficult, and there is little agreement among learned men respecting it. This arises chiefly from the facts related being reckoned from different eras which cannot now be exactly ascertained; and also from judges being thought by some to be successive, whom others consider to have been contemporary in different parts of Palestine. Without reciting the details of the different hypotheses proposed to solve these difficulties, it may be sufficient to state, that Dr. Hales makes the whole period from the death of Joshua to the death of Samson to be four hundred years, while Usher and Lightfoot make not far from three hundred. After all, it is doubtful whether, from the nature of the book, it is possible to adjust the narrative into a regular chronological series. It appears, for the most part, to have been composed of loose historical memoranda, having little relation to each other, and put together by the compiler, like the narratives of the Evangelists in the New Testament, without the least view to a methodical arrangement. Accordingly, in our remarks on the book we purposely leave all chronological questions untouched.

#### V.—SCOPE AND CHARACTER.

The book of Judges forms an important link in the history of the Israelites, and is very properly inserted between the books of Joshua and Samuel, as the Judges were the intermediate governors

between Joshua and the kings of Israel. It furnishes a lively description of a fluctuating and unsettled people, a striking picture of the disorders and dangers which prevailed in a republic without magistracy, when "the highways were unoccupied, and the travellers walked through by ways;" when few prophets arose to control the people, and "every one did that which was right in his own eyes." It exhibits the contest of true religion with superstition; displays the benefits that flow from the former, and represents the miseries and evil consequences of impiety; affording, in fine, a complete verification of the warnings and predictions of Moses, that the children of Israel should be prosperous or unfortunate, according as they obeyed or violated the divine commands. From the scenes of discord and violence which darken this history, Paul has presented us with some illustrious examples of faith in the instances of Gideon, Barak, Samson, and Jephthah; and Dr. Graves remarks, that "by a superficial reader, the whole period under the Judges may be easily mistaken for an uninterrupted series of idolatries and crimes, from his not observing that the lapses which incurred punishment, and the divine deliverances which attended repentance, are related so fully as to occupy almost the whole narrative; while long periods when, under the government of the Judges, the people followed God and the land enjoyed peace, are passed over in a single verse, as productive of no events which required a particular detail."

The whole period is distinguished by the display of extraordinary events, and by the most glaring and miraculous proofs of divine interposition. The history of God's government must necessarily be characterised by the demonstrations of his immediate agency; and the selected instruments of his will may well be expected to exhibit a succession of unprecedented exploits. It should, however, be observed, that some of the actions here recorded were justifiable only on the supposition of a divine warrant, which superseded all general rules of conduct. Without this, the deeds of Ehud and of Jael might be pronounced censurable for their treachery, however commendable the motives by which they were prompted. In respect, too, to some other incidents, it is obvious that the sacred writer by no means vindicates all that he relates; and that the indiscriminate massacre of the people of Jabesh-Gilead, and the rape of the virgins at Shiloh, stamped as they are with the evident marks of injustice and cruelty, cannot possibly be justified on the principles which the Scriptures elsewhere furnish. In all such cases, and in the recorded characters of God's ministers in general who are brought before us in this book, we perceive the traces of human infirmity; and while we discriminate between the lights and shades that mark the picture, it cannot be questionable what parts of their conduct we are called to imitate, and what to avoid.

#### VI.—COMMENTATORS.

The Commentators upon this book are for the most part the same as those who have undertaken to illustrate the book of Joshua, and whom the

reader will find enumerated in the Introduction to that book. Of these the most important are the following:

SEBASTIANI SCHMID Commentarius in Librum Judicum, in quo præter diligentem textus explicationem, præcipuæ questiones et loci communes, quos vocant, ad singula capita et sub finem appendix chronologica adduntur. — Argentorati, 1706, 4to.

Of the elder commentators it would not be easy to point out a superior to Schmid. For accurate analysis, for strict and careful explication of words and phrases, for rigid preciseness in fixing the connexion, and for skill in drawing out his didactic inferences, he is perhaps unrivalled. He is indeed prone to dwell unduly upon trifles; but this was the fault of the age, rather than of the man. His works are a rich store-house of biblical exposition, and the Commentary on Judges is the most finished of his productions. Walch says of it, in his "Bibliotheca Theologica," that it is "a distinguished work, at the head of all the commentaries which our countrymen have written. The author treats every thing, both words and things, diligently, learnedly, and copiously, and whoever consults this work, can easily dispense with all others." Buddens, in his "Isagoge," is equally decided in his testimony to the merits of Schmid as a commentator.

NICOLAI SERARII Judices et Ruth explanati. Moguntiæ, 1609. Fol.

VICTORINI STRIGELII Liber Judicum, argumentis et scholiis illustratus. Lipsiæ, 1575, 1586. 8vo.

DAVIDIS CHYTREI in historiam Judicum populi Israel dilucidus et perspicuus commentarius, cum inserta illius temporis historiarum chronologia. Francofurti, 1589. 8vo.

JO. ADAMI OSIANDRI Commentarius in Librum Judicum, exhibens sacrum cum exegesi textum, lectionum et versionum varietatem, conciliatis antilogias, chronologiam, utilium questionum solutiones, objectiones cum vindiciis, observationes philologicas, et locos communes doctrinales. Tubingæ, 1682. Fol.

"To be enumerated among the best interpretations of this book."—Walch.

MARTINI BUCERI Commentarius in Librum Judicum. Parisiis, 1554, 1563. Fol.

PETRI MARTYRI Commentarius in Librum Judicum. Tiguri, 1561. Londini, 1564. Fol.

JACOBI BONFRERI Commentarius in Josuam, Judices, et Ruth. Parisiis, 1631, 1659. Fol.

JO. ENR. GRABII Epistola ad clarissm. vir. Joannem Millium, qua ostenditur, Libri Judicum genuinam LXX interpretum versionem eam esse, quam MS. codex Alexandrinus exhibet; Romanam autem editionem, quod ad dictum librum, ab illa prorsus diversam, atque eandem cum Hesychiano esse. Oxoniæ, 1707. 4to.

CHRIST. FRED. SCHNURER R. Tanchum Hierosylunitam ad libros Vet. Testamenti Com-

mentarii Arabici Specimen, una cum annotationibus ad aliquot loca libri Judicum. Tubingæ, 1791. 4to.

WERN. CARL. LUDW. ZIEGLERS Bemerkungen über das Buch der Richter aus dem Geist des Heldenalters; nebst Beurteilung der griechischen Versionem, und ihrer Abweichung vom Original text; in Auctoris Theologischen Abhandlungen, erster Band. Gotting. 1791. 8vo. p. 262, seqq.

HEINR. EBERH. GOTTL. PAULUS Blicke in das Buch der Richter, wahr scheinlich den ältesten Rest anoder altehebraischen Literatur, in Auctoris Theolog. Exeget. Conservatorium, P. II. (Heidelberg, 1822,) p. 180. seqq.

GOTTL. LUDW. STUDER das Buch der Richter

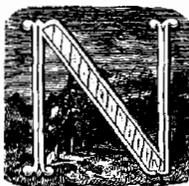
grammatisch und historisch erklärt. Bern, 1835. 8vo.

A valuable and well digested work; devoted principally to philological illustration, and, after the German fashion, keeping studiously clear of every practical remark, and of every thing in fact beyond the bare letter.

In addition to the above, much valuable matter bearing upon the elucidation of different parts of this book will be found in "Lowth's Hebrew Poetry," "Green's Poetical Parts of the Old Testament," "Herder's Spirit of Hebrew Poetry," and Prof. Robinson's Interpretation of Judges, Chap. V., the Song of Deborah and Barak, in the "Biblical Repertory," No. III., June, 1831.

THE  
BOOK OF JUDGES.

CHAPTER I.



OW after the death of Joshua it came to pass, that the children of Israel "asked the LORD, saying, Who shall go up for us against the Canaanites first to fight against them?"

<sup>a</sup> Num. xxvii. 21. Chap. xx. 18.

*After the death of Joshua.*—How long after we have no means of determining; probably not long, for Othniel, the first judge after Joshua's decease, had been his contemporary, and was in fact his son-in-law. *Asked the Lord.*—The original phrase is the usual one for consulting the oracle, or inquiring by the ministry of the high priest, and through the medium of the Urim and Thummim, the will of Jehovah as to the great matters of duty and policy. As we read of no particular person who succeeded Joshua as commander-in-chief of the Israelites, it is probable that every tribe was governed by one or more of its elders for a number of years, and that in their wars with the Canaanites they also were their military commanders. As the people were now becoming more numerous, and capable of occupying a larger extent of territory, they deemed it expedient to renew the war, but having no single head to take the lead in the enterprise, they very properly sought direction from above, as to the manner in which the war should be conducted. It will be observed, that they do not inquire what individual should be chosen as successor to Joshua and commander of the forces, but which of the tribes shall take the precedence in the expedition. Whether each tribe was ambitious of the honour, or fearful of the danger of being first, it is not possible to determine, but by common consent it was resolved to refer the matter to God, the proper arbiter in every doubtful case. Happy is it for us that we have the same infallible source of guidance to which to apply in all our perplexities. *Who shall go up for us?*—The common term for a military expedition. See Isa. vii. 1. Jer. l. 3. The phrase "for us" puts the "going up" in relation to the whole body of the people. The success of whatever tribe took the lead would be an earnest and assurance of the success of the rest in obtaining complete possession of their respective allotments.

VER. 2. And the LORD said, <sup>b</sup>Judah shall go up: behold, I have delivered the land into his hand.

<sup>b</sup> Gen. xlix. 8.

*Judah shall go up.*—That is, the tribe of Judah, not a person of this name. So in ver. 3, Simeon stands for the tribe of Simeon, and so also generally in the sequel. The precedence was given to Judah, because it was the most numerous, powerful, and valiant of all the tribes, and that which the Lord designed should possess the pre-eminence in all respects, as being the one from which the Messiah was to spring, and for that reason crowned with the "excellency of dignity" above all its fellows. Judah therefore must lead in this perilous enterprise; for God not only appoints service according to the strength and ability he has given, but "would also have the burden of honour and the burden of labour go together." Those who have the precedence in rank, reputation, or influence, should always be disposed to go before others in every good work, undismayed by danger, difficulty, or obloquy, that they may encourage others by their example. *I have delivered the land into his hand.*—Have determined that he shall subdue it. Not the whole land, but the land or district destined for his inheritance. This God had so firmly purposed to deliver into his hand, that it might be considered as already done, and such assurance of victory would naturally give courage for the contest.

VER. 3. And Judah said unto Simeon his brother, Come up with me into my lot, that we may fight against the Canaanites; and 'I likewise will go with thee into thy lot. So Simeon went with him.

<sup>c</sup> Ver. 17.

*Judah said unto Simeon—come up with me, &c.*—This proposition was made to Simeon, because these tribes being descended, by their progenitors, from the same father and mother, Jacob and Leah, were brethren in the strictest sense, and because also the lot of Simeon fell within that of Judah. This laid a natural ground for their union and co-operation in the enterprise. "Observe here that the strongest should not despise, but desire the assistance even of those that are weaker. It becomes Israelites to help one another against Canaanites; and all Christians, even those of

different tribes, to strengthen one another's hands against the common interests of Satan's kingdom."—*Henry*. Caleb was probably commander in this war.

VER. 4. And Judah went up, and the Lord delivered the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hand: and they slew of them in <sup>d</sup>Bezek ten thousand men.

d 1 Sam. xi. 8.

*The Lord delivered the Canaanites and the Perizzites.*—Or, Heb. "the Canaanite, even the Perizzite." It is not clear that distinct tribes are intended. *They slew of them in Bezek, &c.*—That is, in the city and the adjacent territory. This city is supposed to have been in the tribe of Judah, though there was another lying to the south of Beth-shean (Scythopolis) seven miles from Sichem, where Saul reviewed his army before marching against Jabesh-Gilead. This verse is to be considered merely as a brief compend of the narrative which is more fully expanded in ver. 5—7. No feature of the historical style of the Scriptures is more common than this.

VER. 5. And they found Adoni-bezek in Bezek: and they fought against him, and they slew the Canaanites and the Perizzites.

*And they found Adoni-bezek.*—That is, "lord or king of Bezek;" probably the common title of the kings of that place. The original word מוצא "found," is sometimes used to denote a hostile encounter; to attack, to surprise: and probably has that sense here. The first word of this verse, "and," would be better rendered "for," in accordance with the remark made above respecting the drift of ver. 5—7.

VER. 6. But Adoni-bezek fled; and they pursued after him, and caught him, and cut off his thumbs and his great toes.

*Cut off his thumbs and his great toes.*—Heb. "the thumbs of his hands and of his feet." Either by express direction or secret impulse from God, who thus purposed to "mete to him the measure he had meted to others." "The Hindoos call the thumb the 'revia-viril,' the great finger of the hand, and the large toe is named the great finger of the foot. This punishment was exceedingly common in ancient times, and was inflicted principally on those who had committed some flagrant offence with their hands and their feet. Thus, those convicted of forgery, or numerous thefts, had their thumbs cut off. The practice is abolished, but its memory will remain, as it is now one of the scarecrows of the nursery and domestic life: 'If you steal any more, I will cut off your thumbs.' 'Let me find out the thief, and I will soon have his thumbs.'"—*Roberts*. The loss of the thumbs would disable them from drawing the bow or handling to advantage the sword or the spear, and so would in effect utterly incapacitate them for war. As to the loss of the great toes, independently of the inconvenience occasioned in the act of running or walking, the disabling effect to an Oriental is infi-

nately greater than to a European. The feet and toes are much employed in all the handicraft operations throughout the East, and in many cases the loss of the great toes would completely disqualify a man from earning his subsistence. Besides the many little active operations which they are tutored to execute, the artisans, as they work with their hands, seated on the ground, hold fast and manage all their work with their feet and toes, in which the great toes have a very prominent duty to perform. Ward, in his "View of the Hindoos," has fully shown to what excellent uses the toes are applied in India. "They are second-hand fingers; they are called feet-fingers in Bengalee. In his own house a Hindoo makes use of them to fasten a clog to his feet by means of a button, which slips between the two middle toes. The tailor, if he does not thread his needle, certainly twists his thread with them. The cook holds his knife with his toes while he cuts fish, vegetables, &c. The joiner, the weaver, &c. could not do without them; and almost every native has twenty different uses for his toes."—*Pict. Bible*.

VER. 7. And Adoni-bezek said, Threescore and ten kings, having their thumbs and their great toes cut off, gathered *their meat* under my table: as I have done, so God hath required me. And they brought him to Jerusalem, and there he died.

e Lev. xxiv. 19. 1 Sam. xv. 33. Jam. ii. 13.

*Threescore and ten kings, &c.*—Not, perhaps, all at one time, but first and last, during his whole reign. It would seem that wasting civil wars had very much prevailed among the Canaanites previous to the arrival of the Israelites, and this circumstance probably tended to facilitate their conquests. "Judah," says Lightfoot, "in conquering Adoni-bezek did in effect conquer seventy kings." In the case of this cruel tyrant we cannot fail to perceive the uncertainty of human greatness. The mighty potentate is here reduced to the condition of a prisoner, to the very extremity of meanness and disgrace; showing that pre-eminence in station often leads only to a sad pre-eminence in misery and distress. "Let not the highest be proud, nor the strongest secure, for they know not how low they may be brought before they die."—*Henry*. *As I have done, so God hath required me.*—A striking acknowledgment, extorted from a guilty conscience, of the retributive justice of heaven. "When God's judgments awaken the conscience we shall own his righteousness, and stand self-condemned before him."—*Haweis*. What pretences he had for warring against these kings, we know not; but thus to insult over the misfortunes of the vanquished, to maim their persons, and compel them, like dogs, to gather up the crumbs from under his table, argued a degree of cruelty which one could scarcely have conceived to exist in a rational being. As the personal injuries he had inflicted would of course disable them from harming him as long as they were kept in bondage, thus to sport himself in their miseries, was a conduct of pure gratuitous

cruelty, and could have proceeded only from the most barbarous and brutal dispositions. But we have cause to be humbled for human nature that such propensities still adhere to it. This is evident from the pleasure which children often take in torturing insects and animals, and in vexing and tyrannizing over those who are weaker than themselves—a disposition which in after life displays itself in a fondness for despotic sway, in a vindictive spirit, and in a career of ruthless ambition. But God is known by the judgments that he executeth, and this cruel Canaanite was in his turn made to feel the anguish which he had so wantonly inflicted upon others. The Israelites were led to deal with him on the principle of their own law of retaliation, “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth,” &c.; although, as it would have been inconsistent with those gracious affections which, as the Lord’s chosen people, they were bound to exercise, they did not reduce him to the same ignominy, or insult over him with the same arrogance that he had shown towards others. Thus it is that God sometimes makes men’s punishments to correspond with their crimes; and in this case, notwithstanding all the feelings of humanity, we cannot but acquiesce in the judgment that befel him, or help being conscious of a secret satisfaction that the same evils he had so cruelly inflicted upon others should be brought home to himself.

VER. 8. Now *f* the children of Judah had fought against Jerusalem, and had taken it, and smitten it with the edge of the sword, and set the city on fire.

*f* See Josh. xv. 63.

*Had fought against Jerusalem and had taken it.*—This event, of prior occurrence, is mentioned here to intimate how it happened that they were able to convey the captive king to Jerusalem. It was because they had before taken that city, and it was now in their possession. The reason of removing him thither was perhaps to make him a more public spectacle of the just judgments of God against barbarous and blood-thirsty tyrants. But though the city is said to have been taken, yet the hill of Zion, as appears from the subsequent history, was still held by the Jebusites till the time of David. *Set the city on fire.*—Heb. “Cast the city into the fire;” an inverted phraseology, peculiar to the Hebrew. Thus Psa. lxxiv. 7, “They have cast fire into the sanctuary;” Heb. “They have cast thy sanctuary into the fire.” Joel iii. 18, “The hills shall flow with milk;” Heb. “Milk shall flow with hills.” This burning the city or a part of it, was probably in token of their detestation of the idolatry which had been practised there.

VER. 9. *g* And afterward the children of Judah went down to fight against the Canaanites that dwelt in the mountain, and in the south, and in the valley.

*g* Josh. x. 36; xi. 21; xv. 13.

*Went down to fight, &c.*—That is, descended to the hill-country lying south of Jerusalem.

VER. 10. And Judah went against the Canaanites that dwelt in Hebron: (now the name of Hebron before was *h* Kirjath-arba:) and they slew Sheshai, and Ahiman, and Talmai.

*h* Josh. xiv. 15; v. 13, 14.

*And Judah went down against the Canaanites, &c.*—That is, under the conduct of Caleb, as we learn from Josh. xv. 14—19, where substantially the same account with the present occurs. How this has happened, whether the writer of Judges took this narrative from Joshua, or the writer of Joshua inserted his from Judges, it is impossible to determine. That both accounts relate to the same events there can be no doubt, but whether those events occurred before or after the death of Joshua, is a point which we despair of ever having satisfactorily settled. As the discussion would encumber our pages with matter of little profit to the general reader, we waive it entirely without offering an opinion. *Slew Sheshai, and Ahiman, and Talmai.*—In the parallel passage, Josh. xv. 14. Caleb is said merely to have “driven out” these sons of Anak. The probability is, that the words before us give the true sense, and that they were actually slain. An enemy driven out is not necessarily understood to be slain, but whoever is slain is virtually driven out, by being expelled from among the living.

VER. 11. *i* And from thence he went against the inhabitants of Debir: and the name of Debir before was Kirjath-sepher:

*i* Josh. xv. 15.

See on Josh. xv. 15—19.

VER. 12. *h* And Caleb said, He that smiteth Kirjath-sepher, and take it, to him will I give Achsah my daughter to wife.

*h* Josh. xv. 16, 17.

VER. 13. And Othniel the son of Kenaz, *i* Caleb’s younger brother, took it: and he gave him Achsah his daughter to wife.

*i* Chap. iii. 9.

VER. 14. *m* And it came to pass, when she came to him, that she moved him to ask of her father a field: and she lighted from off her ass; and Caleb said unto her, What wilt thou?

*m* Josh. xv. 18, 19.

VER. 15. And she said unto him, *n* Give me a blessing: for thou hast given me a south land; give me also springs of water. And Caleb gave her the upper springs, and the nether springs.

*n* Gen. xxxiii. 11.

VER. 16. *o* And the children of the Kenite, Moses’ father-in-law, went up out *p* of the city of palm-trees with the children of Judah into

the wilderness of Judah, which *lieth* in the south of *Arad*; and they went and dwelt among the people.

*o* Ch. iv. 11, 17. *l* Sa. xv. 6. *l* Chr. ii. 55. Jer. xxxv. 2. *p* Deut. xxxiv. 3. *q* Numb. xxi. 1. *r* Numb. x. 32.

*The children of the Kenite, Moses' father-in-law.*—That is, of Jethro; but why he is called the Kenite, it is not easy to say. The probability is, that he inhabited the country occupied by a people of this name, (Numb. xxiv. 21, 22,) and on this account in process of time came to be distinguished by the same appellation. Whether Jethro himself accompanied Israel into Canaan, according to Moses' invitation, (Numb. x. 32,) is not clear, but that his posterity did is certain. After their arrival, they at first pitched their tents near Jericho, called also "the city of palm-trees," which lay in the lot of Benjamin, and here remained during the life-time of Joshua. After his death, for reasons now unknown, they united with the tribe of Judah, and went with them to attack Arad. After the conquest of that country, the Kenites established themselves there, and remained in it mingled with the Amalekites, and leading a quiet life remote from public affairs, till the days of Saul. When this king received a commandment from God to destroy the Amalekites, he sent a message to the Kenites to depart from among them, as God would not destroy them with that devoted people. From them descended Hemath, the father of the house of Rechab, of whom we have so interesting an account, Jer. xxxv. *Arad.*—Of this place see on Numb. xxi. 1. *And they went and dwelt, &c.*—That is, the greatest part of them. Some few families were dispersed in other places, as we find the tent of Jael, who was of this stock, far to the north, in the tribe of Naphtali, when Sisera took shelter there, Chap. iv. 17. *Among the people.*—Heb. "That people;" viz. the children of Judah resident there. "They who willingly share with God's Israel in their sufferings in the wilderness, shall share also with them in the inheritance in glory."—*Haweis.*

VER. 17. \*And Judah went with Simeon his brother, and they slew the Canaanites that inhabited Zephath, and utterly destroyed it. And the name of the city was called \*Hormah.

*s* Ver. 3. *t* Numb. xxi. 3. Josh. xix. 4.

*And Judah went with Simeon, &c.*—According to the previous compact, ver. 3. The thread of the narrative which had been interrupted for the purpose of introducing the foregoing account of Caleb and Othniel, is here resumed. *Slew the Canaanites that inhabited Zephath.*—A valley called Zephathah, is mentioned 2 Chron. xiv. 19, as lying near Maresha in the southern section of Judah, where Asa gained a signal victory over the Ethiopian army. This is probably the same place. It was now destroyed in pursuance of a vow taken by Israel before the death of Moses, Numb. xxi. 1—3, and which for some reason they had delayed to perform till this time.

This seems likely from the fact that the same name, "Hormath," importing utter destruction, is there also bestowed upon the devoted region and we can otherwise see no particular reason for making Zephath an anathema on this occasion. Arad appears not to have been so much the name of a city, as of a tract of country embracing a number of cities, of which perhaps Zephath was the principal.

VER. 18. Also Judah took \*Gaza with the coast thereof, and Askelon with the coast thereof, and Ekron with the coast thereof.

*u* Josh. xi. 22.

*Took Gaza with the coast thereof.*—With the adjoining territory thereof; and so in what follows. Having conquered the south, they turned their arms towards the Philistines' country in the west. These cities it is said they "took," but it is not said that they slew the inhabitants, as they ought to have done. They probably contented themselves with making them tributary, and as a consequence of their ill-judged lenity, they afterwards recovered strength, expelled their invaders, and remained for ages an almost incessant source of annoyance and vexation to the Israelites.

VER. 19. And \*the LORD was with Judah; and he drave out the inhabitants of the mountain; but could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had *s* chariots of iron.

*x* Ver. 2. *2* Kings xviii. 7. *y* Josh. xvii. 16, 18.

*Drave out the inhabitants of the mountain.*—Or, Heb. "possessed the mountain." The idea of the original however is possessing in consequence of a previous expulsion. If the former sense of "driving out" be retained, mountain, *i. e.* the mountainous region, is of course used for mountaineers, or the inhabitants of the mountain, as the name of a country or city often stands for its occupants. In the parallel member of the sentence immediately following, the word "inhabitants" is expressed. *But could not drive out, &c.*—That is, Judah could not. The reason why they could not was their unbelief. Had they duly confided in Omnipotence, the chariots of iron would have been no more of an obstacle to them than chariots of straw. But although on a former occasion, (Josh. xi. 4—9,) they had seen how complete was the victory which Joshua, relying upon God, had obtained over these engines of war, yet now they weakly suffer their fears to prevail over their faith, and instead of trusting God under apparent disadvantages, they meanly withdraw their forces, when one bold stroke would have completed their victories. So with believers, when they view outward difficulties with the eye of sense, and forget the almighty power of God; their hearts grow discouraged, their expectations feeble, and their attempts timid and wavering; and then no wonder they do not prosper, for in proportion to our faith will be our vigour, zeal, and success. The Chal. paraphrast renders the verse; "And the

Word of Jehovah was in the support of the house of Judah, and they extirpated the inhabitants of the mountains; but afterwards, when they sinned, they were not able to extirpate the inhabitants of the plain-country, because they had chariots of iron."

VER. 20. "And they gave Hebron unto Caleb, as Moses said: and he expelled thence the three sons of Anak.

z Numb. xiv. 24 Deut. i. 36. Josh. xiv. 9, 13; xv. 13, 14.

*And they gave Hebron unto Caleb, &c.*—We have little doubt that the true design of inserting this verse in this connexion is lost sight of, by the present mode of rendering. Let the verb be translated in the pluperfect tense, "had given," and the drift is obvious. It is as if the writer had said, "Although they had some time before given Hebron to Caleb, and he had expelled thence the three gigantic sons of Anak, who were deemed the most formidable and invincible of all the old inhabitants of Canaan, and though his success ought to have been regarded as a pledge and earnest of their own, let the opposing power have been what it might, yet notwithstanding this precedent, they ignobly failed in the achievement of a conquest equally easy." Understood in this sense, the words instead of being an unmeaning repetition of an incident frequently mentioned before, are in fact a tacit but severe rebuke of the cowardice and pusillanimity of the nation.

VER. 21. "And the children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites that inhabited Jerusalem; but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Benjamin in Jerusalem unto this day.

a See Josh. xv. 63; xviii. 28.

*The children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites.*—Jerusalem was situated partly in the tribe of Judah, and partly in that of Benjamin; the northern part belonging to the latter tribe, the southern to the former. This will account for the fact, that what is here said of Benjamin, is in Josh. xv. 63, said of Judah. It was owing to the most culpable remissness on the part of the tribe of Benjamin that these Jebusites were not expelled from their stronghold. As the Jebusites dwelt in Jerusalem till the days of David, and the author of this book states them to have been in possession of Jerusalem when he wrote, therefore this book was certainly written before the reign of David, or before the date of his capture of that part of the city.

VER. 22. And the house of Joseph, they also went up against Beth-el: <sup>b</sup> and the LORD was with them.

b VER. 19.

*The house of Joseph—went up.*—That is, the tribe of Ephraim, as appears from the contrary affirmation respecting Manasseh. *The LORD was with them.*—Another mode of saying that they were eminently successful in the expedition.

The presence of God with us in our conflicts is the strongest assurance of triumph. Chal. "The Word of the LORD was their Helper;" *i. e.* Christ.

VER. 23. And the house of Joseph sent to descry Beth-el. (Now the name of the city before was <sup>d</sup> Luz.)

c Josh. ii. 1; vii. 2. Chap. xviii. 2.  
d Gen. xxviii. 19.

*Sent to descry Bethel.*—Heb. "sent to descry, or explore in Bethel." That is, in the region or tract immediately surrounding the city. The primary sense of the original is to make a circuit, especially with a view to spy, explore, or reconnoitre. From this the native import of the word, and from the term made use of in the next verse to designate the persons in question, there is little doubt that the language implies the constant employment of a number of persons in this service, their being appointed to keep steadily on the watch. We cannot otherwise account for the use of the particle "in." *Luz.*—See on Gen. xxviii. 19.

VER. 24. And the spies saw a man come forth out of the city, and they said unto him, Show us, we pray thee, the entrance into the city, and we will show thee mercy.

e Josh. ii. 12, 14.

*And the spies saw a man, &c.*—Heb. "the guards, the watchmen;" implying that there was a stationary watch placed in the vicinity of the city to observe its movements, to note if any came out, and to apprehend them. *Show us—the entrance into the city.*—Not the gate, the common avenue, which there could be no difficulty in finding, but some weak point, where an entrance could be effected with least danger and difficulty. *We will show thee mercy.*—This confirms the opinion that the Israelites might spare the lives of such Canaanites as either submitted to become bondmen and renounced idolatry, or emigrated into other regions, as was the case with this individual and his family. See on Josh. xi. 19.

VER. 25. And when he showed them the entrance into the city, they smote the city with the edge of the sword: but they let go the man and all his family.

*And when he showed them the entrance, &c.*—We do not feel prepared with Adam Clarke to pronounce the conduct of this man "execrable, taken in whatever light we choose," without knowing more of the real motives by which he was actuated in giving the intelligence he did. It is possible he might have done it from the conviction that "the LORD was with them," and that by his gift the land was theirs of right, and then the same reasons which justified Rahab in entertaining those whom she knew to be the enemies of her country, but the friends of God, would justify him. Yet the fact that he did not, when set at liberty, like Rahab, unite his interests

with the worshippers of Jehovah, but retired to his countrymen in another region, argues against him, and leads us rather to infer, that he was influenced more by fear than by faith in acting the part of an informer. In that case we are not called to pass judgment on his conduct at all, but leave him in the hands of Him who knows better than we do how to discriminate between the claims of allegiance to one's country and of the principle of self-preservation.

VER. 26. And the man went into the land of the Hittites, and built a city, and called the name thereof Luz: which is the name thereof unto this day.

*Went into the land of the Hittites.*—Probably some place without the bounds of the promised land, perhaps in Arabia, where Josephus mentions a city called Lussa (Luz). (Antiq. B. xiv. chap. 2.) The man himself was perhaps a Hittite, and to perpetuate the name of his city, he called the new one, which he now founded, after the ancient name of Bethel.

VER. 27. *f* Neither did Manasseh drive out the inhabitants of Beth-shean and her towns, nor Taanach and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Dor and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Ibleam and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Megiddo and her towns; but the Canaanites would dwell in that land.

*f* Josh. xvii. 11—13.

*Neither did Manasseh drive out.*—That is, possess by dispossessing, the true sense of the original, as already remarked, ver. 19. On the situation of Beth-shean, and the other towns recited here, see on Joshua xvii. 11. *And her towns.*—Heb. "and her daughters," *i. e.* her dependent places, her adjacent villages. *The Canaanites would dwell in that land.*—On this remarkable and very expressive phraseology, see on Josh. xvii. 12.

VER. 28. And it came to pass, when Israel was strong, that they put the Canaanites to tribute, and did not utterly drive them out.

*When Israel was strong, &c.*—The fact of their ability aggravated the crime of their neglect, and it is probably with a view to intimate this, that the circumstance of their becoming strong is mentioned. Thus their sin prepared its own punishment, and the love of present ease became the source of perpetual disquiet in after times. Thus shall we ever fare by neglecting present opportunities, through sinful self-indulgence and failing to bring under our enemies when they are in our power. See on Josh. xvii. 13.

VER. 29. *g* Neither did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites that dwelt in Gezer; but the Canaanites dwelt in Gezer among them.

*g* Josh. xvi. 10.

1 Kings ix. 16.

*The Canaanites dwelt among them.*—Intimating, perhaps, that they allowed them a quiet settlement and indulged them the privileges of an unconquered people, not even making them tributary.

VER. 30. Neither did Zebulun drive out the inhabitants of Kitron, nor the <sup>h</sup> inhabitants of Nahalol; but the Canaanites dwelt among them, and became tributaries.

<sup>h</sup> Josh. xix. 15.

VER. 31. <sup>i</sup> Neither did Asher drive out the inhabitants of Accoh, nor the inhabitants of Zidon, nor of Aphab, nor of Achzib, nor of Helbah, nor of Aphik, nor of Rehob:

<sup>i</sup> Josh. xix. 24—30.

VER. 32. But the Asherites <sup>k</sup> dwelt among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land: for they did not drive them out.

<sup>k</sup> Psa. cvl. 34, 35.

*The Asherites dwelt among the Canaanites.*—As it is not usual to say of a larger number that it dwells among a smaller, the inference in regard to Asher and Naphtali is, that they expelled comparatively but few of the Canaanites, leaving them in fact a majority of the population. With most of the other tribes, the case appears, for a considerable time at least, to have been different. See on chap. iii. 5.

VER. 33. <sup>l</sup> Neither did Naphtali drive out the inhabitants of Beth-shemesh, nor the inhabitants of Beth-anath; but he <sup>m</sup> dwelt among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land: nevertheless, the inhabitants of Beth-shemesh and of Beth-anath <sup>n</sup> became tributaries unto them.

<sup>l</sup> Josh. xix. 38.

<sup>m</sup> Ver. 32.

<sup>n</sup> Ver. 30.

VER. 34. And the Amorites forced the children of Dan into the mountain: for they would not suffer them to come down to the valley:

*The Amorites forced the children of Dan into the mountain.*—That is, into the mountainous parts of their lot. *Would not suffer them to come down to the valley.*—To the lower country, or the plains, probably by reason of their iron chariots.

VER. 35. But the Amorites would dwell in mount Heres <sup>o</sup> in Aijalon, and in Shaalbim: yet the hand of the house of Joseph prevailed, so that they became tributaries.

<sup>o</sup> Josh. xix. 42.

*Would dwell in mount Heres, &c.*—Not content with the possession of the valleys, they in three instances at least made themselves for a while masters of the mountains, but this portion of them, by the seasonable assistance of the descendants of Joseph, were checked in their progress, confined within narrower limits, and compelled to pay tribute. But the Danites as a whole were so

pressed and straitened by these Amoritish hordes, that they were finally induced to enlarge their possessions by seeking new quarters in a remote part of the land. (Chap. xviii. 1. Josh. xix. 47.)

VER. 36. And the coast of the Amorites was from the going up to Akkrabbim, from the rock, and upward.

p Numb. xxxiv. 4. Josh. xv. 3.

*And the coast of the Amorites was, &c.*—That is, the territory, the country occupied. The scope of this verse seems to be to intimate that it was not surprising that the Amorites were such a formidable enemy to Israel, when it is considered that they were a powerful and numerous race, inhabiting a territory that extended from the southern limits of Canaan, (Akkrabbim, Josh. xv. 3.) and even from beyond the city of the rock (Petra), northwestward as far as to Mount Heres.

## CHAPTER II.

VER. 1. AND an angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said, I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I swear unto your fathers; and <sup>b</sup> I said, I will never break my covenant with you.

<sup>a</sup> Ver. 5. <sup>b</sup> Gen. xvii. 7.

*An angel of the Lord.*—As the word “angel,” in its primary import, is a term of office equivalent to messenger, the Jews for the most part are of the opinion that it here denotes a prophet sent by God as a messenger, and that messenger they suppose to have been Phinchas, the high-priest, who was commissioned on this occasion to deliver the ensuing solemn reproof to Israel. This is indeed possible, but the more probable opinion we take to be, that it was neither a human prophet nor a created angel, but the Son of God himself, he who is so frequently styled, in the Scriptures, the “angel of the covenant.” The evidence of this is found in what he immediately goes on to say of himself;—“I made you to go up out of Egypt,” &c. Who but Jehovah himself could or would adopt such language as this? It was not a creature that brought the Israelites out of Egypt; but Jehovah. It was not a creature that made a covenant with them; but Jehovah. It was not a creature to whom they were accountable for their disobedience, and whose displeasure they had so much reason to dread; but Jehovah. As to the circumstance of his being said to “come up” from Gilgal, which is supposed to militate against this interpretation, it rather confirms it; for it was in Gilgal, near to Jericho, that this same divine person had appeared to Joshua as an armed warrior. That he was Jehovah cannot be doubted, because he suffered Joshua to worship him, and even commanded him to put off his shoes from his feet, inasmuch as the ground on which he stood was, by reason of his presence, rendered holy. In his conversation with Joshua he had called himself the “Captain of the Lord’s host,”

and therefore there was a particular propriety in his appearing now to the people, to inquire, Why they had not carried his orders into effect? and to threaten them that he would fight for them no longer. Besides, at Gilgal the people had renewed the ordinance of circumcision and the passover, in which they had consecrated themselves to God afresh, and engaged to serve him as his redeemed people. In coming therefore as from Gilgal, the angel upbraided them with their base ingratitude, and humbled them the more for their violation of them. *To Bochim.*—Heb. “the weepers.” Gr. *κλαυθμους*, bewailings; so called by anticipation from the weeping and lamentation (ver. 8) that took place there. Where Bochim was situated we are not elsewhere informed, and the probability is, that the place was in reality no other than Shiloh where the people were now assembled (ver. 4) on one of their solemn festivals; for it appears (ver. 5) that sacrifices were offered on the occasion, and we know that, as a general rule, sacrifices were not offered except where the tabernacle and altar were fixed, and this, at the present time, was at Shiloh. As to the time when the events recorded, ver. 1—11, took place, it was doubtless subsequent to the death of Joshua, though the precise date of it cannot now be ascertained. If in Joshua’s time they had been guilty of the gross delinquency here laid to their charge, he would hardly have failed to reprove them for it, or have said, (Josh. xxiii. 8,) that they had “cleaved unto the Lord their God unto that day.” The reason for the mention of Joshua’s dismissal of the people being inserted in this immediate connexion, will be given in our remarks on ver. 6. *I said, I will never break my covenant.*—Provided you are true and faithful to yours. The first breach of covenant shall never be laid to my charge.

VER. 2. And ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land; ye shall throw down their altars: but ye have not obeyed my voice: why have ye done this?

<sup>c</sup> Deut. vii. 2. <sup>d</sup> Deut. xii. 3.  
<sup>e</sup> Ver. 20. Psal. cvi. 34.

*Ye shall make no league, &c.*—The letter of this passage is too plain to need remark, but the spirit of it, in its application to the Christian Israel, merits our most serious regard. It teaches the danger of indecision and supineness in prosecuting our Christian warfare. The command to every follower of Christ is, to make no league with our spiritual enemies. Our corrupt affections and lusts are not to be spared. It is not sufficient to make them pay tribute; we must crucify and slay them; we must show them no mercy; our hatred of them must be irreconcilable and incessant. But, alas! what is too often our state? Do we find in ourselves this zeal? Instead of proceeding to the utter extirpation of our spiritual enemies, are we not satisfied if they do not reign? Are we not contented to let them exist, provided they will keep themselves concealed from public view? What, then, is the declaration of God concerning us? Does he not warn us that the evils which we spare shall

become as thorns in our sides, and prove a snare to our souls? And do we not find it in our actual experience to be so? Do not close connexions and sinful compliances with the world lead to disastrous inroads upon our peace? Does not an excessive devotion to the cares of the world hinder our upward course, and give the adversary an immense advantage over us? And does not the harbouring of any besetting sin invest it with tenfold force, and often pave the way for our being involved in some flagrant and scandalous transgression? Where then is our safety but in perpetual resistance, in never-ceasing conflict?

VER. 3. Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you; but they shall be *as thorns* in your sides, and *their gods* shall be a *snare* unto you.

*f* Josh. xxiii. 13. *g* Chap. iii. 6.  
*h* Exod. xxiii. 33; xxxiv. 12. Deut. vii. 16. Ps. cvi. 36.

*Wherefore I also said.*—I inwardly purposed and resolved. On this sense of the word "say," see on chap. xxii. 33. Or, with several of the versions, it may be rendered in the present, "I say, I declare." As *thorns in your sides.*—See Numb. xxxiii. 55. Josh. xxiii. 13. *Their gods shall be a snare unto you.*—Chald. "their abominations." They will prove an enticement to you, to entangle you in idolatry, and so effect your ruin.

VER. 4. And it came to pass, when the angel of the LORD spake these words unto all the children of Israel, that the people lifted up their voice, and wept.

*The people lifted up their voice and wept.*—For a time, at least, they were deeply affected with a sense of their transgressions. They lifted up their voice both in confession of sin and deprecation of punishment. And have we not equal occasion to weep, whether we consider our sin or our punishment? Is not the sparing of inveterate lusts as wicked as sparing the devoted Canaanites? Does it not betray an equal want of reverence for God, of love to his name, of zeal for his honour? Let us hear, then, the voice that proclaims our duty: "Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy into heaviness; humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, and he shall lift you up." But while we imitate the humiliation of the Israelites on this occasion, let us be careful to bring forth fruits more meet for repentance than did they in their subsequent conduct. For though they now showed signs of deep abasement and sorrow of spirit, yet we do not find, from the ensuing history, that any general or permanent reformation took place; though they now relented, they soon relapsed, and involved themselves afresh and still more deeply in the guilt of defection and idolatry. "Many are melted under the word, that harden again before they are cast in a new mould."—*Henry.*

VER. 5. And they called the name of that place Bochim: and they sacrificed there unto the LORD.

*They sacrificed there unto the Lord.*—They had recourse to the blood of sprinkling for the remission of their sin. Though their weeping was very general and very bitter, so much so as to give a name to the place, yet they did not hope to pacify their offended God with tears. They knew that an atonement was necessary, and they therefore sought him in his appointed way. Would that we might learn from them! Humiliation is necessary, but not sufficient. Tears, even if they were to flow in rivers, could never wash away sin. The blood of atonement is indispensable, without which there is no remission. Nor should the fact be lost sight of here, that the sin laid to the charge of Israel was not of commission, but of omission; not some flagrant enormity, but a lukewarmness and neglect of duty. Yet they saw their need of a sacrifice to atone for that. In like manner, though we should have no guilt imputed to us but that of omission and defect, yet must we apply to the blood of sprinkling, and seek for pardon through that one sacrifice offered for us upon the cross. Finally, let the transaction here recorded teach us the value of a faithful monitor. We do not like faithful admonitions, even from those whose special duty it is to reprove sin. We are ready to account them harsh and severe. But what is the office which a friendly monitor performs? Is it not that which the Angel of the covenant came from heaven to execute on this occasion? And is it an evil, is it not a mercy, even at the expense of sounding a terrible alarm in the sinner's ears, to show him his guilt and danger, to rouse him from his security, and to urge him to fly to the only ark of safety? Certain it is, that the congregation of Israel must have felt themselves unspeakably indebted to him who thus sought their welfare; and equally sure are we that there is not a contrite sinner in the world who will not be thankful beyond expression to that monitor who has brought him to weep here, and thus prevented him from weeping, and wailing, and gnashing his teeth in the regions of woe for ever.

VER. 6. And when Joshua had let the people go, the children of Israel went every man unto his inheritance to possess the land.

*f* Josh. xxii. 6; xxiv. 28.

*When Joshua had let the people go.*—This passage (ver. 6–9) has already occurred, in nearly the same words, in Josh. xxiv. 29–31. It seems to be repeated here as a suitable preliminary to the ensuing account of their degeneracy and apostasy. The angel had foretold that the Canaanites and their idols would be a snare to Israel. The writer is now about to show that this prediction was actually fulfilled, and in order to that he turns back and takes a brief retrospect of some previous incidents in their history which, by contrast, would set the enormity of their transgressions in a still more striking point of view. This is according to the common usage

of the sacred writers, who, in their narrations, go more by the relation of events to each other than by their strict chronological order. After being so happily fixed in their several inheritances, and having commenced their settlement in Canaan under such favourable auspices, it greatly aggravated their sin, that they should afterwards have fallen away from God, and so grievously disappointed the promise which their fair beginnings held out.

VER. 7. <sup>h</sup> And the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the LORD, that he did for Israel.

<sup>k</sup> Josh. xxiv. 31.

*All the days of the elders that outlived Joshua.*—Heb. “that prolonged their days after Joshua.” As these elders might some of them have lived several years after Joshua’s decease, this term should be deducted from the whole period of Israel’s idolatries recorded in this book.

VER. 8. And <sup>l</sup> Joshua, the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, *being* an hundred and ten years old.

<sup>l</sup> Josh. xxiv. 9.

VER. 9. <sup>m</sup> And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in <sup>n</sup> Timnath-heres, in the mount of Ephraim, on the north side of the hill Gaash.

<sup>m</sup> Josh. xxiv. 30. <sup>n</sup> Josh. xix. 50; xxiv. 30.

*Buried him—in Timnath-heres.*—This place is called, in Josh. xxiv. 30, “Timnath-serah.” By transposing the letters of the last word, it becomes, as here, “Heres,” which signifies “the sun,” and it is not improbable, as the Jews imagine, that it was so called by reason of some memorial, connected with his sepulchre, of the sun’s miraculously standing still at his command.

VER. 10. And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, <sup>o</sup> which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel.

<sup>o</sup> Exod. v. 2. <sup>1</sup> Sam. ii. 12. <sup>1</sup> Chron. xxviii. 9. Jer. ix. 3; xxii. 16. Gal. iv. 8. <sup>2</sup> Thess. i. 8. <sup>1</sup> Titus i. 16.

*Which knew not the Lord.*—Had no practical or experimental knowledge of him; no deep or lively impression of his goodness; no affectionate, grateful, or devout sense of the wondrous manifestations of his power on their behalf. See on Exod. i. 8.

VER. 11. And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim:

*Served Baalim*—This word, the plural of “Baal,” signifies “lords.” Their false gods the Canaanites considered as supernatural rulers or governors, each having his peculiar district and office. But when they wished to express a par-

ticular “Baal,” or lord, they usually added some distinctive epithet, as Baal-zephon, Baal-peor, Baal-zebub, &c. The plural is here used to intimate that these imaginary deities were various, and that the worship of the Israelites, like that of the Canaanites, was not confined to any one of them. Lords many and gods many had dominion over them. From this verse onwards to the end of the chapter, the writer’s drift seems to be to give in brief terms a summary or compend of the whole book. It is a general and condensed statement of the leading features of the history of Israel, during the period of the Judges, which, in the ensuing chapters, is expanded into the various details of oppression and deliverance which are so briefly touched upon in these verses. This is according to the common usage of the sacred writers, and we have no doubt that the more minute is the reader’s inspection of the structure of the book, the more plausible will this view of the subject appear.

VER. 12. And they <sup>p</sup> forsook the LORD God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed <sup>q</sup> other gods, of the gods of the people that *were* round about them, and <sup>r</sup> bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the LORD to anger.

<sup>p</sup> Deut. xxxi. 16. <sup>q</sup> Deut. vi. 14. <sup>r</sup> Exod. xx. 5.

*And they forsook the Lord God.*—Rather, “for they forsook,” &c., a mere enlargement in its more minute particulars of the general fact stated in the preceding verse. Chald. “they forsook the worship of the Lord God,” as they that forsake the worship of God do in effect forsake God himself.

VER. 13. And they forsook the LORD, <sup>s</sup> and served Baal and Ashtaroth.

<sup>s</sup> Chap. iii. 7; x. 6. Psal. cvi. 36.

*Served Baal and Ashtaroth.*—Ashtaroth, like Baalim above, is of the plural number, and is probably here used as a general name for all the female deities of these nations, as Baal or Baalim is of the male. The sing. Ashtereth (Astarte) is the name of the Syrian Venus, who was worshipped with the most revolting and abominable rites. It is supposed that the moon was worshipped under this name, as was the sun under that of Baal.

VER. 14. <sup>t</sup> And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he <sup>u</sup> delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them, and <sup>v</sup> he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they <sup>w</sup> could not any longer stand before their enemies.

<sup>t</sup> Chap. iii. 8. <sup>u</sup> Psa. cvi. 40—42. <sup>v</sup> <sup>2</sup> Kings xvii. 20. <sup>w</sup> Chap. iii. 8; iv. 2. <sup>u</sup> Psa. xlv. 12. <sup>u</sup> Isa. i. 1. <sup>y</sup> Lev. xxvi. 37. <sup>y</sup> Josh. vii. 12, 18.

*Into the hands of spoilers.*—Robbers, marauders, plundering parties of the Canaanites, who committed depredations upon their cattle, flocks, crops, &c. The word may also be understood in a still fuller sense as <sup>z</sup> equivalent to oppressors,

those who captured not their property only, but themselves, reducing them to servitude, or at least compelling them to pay tribute. *Sold them.*—To sell, is to alienate the possession of any thing for a valuable consideration. The term is used in the Scriptures, however, without the annexed idea of an equivalent. God is said to “sell” his disobedient people when he delivers them up into the hands of their enemies to be dealt with as they may see fit, when he puts them out of his own hand, as it were, withholds his protection, and has nothing more to do with them as the objects of his peculiar protection. It is a term, therefore, emphatically expressive of the Divine dereliction, the most fearful judgment in its consequences that can befall a nation or an individual. Compare chap. iii. 8; iv. 8. Deut. xxxii. 30. Psal. xlv. 13. Isa. l. 1.

VER. 15. Whithersoever they went out, the hand of the LORD was against them for evil, as the LORD had said, and <sup>z</sup> as the LORD had sworn unto them: and they were greatly distressed.

<sup>z</sup> Lev. xxvi. Deut. xxviii.

*Whithersoever they went out.*—Whatsoever they undertook. Heb. “in every thing to which they went forth.” Not only in their military expeditions against their enemies, but in whatever undertaking they engaged at home, they were still baffled and disappointed, and every thing went against them. The doing of any kind of business is frequently expressed in Hebrew by the phrase “going out” or “coming in.” Thus (Deut. xxviii. 6) “Blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and blessed shalt thou be when thou goest out;” *i. e.* in all thine undertakings and employments, in the whole course and current of thine affairs. (Comp. Psal. cxxi. 8.) *As the Lord had said, &c.*—Particular reference is had to Lev. xxvi. 15—17. Deut. xxviii. 25, where these very judgments are expressly denounced against them in case they should thus apostatize.

VER. 16. Nevertheless <sup>a</sup> the LORD raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them.

<sup>a</sup> Chap. iii. 9, 10, 15. 1 Sam. xii. 11. Acts xiii. 20.

*The Lord raised up judges.*—That is, by the secret prompting and inspiration of his Spirit, working upon the hearts of particular individuals in view of the sufferings and calamities of the people, and inciting them, like Moses in Egypt, to aim at effecting their deliverance. This inward impulse was usually, perhaps always, accompanied by an express call and command to undertake the work, and by some outward designation which testified to the people the divine election; such for the most part as the display of some signal act of heroism, the performance of some marvellous or miraculous exploit, as in the cases of Shamgar, Gideon, Samson, &c. On the import of the word “judges” in this book, see Introduction.

VER. 17. And yet they would not hearken unto

their judges, but they <sup>b</sup> went a whoring after other gods, and bowed themselves unto them. they turned quickly out of the way which their fathers walked in, obeying the commandments of the LORD; but they did not so.

<sup>b</sup> Ex. xxxiv. 15, 16. Lev. xvii. 7.

*Would not hearken unto their judges.*—Would not obey them. *But went, &c.*—By the covenant entered into at mount Sinai, (Exod. xix. 6,) the people of Israel were virtually married unto God, so that every instance of idolatry was a breach of that solemn compact. The worship of idols was accounted and spoken of as spiritual adultery, and from the nature of the rites accompanying these idolatrous practices the term was often more than metaphorically proper.

VER. 18. And when the LORD raised them up judges, then <sup>c</sup> the LORD was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge: (<sup>d</sup> for it repented the LORD because of their groanings by reason of them that oppressed them and vexed them.)

<sup>c</sup> Josh. i. 5.

<sup>d</sup> See Gen. vi. 6. Deut. xxxii. 36. Psal. cvi. 44, 45.

*It repented the Lord.*—He altered the course of his providence, acted as if he repented. See on Gen. vi. 6, 7. Deut. xxxii. 36.

VER. 19. And it came to pass, <sup>e</sup> when the judge was dead, *that* they returned, and corrupted themselves more than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them, and to bow down unto them; they ceased not from their own doings, nor from their stubborn way.

<sup>e</sup> Chap. iii. 12; iv. 1; viii. 33.

*They ceased not from their own doings.*—Heb. “they let nothing fall from their doings.” They abated, they relaxed nothing of their evil practices. *Nor from their stubborn way.*—Heb. “their hard way.” Hard, as proceeding from a hard and perverse heart; hard, in the sense of being stubbornly persisted in; and hard or grievous in its consequences. It is the term applied to the obstinate and intractable conduct of Pharaoh.

VER. 20. <sup>f</sup> And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel; and he said, Because that this people hath <sup>g</sup> transgressed my covenant which I commanded their fathers, and have not hearkened unto my voice;

<sup>f</sup> Ver. 14.

<sup>g</sup> Josh. xxiii. 16.

*And the anger of the Lord was kindled, &c.*—From this verse to the end of the chapter, the narrative is probably to be considered merely as a repetition in substance of what is affirmed by the angel, ver. 1—3. It is a more full and detailed statement of the reasons for the foregoing appearance of the divine messenger, threatening them with the judgments of heaven

for their disobedience. Nothing is more common than such transpositions in the order of the inspired record. The effect is first mentioned, and the cause afterwards.

VER. 21. <sup>a</sup> I also will not henceforth drive out any from before them of the nations which Joshua left when he died :

<sup>b</sup> Josh. xxiii. 13.

*Will not henceforth drive out, &c.*—I will not while you continue in your stubborn way. The promises of God to expel the Canaanites were upon condition of their obedience.

VER. 22. <sup>c</sup> That through them I may <sup>d</sup> prove Israel, whether they will keep the way of the LORD to walk therein, as their fathers did keep it, or not.

<sup>e</sup> Chap. iii. 1, 4.

<sup>f</sup> Deut. viii. 2, 16; xiii. 3.

*That through them I may prove Israel.*—Not for his own satisfaction, but that they themselves might be made better acquainted with the plague of their own hearts, and that the righteous judgments of God might thus approve themselves to the consciences of all who should either experience, or witness, or hear of them. The Most High often orders his providence on the principle of a father or master who distrusts the fidelity of his son or servant, and places them in such circumstances that they may, by their good or evil conduct, justify his suspicions, or give him proofs of their being groundless. It is implied, however, that these nations in case the Israelites stood not the test, should be not only trials or ordeals to them, but also scourges and instruments of wrath. *As their fathers did keep it.*—That is, those who lived in the days of Joshua, and the elders who overlived him.

VER. 23. Therefore the LORD left those nations, without driving them out hastily; neither delivered he them into the hands of Joshua.

*Therefore the Lord left, &c.*—Or, Heb. “suffered.” It is not to be understood that there was any absolute necessity for this delay in expelling the Canaanites, but as God foresaw the remissness of his people in accomplishing this work, he saw fit in his providence to overrule it to a wise and useful result. In like manner he overrules the wickedness of all the wicked in the universe, and causes it to redound to the good of the whole and his own glory.

### CHAPTER III.

VER. 1. Now these *are* <sup>a</sup> the nations which the LORD left, to prove Israel by them, *even* as many of Israel as had not known all the wars of Canaan ;

<sup>b</sup> Chap. ii. 21, 22.

*Now these are the nations, &c.*—The nations

left to prove the Israelites were the five lordships or satrapies of the Philistines, who gave them more trouble than any of the rest—particularly in the latter days of the Judges—the Sidonians, Canaanites, and the Hivites that dwelt about mount Lebanon. *As many—as had not known, &c.*—These words, and those of the ensuing verse, included together in the parenthesis, however obvious a sense they seem to present to the English reader, are by no means so easy of explanation when we turn to the original. The first, and perhaps most natural impression, as to their meaning is, that they are designed to acquaint us with another reason which God had for leaving these nations in the land, besides that of proving Israel, viz. that their posterity might not forget military discipline, but keep themselves habituated to those warlike practices which would be necessary for their protection. This effect would be secured by the constant presence of an enemy, and therefore God left a remnant of the devoted nations to prevent his people growing rusty, if we may so say, in the use of arms. This we are not prepared to term an erroneous construction, but quite sure we are that it is an inadequate one. The term “to know” must in fairness be interpreted according to its usual scriptural import, which is to have not merely an intellectual, but an experimental knowledge of any thing. By those, therefore, who “had not known all the wars of Canaan,” we understand those who had not with confiding faith, with lively zeal, and from a prompt and grateful spirit of obedience, entered into and persevered in, those conflicts with the Canaanites which God had enjoined. As they had grossly failed in their duty in this respect, and had not “known” these wars as they should have done, their children, according to the righteous economy of Providence, were appointed to reap the bitter fruits of their neglect. They were to know to their cost, to be taught by sad experience, the trouble, vexation, and annoyance that should come upon the successive generations descended from those who, by their culpable remissness, had so righteously incurred this afflictive judgment. This we suppose to be the true import of the original, to which no translation can do full justice. But we may learn from it that the neglect of one generation to discharge its appropriate duties, never fails to burden their successors with the penalty of their remissness.

VER. 2. Only that the generations of the children of Israel might know, to teach them war, at the least such as before knew nothing thereof;

VER. 3. *Namely,* <sup>b</sup> five lords of the Philistines, and all the Canaanites, and the Sidonians, and the Hivites that dwelt in mount Lebanon, from mount Baal-hermon unto the entering in of Hamath.

<sup>c</sup> Josh. xiii. 3.

*Five lords.*—Five lordships, principalities, or satrapies, as it is rendered by the Seventy. See on Josh. xiii. 3. *All the Canaanites and the Zidonians, &c.*—Rather, “all the Canaanites, even the

Zidonians," &c. That portion of the Canaanites seems to be intended who are otherwise styled Phœnicians, whose capital city was Zidon, so called from Sidon the son of Canaan, (Gen. x. 15,) and who were never entirely subdued by the Israelites. *From mount Baal-hermon.*—A part of Antilibanus, lying near the sources of the Jordan.

VER. 4. "And they were to prove Israel by them, to know whether they would hearken unto the commandments of the LORD, which he commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses.

c Chap. ii. 22.

*And they were to prove Israel.*—Heb. "and they were made to be for a trial or proof of Israel," expressive not so strictly of the design of their being left, which is stated ver. 1, as of the actual event. The result corresponded with the divine prescience and purposes. "God in his revealed will had commanded (doomed) the Canaanites to slaughter, yet secretly gives over Israel to a toleration of some Canaanites, for their own punishment. He hath bidden us cleanse our heart of all our corruptions; yet he will permit some of these thorns still in our sides for exercise, for humiliation. If we could lay violent hands on our sins, our souls should have peace; now our indulgence costs us many stripes and many tears."—*Bp. Hall. To know.*—That is, to make known, to afford to themselves and others experimental proof. God himself of course could stand in no need of such a process to ascertain the truth. See on Deut. viii. 2.

VER. 5. "And the children of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites, Hittites, and Amorites, and Perizzites, and Hivites, and Jebusites:

d Ps. cvi. 35.

*Dwelt among the Canaanites.*—Evidently implying that, contrary to the command of God, they suffered these nations to remain a majority in point of numbers, as otherwise they could not properly be said to dwell among them. See on chap. i. 32.

VER. 6. And "they took their daughters to be their wives, and gave their daughters to their sons, and served their gods.

e Ex. xxxiv. 16. Deut. vii. 3.

*Took their daughters—and served their gods.*—Chal. "worshipped their errors (idols)." The cause and the effect brought into immediate connexion, in exact accordance with what had been long before announced, (Deut. vii. 3, 4,) "Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods; so will the anger of the Lord be kindled," &c. "In such unequal matches there is more reason to fear that the bad will corrupt the good, than to hope the good will reform the bad."—*Henry.*

VER. 7. "And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and forgat the LORD their God, and served Baalim, and the groves.

f Chap. ii. 11. g Chap. ii. 13.  
h Ex. xxxiv. 13. Deut. xvi. 21. Chap. vi. 25.

*Served Baalim and the groves.*—Not the groves themselves, but the grove gods, the images or idols which were set up in shady groves consecrated to their worship. Gesenius, however, on the original word אַשְׁרֹתִים *Asheroth*, contends with much plausibility that it is a proper name closely related to Ashtaroth, and signifies the "statues of Astarte," the Syrian Venus, or goddess of fortune, one of the most noted of the Phœnician deities. This is confirmed by nearly all the ancient versions. The rendering "groves" originated with the Greek Septuagint, probably from the fact of their votaries worshipping those images in such retired places. From this source the signification of "groves" has crept into most lexicons and commentaries of modern times. *Forgat the Lord their God.*—"In complaisance to their new relations, they talked of nothing but Baalim and the groves, so that by degrees they lost the remembrance of the true God, and forgot that there was such a being, and what obligations they lay under to him. In nothing is the corrupt memory of man more treacherous than in this, that it is apt to forget God; because he is out of sight he is out of mind, and here begins all the wickedness that is in the world; they have 'perverted their way,' for they have 'forgotten the Lord their God.'"—*Henry.*

VER. 8. Therefore the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he 'sold them into the hand of Chushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia: and the children of Israel served Chushan-rishathaim eight years.

i Chap. ii. 14. k Hab. iii. 7.

*Sold them into the hand.*—Delivered them into the hand. See this phrase explained, chap. ii. 14. *Chushan-rishathaim.*—Rendered by most of the ancient versions "Chushan, the wicked, or impious;" properly the doubly, *i. e.* pre-eminently wicked. The grounds of the appellation, supposing this to be correct, it is now impossible to determine. *Mesopotamia.*—Heb. "Aram-Naharaim, Syria of the two rivers;" *i. e.* the country lying between the rivers Tigris and Euphrates, thence called Mesopotamia, which signifies the midst of rivers. See on Gen. xxiv. 10. It is now called Diarbek. *Served.*—This servitude, as applied to the state of subjection to which the Israelites were oftentimes reduced, must be understood with some variation of meaning according to circumstances; but generally it signifies the obligation to pay tribute and make presents to the conqueror. That they were obliged to render personal or military service does not appear from the Scriptures; but that they were sometimes subject to the most severe and cruel treatment is obvious from the whole history. It is very probable that their subjection to this

distasteful king was more favourable than to the immediately neighbouring nations, and even to nations dwelling in the same land with themselves, to which they were afterwards reduced.

VER. 9. And when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer to the children of Israel, who delivered them, even Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother.

*l* Ver. 15. Chap. iv. 3; vi. 7; x. 10. 1 Sam. xii. 10. Neh. ix. 27. Psal. xxii. 5; cvi. 44; cvii. 13, 19.  
*m* Chap. ii. 16. *n* Chap. i. 13.

When the children of Israel cried.—When they uttered fervent prayers, coupled with penitent confessions of their faults, as is to be inferred from chap. x. 10, and xv. 16. Raised up a deliverer.—Heb. “a saviour.” So afterwards, “who delivered,” Heb. “and saved;” which is more properly, we think, to be referred to God than to Othniel. God saved or delivered them by Othniel. “Saviour,” in this connexion, is but another name for the “judges,” who were raised up from time to time for the deliverance of Israel. Comp. 2 Kings xiii. 5. Neh. ix. 27. The original for “raised up” properly signifies, stirred up, excited, prompted, in consequence of a special divine influence exerted upon the individual. The phrase is in fact explained by the terms employed in the beginning of the next verse. Othniel the son of Kenaz.—Of whom see Josh. xv. 16, and Judg. i. 13. He had already signalized his valour in the taking of Kirjath-sepher; and by his experience in war, and the reputation he had gained with his countrymen, was peculiarly qualified to lead them successfully against their oppressors.

VER. 10. And the Spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he judged Israel, and went out to war: and the LORD delivered Chushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand; and his hand prevailed against Chushan-rishathaim.

*o* See Numb. xxvii. 18. Chap. vi. 34; xi. 29; xlii. 25; xiv. 6, 19. 1 Sam. xi. 6. 2 Chron. xv. 1.

The Spirit of the Lord came upon him.—Heb. “was, or was made to be, upon him.” A common expression for one's being moved, acted upon, and impelled by supernatural influence to perform some extraordinary exploit, or to take the lead in some great and important enterprise. Chald. “the spirit of prophecy remained upon him.” The expression implies that he was endowed with singular wisdom, fortitude, and valour, adapting him to the work to which he was called. He judged Israel.—That is, he not only assumed the office of chief magistrate, and entered upon the work of reforming their manners, repressing idolatry, administering justice, and reviving religion, but also, as appears from the ensuing clause, put himself at the head of their forces, and in this capacity pleaded and avenged the cause of Israel against their oppressors. Thus the term is employed Psal. xliii. 1: “Judge me, O God, and plead my cause against an un-

godly nation;” *i. e.* judge me by pleading my cause, by vindicating me from the aspersions and delivering me from persecutions of my enemies. Comp. Deut. xxxii. 36. Psal. x. 18.

VER. 11. And the land had rest forty years: and Othniel the son of Kenaz died.

The land had rest forty years.—Enjoyed prevailing peace, was exempt from tribute, and was in every respect in a tranquil and flourishing state, during that period. The forty years are perhaps to be dated from Othniel's being raised up to judge Israel. And Othniel died.—“Othniel had rescued Israel from idolatry and servitude; his life and their innocence and peace ended together. How powerful the presence of one good man is in a church or state, is best found in his loss.”—*Bp. Hall.* An attentive examination of the chronology of this book, makes it all but absolutely certain that it is somewhere near to this period that we are to refer the idolatry of the Danites and the war with the Benjamites, mentioned chap. xvii.—xxi. Though, for the reasons stated in our Introduction, thrown together at the end of the book, yet the events no doubt took place either under or before Othniel's administration, who, though a judge, was not, as Henry remarks, such a king in Israel as to keep men from doing what was “right in their own eyes.”

VER. 12. And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD: and the LORD strengthened Eglon the king of Moab against Israel, because they had done evil in the sight of the LORD.

*p* Chap. ii. 19. *q* 1 Sam. xii. 9.

The Lord strengthened Eglon.—Allowed him to become strong, suffered his providence to take such a course as would result in his becoming too powerful for the Israelites. It was not by positive agency, but by sovereign permission, that this result took place. The course of God's providence often favours the designs of his enemies, and they take advantage of it, while the effect, in Scripture style, is attributed to God himself; but it was only as we should say that God delivered a vessel, with all on board, into the hands of a pirate, because he caused the wind to blow in a particular direction, of which the pirate took advantage, and captured the vessel. The phraseology is liable to no just objection when rightly understood, and affords a clue to the explanation of hundreds of passages in the sacred volume. “Rather than Israel shall want a scourge for their sin, God himself shall raise them up an enemy. Moab had no quarrel but his own ambition, but God meant by the ambition of the one party to punish the ambition of the other. His justice can make one sin the executioner of another, while neither shall look for any measure from him but judgment.”—*Bp. Hall.*

VER. 13. And he gathered unto him the children of Ammon and Amalek, and went and smote Israel, and possessed the city of palm-trees.

*r* Chap. v. 14. *s* Chap. i. 16.

*And he gathered.*—That is, God gathered; in the sense above explained. He gathered, by allowing Eglon to gather, the forces of these neighbouring tribes, who were predisposed by ancient enmity to enter into the alliance. *Possessed the city of palm-trees.*—Jericho, or rather the site of Jericho, with the adjacent territory, as the city itself was in ruins. On this site, Eglon probably pitched his camp, erected fortifications, and, if Josephus be correct, fixed here his residence. His object was undoubtedly to obtain command of the fords of the Jordan, which would not only open to him a free communication with the land of Moab, but prevent also the tribes on the east and the west of the river forming a junction of forces. Accordingly the first step taken by Ehud, when assured of victory, (ver. 28,) was to take possession of these fords, and thus cut off the retreat of the enemy.

VER. 14. So the children of Israel served Eglon the king of Moab eighteen years.

† Dent. xxviii. 40.

*The children of Israel served Eglon eighteen years.*—“Israel seems as born to servitude; they came from their bondage in the land of Egypt, to serve in the land of promise. They had neglected God, now they were neglected of God; their sins had made them servants, whom the choice of God had made free, yea, his first-born. Worthy are they to serve those men whose false gods they had served; and to serve them always in thralldom, whom they have once served in idolatry. We may not measure the continuance of punishment by the time of the commission of sin; one minute’s sin deserves a torment beyond all time.”—*Bp. Hall.*

VER. 15. But when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, the LORD raised them up a deliverer, Ehud the son of Gera, a Benjamite, a man left-handed: and by him the children of Israel sent a present unto Eglon the king of Moab.

α Ver. 9. Psal. lxxviii. 34.

*Cried unto the Lord.*—With strong and earnest supplications. “Doubtless Israel was not so insensible of their own misery, as not to complain sooner than the end of eighteen years. The first hour they sighed for themselves, but now they cried unto God. The very purpose of affliction is to make us importunate; he hears the secret murmurs of our grief, yet will not seem to hear us, till our cries be loud and strong. God sees it best for the penitent to dwell for the time under their sorrows; he sees us sinking all the while, yet he lets us alone till we be at the bottom; and when once we can say, ‘Out of the depths have I cried unto thee,’ instantly follows, ‘The Lord heard me.’ A vehement suitor cannot but be heard of God, whatsoever he asks. If our prayers want success, they want heart; their blessing is according to their vigour.”—*Bp. Hall.* *A man left-handed.*—Heb. “a man shut or obstructed of his right hand;” i. e. not

able readily to use it. Chal. “contracted or impeded in his right hand.” Syr. “a man whose right hand was torpid.” The Septuagint renders it an ambidexter, i. e. one who could use both hands alike; from which the Vulgate, “who could use either hand as a right hand,” for neither of which is there any authority in the original. The true import of the Heb. undoubtedly is, that through disease, injury, or some other infirmity, he made little or no use of his right hand, but employed his left only, a circumstance which would seem to render him less fit for war, as he must necessarily use his sword somewhat awkwardly. “Yet God chose this left-handed man to be the man of his right hand, whom he would ‘make strong for himself.’ It was God’s right hand that gained Israel the victory, (Psal. xlv. 3,) not the right hand of the instruments he employed.”—*Henry.* It is remarkable that although the name “Benjamiu” signifies the son of the right hand, yet as appears, from chap. xx. 16, multitudes of this tribe were from some cause or other left-handed; so far are men’s characters oftentimes from corresponding with their names. *Sent a present.*—Either the tribute-money which Eglon had imposed upon the Israelites, or a gratuity over and above their ordinary tribute, sent to conciliate the favour of the lord of Moab, their present master. The former we suppose to be the most probable interpretation, as the original, *Mincha*, repeatedly occurs in this sense. Similar exactions on the part of the despotic rulers of the East continue to be levied upon subject provinces to the present day, and it is well known that their exorbitant demands of this kind are among the principal causes of the impoverished state of the oriental nations, and of the frequent insurrections that occur among them. It is possible that Eglon’s oppressions in this way had become so grievous to the Israelites, that they could bear them no longer, and accordingly in their distress groaned out to God for deliverance.

VER. 16. But Ehud made him a dagger which had two edges, of a cubit length: and he did gird it under his raiment upon his right thigh.

*Ehud made him a dagger.*—Caused to be made; just as Joshua, (chap. v. 3,) is said to have “made him sharp knives,” that is, by the ministry of others. *Of a cubit length.*—The original word (כַּמֶּטֶר *gomed*) here rendered cubit, is of very doubtful signification. As the kindred root in Chald. has the import of contracted, Michaëlis suggests that it probably means an instrument made shorter than usual for the purpose intended. The Sept. renders it “of a span length,” and most of the versions understand it in the same sense. A Jewish cubit is nearly two feet; a span is about eight inches, a much more convenient length for a poniard or stiletto, which would undoubtedly have been the modern name of Ehud’s instrument. *Upon his right thigh.*—Whence it could be more easily drawn forth by his left hand.

VER. 17. And he brought the present unto Eglon king of Moab: and Eglon was a very fat man.

VER. 18. And when he had made an end to offer the present, he sent away the people that bare the present.

*Made an end to offer.*—When he had ended all the ceremonies which in those days were customary in presenting gifts to great men. *The people that bare the present.*—A considerable number of persons seems to have been employed on this occasion, not so much because the quantity or variety of the presents required it, as for the sake of etiquette, and a somewhat pompous display. The orientals habitually affect a great parade in presenting their gifts, especially to persons of power and distinction. "Through ostentation," says Maillet, "they never fail to load upon four or five horses what might easily be carried on one. In like manner as to jewels, trinkets, and other things of value, they place in fifteen dishes, what a single plate would very well hold." It appears evident from the next verse that Ehud accompanied this party some distance on their way homewards, and then returned himself alone to execute, without accomplices, the deed which he meditated, and to which he was probably impelled by a divine prompting.

VER. 19. But he himself turned again <sup>x</sup> from the quarries that were by Gilgal, and said, I have a secret errand unto thee, O king: who said, Keep silence. And all that stood by him went out from him.

<sup>x</sup> Josh. iv. 20.

*From the quarries.*—Heb. פסלים *pesilim*, from the root פסל to cut out, or carve, as a sculptor, whence several of the ancient versions understand the word of idols or graven images, by which it is generally rendered. It was perhaps the place where idolatrous statues of stone were cut out of the quarry, and erected as objects of worship by the Moabites. This might have been done in contempt of the religion and worship of the Israelites, and in the sight of them may have stirred up afresh the pious indignation of Ehud, and animated him with new zeal to accomplish the work upon which he was intent. *I have a secret errand.*—Heb. "a word or thing of concealment, of secrecy." *Who said, Keep silence.*—This is generally understood as addressed to Ehud, intimating that he was to keep silent, and not declare his message till the king's attendants had withdrawn. But a preferable sense, we think, is that given by Geddes in his translation, "The king said, Privacy!" which was equivalent to a command to his servants to leave the room. This is confirmed by the Chal., Syr., and Arab. versions, and also by the connexion, as the next clause evidently expresses the performance of a command.

VER. 20. And Ehud came unto him; and he was sitting in a summer-parlour, which he had for himself alone: and Ehud said, I have a message from God unto thee. And he arose out of his seat.

*Sitting in a summer-parlour.*—Heb. "in an upper room or chamber of cooling." The extreme heat of the climate obliged the Orientals to adopt various devices for ventilating and cooling their apartments. For this purpose they made their doors large, and their chambers spacious; but they soon found that such simple contrivances were insufficient, and that other methods of cooling their habitations were necessary. At Aleppo, according to Russell, this was effected by means of kiosks, which are a sort of wooden divans or stages, which project a little way from their other buildings, and hang over the street. They are raised about a foot and a half higher than the floor of the room, to which they are quite open, and by having windows in front and on each side, a great draught of air is produced, causing a refreshing coolness in the sultry heat of summer. Another method of compassing the same end is by ventilators. The houses in Persia are ventilated by means of a triangular building which rises far above the terrace roof, and is open at top, so as to receive the wind in whatever direction it blows. The summer-parlour of Eglon was undoubtedly cooled by some of these contrivances, which proves that expedients for mitigating the extreme heat of the climate are of great antiquity. *Which he had for himself alone.*

—Into which he went when he wished to be retired, and so better adapted to hearing a secret message. The circumstance is probably mentioned here by way of accounting for his servants' waiting so long, (ver. 23,) before going in to him. From a circumstance mentioned by Mr. Bruce, it appears that Ehud acted in strict conformity to the customs of the time and place, so that neither the suspicion of the king nor his attendants should be excited by his conduct. It was usual for the attendants to retire when secret messages were to be delivered. "I drank a dish of coffee," says he, "and told him that I was a bearer of a confidential message from Ali Bey of Cairo, and wished to deliver it to him without witnesses, whenever he pleased. The room was accordingly cleared without delay, excepting his secretary, who was also going away, when I pulled him back by the clothes, saying, Stay, if you please; we shall need you to write the answer." *I have a message from God unto thee.*—A message to be delivered, not in word, but by action. The Hebrew signifies a thing, a business, an affair, as well as a word. The message was on the point of Ehud's dagger. The original for "God," moreover, is a term common both to the true God and the supposed deities of the heathen; so that Eglon, as an idolater, might have understood it in a very different sense from that intended by Ehud. Yet we think it most probable, on the whole, that he would understand Ehud, an Israelite, as speaking of the God of Israel, and that a general feeling of reverence inspired by the mention of the Deity, or the Powers above, even though his conceptions of such a power were very vague, was sufficient to prompt him to pay a serious attention to what was professedly uttered in his name. *And he arose from his seat.*—Thus paying a becoming respect to a divine communication. "Though a king, though a heathen king, though rich and

powerful, though now tyrannizing over the people of God; though a fat, unwieldy man, that could not easily rise nor stand long, yet when he expected to receive orders from Heaven, he rose out of his seat, and whether it was low and easy, or high and stately, he quitted it, and stood up when God was about to speak to him, thereby owning God his superior. This shames the irreverence of many who are called Christians, and yet when a message from God is delivered to them, study to show by all marks of carelessness how little they regard it."—*Henry*. His rising also gave Ehud a favourable opportunity of striking the fatal blow.

VER. 21. And Ehud put forth his left hand, and took the dagger from his right thigh, and thrust it into his belly :

*Took the dagger—and thrust it, &c.*—A correct estimate of the moral character of this bold deed of Ehud can only be formed by settling the previous question, whether in performing it he was acting under a divine commission, or prompted merely by a self-moved impulse of patriotism to free his country from the yoke of an usurper and a tyrant. If the latter were the fact, we have no disposition to justify the course adopted by Ehud, although it may be plausibly maintained to be according to the acknowledged right of nature and of nations for subjects to free themselves from bondage, and restore liberty to a country unjustly enslaved, by taking the life of their oppressor. Most nations, both in ancient and modern times, that have recovered themselves from political thralldom, have taken this course, and apparently with the approbation of the great mass of mankind. At any rate, the objection against this act of Ehud, as a base assassination, comes with an ill grace from those who admire and eulogize the conduct of Brutus in stabbing Cæsar in the senate-house, on the plea of ridding his country of a tyrant. But the deed of Ehud is doubtless to be vindicated on other grounds. There is every reason, we think, to look upon him as moved to this undertaking by an impulse from above. It is expressly said, (ver. 15,) that God raised him up as a saviour to the country; and how could he save his country but by crushing the power which held it in subjection? Again, we are brought to the same conclusion by considering the peculiar circumstances under which the deed was accomplished. In view of the dangers attending it, what but the confidence of being divinely directed could have induced him, after dismissing his attendants at Gilgal, to return alone, and attempt the execution of his purpose? How could he otherwise presume to think that he, a single person, and disabled in his right hand, could reach the heart of the king amidst the circle of his officers and guards? How could he expect, enemy as he was, to be admitted to a private interview? And, if admitted, how could he look for an incident so favourable to his object as the king's ordering all the company to leave the room? And then, should he succeed in despatching the king, what prospect had he of effecting his escape?—and yet, should he fail to escape, the whole enterprise, as far as the deliverance of

his country was concerned, would have been abortive. We cannot, therefore, resist the evidence arising from these considerations that Ehud acted in this matter in virtue of a commission from God, who saw fit thus to punish the oppressor of his people, after having first made use of him for their correction. He would, of course, know that the prompting to the act was of God by the Spirit that came upon him, the impulses of which carried their own evidence along with them, and so gave him full assurance at once of the lawfulness and the success of the attempt, of both which he would otherwise have had the utmost reason to doubt. "If he be sure that God bids him do it, he is sure both that he may do it and that he shall do it; for a command from God is sufficient to bear us out, and to bring us off, both against our consciences and against all the world."—*Henry*. It is not, however, to be imagined that Ehud's conduct is to be followed as a precedent; for no man can dare to follow it unless he have infallible evidence that he is called of God to do it; but as no man can expect such a call at this time, no man can, without the deepest criminality, presume to imitate his example.

VER. 22. And the haft also went in after the blade; and the fat closed upon the blade, so that he could not draw the dagger out of his belly; and the dirt came out.

*And the dirt came out.*—According to some, "and it (the blade) went out behind." The obscurity of the original renders it difficult to affix any determinate sense to the words.

VER. 23. Then Ehud went forth through the porch, and shut the doors of the parlour upon him, and locked them.

*Ehud went forth, &c.*—By a remarkable providence Eglon fell silently without uttering any shriek or outcry, which might have been overheard by his servants at a distance. His dying groans seem to have been stifled in his own fat, and thus the escape of his executioner was signally favoured. Ehud accordingly walked forth, shutting and locking the doors, and probably taking the key with him, with such an air of composure and innocence as gave no ground of suspicion, to any of the guards that he might have passed, of what had taken place within. His calm and sedate demeanour under such trying circumstances is to be resolved into that strong confidence in God by which he was actuated in executing the commission.

VER. 24. When he was gone out, his servants came; and when they saw that, behold, the doors of the parlour were locked, they said, Surely he covereth his feet in his summer-chamber.

*He covereth his feet.*—This appears to have been an idiomatic and colloquial form of expression for lying down to sleep. When this was done they dropped their slippers, lifted up their

feet, and covered them with their long loose garments. Thus, in the only other place where this phrase occurs, (1 Sam. xxiv. 3.) we read, that Saul "went into a cave to cover his feet," *i. e.* to refresh himself by sleep. This interpretation, though varying from that of several of the ancient versions, which regard it as a euphemism for a different act, is confirmed by the Arabic and Syriac, and also by Josephus, who says, "The king's servants were very still, as supposing that the king had composed himself to sleep." From the case of Ishbosheth, (2 Sam. iv. 5,) and of David, (2 Sam. xi. 2,) it is evident that the custom of taking repose in those hot countries in the middle of the day was by no means unusual.

VER. 25. And they tarried till they were ashamed: and, behold, he opened not the doors of the parlour, therefore they took a key and opened them: and, behold, their lord was fallen down dead on the earth.

*Tarried till they were ashamed.*—That is, perplexed, confounded, not knowing what to make of it. They were greatly agitated between the fear of disturbing him on the one hand, and of neglecting their duty on the other. Though the primary import of the original is that of "feeling shame," yet it is also in repeated instances found to be closely connected with the idea of disappointment in long waiting, and consequent perplexity, chagrin, mortification. Thus, (Jer. xiv. 3,) "And their nobles have sent their little ones to the waters; they have come to the pits, and have found no water; they returned with their vessels empty; they were ashamed and confounded, and covered their heads." (Job vi. 19, 20,) "The troops of Tema looked, the companies of Sheba waited for them. They were confounded because they had hoped; they came thither, and were ashamed." Comp. Ps. vi. 1. Jer. xiv. 4. Isa. xix. 9. *Behold, their lord was fallen down.*—Heb. "their lords;" pl. excel. according to the Heb. idiom. See on Gen. i. 1. "God, when he hath chastened his children, doth many times cast the rod into the fire."—*Trapp.*

VER. 26. And Ehud escaped while they tarried, and passed beyond the quarries, and escaped into Seirath.

VER. 27. And it came to pass when he was come, that he blew a trumpet in the mountain of Ephraim, and the children of Israel went down with him from the mount, and he before them.

*g* Chap. v. 14; vi. 34. 1 Sam. xlii. 3.  
*z* Josh. xvii. 15. Chap. vii. 24; xvii. 1; xix. 1.

*Blow a trumpet in the mountain of Ephraim.*—That is, caused trumpets to be blown in different directions throughout that region. By the "mountain of Ephraim" is not meant any particular mountain, but the mountainous tract or district generally. Ehud, though a Benjamite, applied first to the tribe of Ephraim, probably for the reason that that tribe, lying immediately contiguous, was more numerous than his own, and had more men to spare, as the Benjamites not long before, in consequence of the events

mentioned ch. xix.—xxi., seem to have been reduced to a mere handful. It is not unlikely, moreover, that the Ephraimites had been the principal sufferers under the rod of Moab. *The children of Israel went down from the mount.*—After being collected in considerable numbers by his emissaries.

VER. 28. And he said unto them, Follow after me: for "the Lord hath delivered your enemies the Moabites into your hand. And they went down after him, and took <sup>b</sup> the fords of Jordan toward Moab, and suffered not a man to pass over.

*a* Chap. vii. 9, 15. 1 Sam. xvii. 47.  
*b* Josh. ii. 7. Chap. xii. 5.

*Took the fords of Jordan.*—He first secured these passes and set a strong guard upon them, to cut off all communication between the Moabites on the west, and those in their own country on the east of Jordan, so that those who might attempt to fly should have no means of escape, and those who might resolve to fight no prospect of assistance from abroad. "He thus shut them up in that land as their prison, in which they were pleasing themselves as their palace and paradise."—*Henry.*

VER. 29. And they slew of Moab at that time about ten thousand men, all lusty, and all men of valour: and there escaped not a man.

*All lusty, and all men of valour.*—The best and choicest of all the king of Moab's forces, picked troops, composed of men of bulk and stature, able-bodied and high-spirited, whom Eglon had stationed on that side the Jordan to overawe and keep Israel in subjection. Chal. "every one terrible and full of valour."

VER. 30. So Moab was subdued that day under the hand of Israel: and "the land had rest fourscore years.

*c* Ver 11.

VER. 31. And after him was <sup>d</sup>Shamgar the son of Anath, which slew of the Philistines six hundred men <sup>e</sup> with an ox-goad; <sup>f</sup> and he also delivered <sup>g</sup> Israel.

*d* Chap. v. 6, 7. 1 Sam. xliii. 19, 22.  
*e* 1 Sam. xvii. 47, 50. *f* Chap. ii. 16.  
*g* Chap. iv. 1, 3, &c.; x. 7, 17; xi. 4, &c. 1 Sam. iv. 1.

*After him was Shamgar.*—Of the tribe and family of Shamgar nothing is said in the Scripture, except that he was the son of Anath, nor are we informed how long he judged Israel. From his having to do principally with the Philistines, it is probable that he originated in one of the tribes bordering upon their territory, as perhaps that upon that of Judah or Dan. *With an ox-goad.*—Heb. מלמד *malmad*, from the root למד *lamad*, to teach, and literally rendered "an instructor of oxen;" *i. e.* an instrument by which they are brought into due subjection, analogous to which we have, Hos. x. 11, עגלה כלמדה "a heifer that is taught," and Jer. xxxi. 18, "I was chastised כעגלה כלמדה as a bullock not taught," *i. e.* not trained

to subjection, though rendered less accurately in our translation, "unaccustomed to the yoke." The Sept. and Vulg. render the original by a couler or ploughshare, but that the ox-goad still used in Palestine is a weapon sufficiently destructive for this purpose, if wielded by a strong and skilful hand, appears highly probable from the description of this implement given by Maundrell. He says, "the country people were now everywhere at plough in the fields, in order to sow cotton. It was observable, that in ploughing they used goads of extraordinary size; upon measuring of several, I found them eight feet long, and at the bigger end six inches in circumference. They were armed at the lesser end with a sharp prickle for driving the oxen, at the other end with a small spade, or paddle of iron, strong and massy, for cleansing the plough from the clay that encumbers it in working. May we not from hence conjecture, that it was with such a goad as one of these, that Shamgar made that prodigious slaughter related of him? (Judg. iii. 21.) I am confident that whoever should see one of these instruments, would judge it to be a weapon not less fit, perhaps fitter, than a sword for such an execution. Goads of this sort I saw always used hereabouts, and also in Syria; and the reason is, because the same single person both drives the oxen, and also holds and manages the plough; which makes it necessary to use such a goad as is above described, to avoid the encumbrance of two instruments." This is confirmed by Mr. Buckingham, who in describing his journey from Soor (Tyre) to Acre, remarks of the ploughing that he witnessed, that "oxen were yoked in pairs, and the plough was small and of simple construction, so that it seemed necessary for two to follow each other in the same furrow, as they invariably did. The husbandman holding the plough with one hand, by a handle like that of a walking crutch, bore in the other a goad of seven or eight feet in length, armed with a sharp point of iron at one end, and at the other with a plate of the same metal shaped like a calking-chisel. One attendant only was necessary for each plough, as he who guided it, with one hand spurred the oxen with the points of the goad, and cleansed the earth from the ploughshare by its spaded heel with the other." Shamgar was perhaps quietly following the plough, at the time when the Philistines made a sudden inroad upon the country for purposes of plunder, and being moved by God to oppose them, and having neither spear nor sword at hand, he availed himself of the implement with which he was driving his oxen, and with that effected the slaughter here described. The achievement was probably miraculous on his part, like that of Samson in killing so many thousands of the Philistines with the jaw-bone of an ass; though several respectable commentators suppose that instead of withstanding the enemy alone, he put himself at the head of a hastily gathered band of country people, who arming themselves with the implements of tillage with which they were occupied, fell upon the invaders and put them to a total rout. In support of this sense it is affirmed, that a leader is often put for the force which he commands, as above, (chap. i. 13,) where Othniel is said to have taken Kirjath-sepher, though no

one will suppose he did it unassisted. So also in regard to the exploits of the three champions of Israel mentioned 2 Sam. xxiii. 8—12. But this interpretation appears on the whole less likely. The incident is evidently recorded as something uncommon and marvellous, and as divine interpositions no more strange frequently occurred during the days of the judges, we deem it safer to abide by the exact letter of the text. "It is no matter how weak the weapon is, if God direct and strengthen the arm. An ox-goad, when God pleases, shall do more than Goliath's sword. And sometimes he chooses to work by such unlikely means, that the excellency of the power may appear to be of God."—*Henry*. The brief account here given of Shamgar suggests the remark, (1.) That the most distinguished men have often risen from the meanest employments. (2.) That when a ploughman is raised up by God to hold the reins of government, or a fisherman is elevated to the apostleship, he will qualify them for their work, and bless them with success.

#### CHAPTER IV.

VER. 1. AND <sup>a</sup>the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD when Ehud was dead.

<sup>a</sup> Chap. ii. 19.

*The children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord.*—This mode of expression when used as here, of the whole body of the nation, seems to imply a general and open defection from the worship of God, so that the services of the sanctuary were in a great measure neglected. "What a continued circle is here of sins, judgments, repentance, deliverance! The conversation with idolaters taints them with sin, their sin draws on judgment, the smart of the judgment moves them to repentance, on their repentance follows speedy deliverance, on their peace and deliverance they sin again! Who would not think idolatry an absurd and unnatural thing? which as it hath the fewest inducements, so had also the most direct prohibitions from God; and yet after all their warnings, Israel falls into it again. Neither affliction nor repentance can secure an Israelite from redoubling his worst sin, if he be left to his own frailty."—*Bp. Hall*. *When Ehud was dead.*—This appears to be inserted not merely to indicate the time when this apostasy took place, but also to acquit Ehud of all participation in it. Had he been alive there would have been less likelihood of its occurring.

VER. 2. And the LORD <sup>b</sup>sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, that reigned in <sup>c</sup> Hazor, the captain of whose host was <sup>d</sup>Sisera, which dwelt in <sup>e</sup>Harosheth of the Gentiles.

<sup>b</sup> Chap. ii. 14. <sup>c</sup> Josh. xi. 1, 10; xix. 36.

<sup>d</sup> 1 Sam. xii. 9. <sup>e</sup> Ps. lxxxiii. 9. <sup>e</sup> Ver. 13. 16.

*Sold them.*—See on chap. ii. 14. *Jabin, king of Canaan.*—That is, of the region where the

greatest body of the Canaanites dwelt, which was in the northern section of the country. This Jabin was perhaps a descendant, as well as successor, of the king of the same name, who reigned also in Hazor, and who was routed and slain, and his city burnt, by Joshua, (Josh. xi. 1, 10.) In process of time, it appears that the city had been rebuilt, its power regained, its losses retrieved, and by degrees the king of Hazor had obtained the ascendancy over Israel, who were exceedingly oppressed under his rod. Their former defeat by the chosen people would naturally provoke them to make their burdens as heavy as possible, while, on the other hand, the misery of the sufferers would be aggravated by the reflection, that these Canaanites had once been conquered and subdued by them, and might now have been under their feet and incapable of molesting them, if their own slothfulness, cowardice, and unbelief, had not given them the advantage. To be oppressed by those whom their fathers had conquered, and whom they had foolishly spared, must have greatly embittered their bondage. No reverses are so trying as those which give the upper hand to persons or events that have once been under our complete control. *Harosheth of the Gentiles.*—Or, “Harosheth of the nations,” *i. e.* of the heathen nations, as opposed to the Hebrews, so called perhaps from the remains of the Canaanitish nations having resorted thither in great numbers to assist Sisera, the commander of Jabin’s armies, and to obtain his protection. It was situated in the tribe of Naphtali, near the west borders of the Lake Samechonitis, in the region which was afterwards called, perhaps in allusion to this passage, “Galilee of the Gentiles.”

VER. 3. And the children of Israel cried unto the LORD: for he had nine hundred <sup>f</sup>chariots of iron; and twenty years <sup>g</sup>he mightily oppressed the children of Israel.

<sup>f</sup>Chap. i. 19.      <sup>g</sup>Chap. v. 8.      Ps. evi. 42.

*Cried unto the Lord.*—“Those who abuse prosperity shall know the cries of adversity.”—*Haweis.* *Nine hundred chariots of iron.*—Had so many at his service and under his control. It is probable that part of them belonged to the neighbouring powers, (chap. v. 19,) who were confederate with him on this occasion, but altogether they made out the vast number here mentioned. “God provides, on purpose, mighty adversaries for his church, that their humiliation may be greater in sustaining, and his glory may be greater in deliverance.”—*Bp. Hall.* *Twenty years.*—A longer period of oppression than either of the former, because God proportions the judgments of his sinning people to the aggravation of their offences.

VER. 4. And Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time.

*And Deborah a prophetess.*—Heb. “Deborah, a woman, a prophetess.” The words “prophet,” and “prophetess,” are of very extensive and somewhat ambiguous signification in the Old Testament, being sometimes applied to persons

extraordinarily endowed of God with the power of foretelling future events or of working miracles, or of chanting or singing forth the praises of God under supernatural influence; and sometimes to those who were remarkably instructed in divine knowledge by the immediate inspiration of the Spirit of God, and therefore appointed to act as interpreters of his will. As to Deborah, she probably belonged to the latter class, and was perhaps only a woman of eminent holiness, prudence, and knowledge of divine things; by which she was qualified, above any of the other sex then living, to judge the people; that is, by acting as God’s mouth to them, correcting abuses, redressing grievances, and determining causes, especially in matters pertaining to the law and the worship of God. She was resorted to by the people of Israel, from different parts, for judgment or counsel relative to subjects of general interest to the nation, or that part of it where she resided and discharged her duty, by expounding the Scriptures, and animating the magistrates in their several districts to put the laws in execution. “I do not find any prophet in Israel during their sin; but so soon as I hear news of their repentance, mention is made of a prophetess and judge of Israel. There is no better sign of God’s reconciliation than the sending of his holy messengers to any people; he is not utterly fallen out with those whom he blesses with prophecy.”—*Bp. Hall.* Under every dispensation the Most High exercises his prerogative, as a sovereign, in the bestowment of spiritual gifts; and though women, under the Christian economy, are precluded from the function of public teachers, yet nothing hinders them from making the most eminent attainments in divine knowledge, and becoming able, in a private capacity, to render the most signal services to the ministry and the cause of Christ. The import of the name Deborah is “a bee.” Females possessed of her spirit, in respect to the assiduous study of the Scriptures, will find themselves, like David, feeding upon that which is sweeter to their taste than honey or the honeycomb, and in the benevolent employments to which it will prompt them, will evince the busy and untiring diligence of their insect exemplar. *The wife of Lapidoth.*—The termination of the word is the Hebrew feminine plural, which very seldom occurs in the names of men. Some, therefore, render it “woman of Lapidoth,” as if it were the name of a place. Others, as Lapidoth taken appellatively signifies “lamps,” would read it a “woman of lamps,” *i. e.* one who made wicks for the lamps of the Tabernacle. Others, again, with more show of probability, would translate it a “woman of illuminations or splendours,” by which they would understand a woman supernaturally enlightened, endowed with extraordinary wisdom, and who had thus become very eminent and illustrious. After all, the present rendering, “wife of Lapidoth,” is the most probable. Thus, 2 Kings xxii. 14, “Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum.” And for examples of feminine terminations in the names, see “Shelomith,” (1 Chron. xxiii. 9.) “Meremoth,” (Ezra viii. 33.) and “Mikloth,” (1 Chron. xxvii. 4.) *Judged Israel.*—That is, in the manner above described

It can hardly be supposed that she performed all the duties usually involved in the office of a judge of Israel, of which one of the principal was leading the tribes in person to war against the enemies and oppressors of their country. But so far as the work of judging the people depended upon counselling and directing them in difficult cases, and expounding the will of God under the influence of the spirit of prophecy, this, though a woman, she might be qualified to do. Had this office, at this time, been filled by a man, it would probably have given alarm to Jabin, and afforded a pretext to oppress the nation with still greater burdens, and perhaps to attempt to crush them altogether. Josephus, speaking of this period, says, "When they (the Israelites) were become penitent, and were so wise as to learn that their calamities arose from their contempt of the laws, they besought Deborah, a certain prophetess among them, to pray to God to take pity on them, not to overlook them now they were ruined by the Canaanites."—(Antiq. b. v. ch. 5.) Compare what is said of Samuel, 1 Sam. vii. 8, 9.

VER. 5. <sup>h</sup> And she dwelt under the palm-tree of Deborah, between Ramah and Beth-el, in mount Ephraim: and the children of Israel came up to her for judgment.

<sup>h</sup> Gen. xxxv. 8.

*She dwelt under the palm-tree of Deborah.*—That is, perhaps, collect. a palm-grove, a pleasant and shady recess, amidst a thick plantation of palm-trees; which from this circumstance went ever after by the name of Deborah's palm-grove. Whether this is designed to intimate that her ordinary settled habitation was selected in this place, or that her judgment-seat was fixed here in the open air for hearing the applications that were made to her, it is not easy to determine. The original (יִשְׁבֵּרָה) was sitting) will admit of either sense. From the phrase "sitting in judgment" (Psal. ix. 8,) it would appear, that the latter is the more genuine import of the words. *Between Ramah and Bethel in mount Ephraim.*—Consequently very near the confines of the tribes of Benjamin and Ephraim, in one of which lay Ramah, and in the other Bethel, the former about six miles north of Jerusalem, the latter about twelve.

VER. 6. And she sent and called <sup>i</sup> Barak the son of Abinoam out <sup>h</sup> of Kedesh-naphtali, and said unto him, Hath not the Lord God of Israel commanded, *saying*, Go, and draw toward mount Tabor, and take with thee ten thousand men of the children of Naphtali, and of the children of Zebulun?

<sup>i</sup> Heb. xi. 32.

<sup>h</sup> Josh. xix. 37.

*Kedesh-naphtali.*—So called to distinguish it from two other cities of the same name, the one in Issachar, the other in Judah. This place was situated on an eminence about eight miles north-west from the head of the sea of Galilee. To Kedesh she sent for Barak, in virtue of the autho-

riety with which she was invested as prophetess, and which seems to have been generally acknowledged by her people. "He could do nothing without her head, or she without his hands; both together made a complete deliverer and effected a complete deliverance. The greatest and best are not self-sufficient, but need one another."—*Henry.* *Hath not the Lord God of Israel commanded, &c.*—The usual form of a strong affirmation. It does not appear, however, that Barak had received any command whatever previous to this time. *Go and draw toward mount Tabor.*—The true sense of the term "draw" in this connexion, is a point much debated by commentators. According to the rendering of our common translation it would naturally be taken as a command to approach toward mount Tabor; but this evidently is incorrect, as the verb in the original never has this meaning, and the exact rendering of the preposition is in or upon mount Tabor, instead of toward. A nearer approximation to the sense of the Hebrew must be attempted, and here as in other cases of doubtful interpretation the prevailing usage (usus loquendi) of the sacred writers in regard to the word in question must afford the clew to our inquiries. That its primary import is to draw, to draw out, and thence, in some cases, to prolong, to protract, as the sound of a trumpet in blowing, is universally conceded. Indeed Le Clerc, Schmid, and others, on the ground of its being applied to the long-drawn sound of a trumpet, (Exod. xvii. 13. Josh. vi. 5,) propose to supply the original word for trumpet, and to take it as a command to Barak to go and blow the trumpet on mount Tabor, as a signal for the gathering of the tribes, as Ehud did upon mount Ephraim. Gesenius and Winer in their lexicons, understand it of drawing out, or asunder a military force, *i. e.* intrins. extending, expanding, spreading themselves out. A preferable sense we think to be that of drawing, drafting, or enlisting, not perhaps by compulsion, but by argument and persuasion; not so much to raise an army of conscripts, as a band of volunteers: as will be easily inferred from the tenor of Deborah's song in the ensuing chapter, which is in part a reproof to several of the tribes for not offering themselves willingly on this perilous emergency. How much support this rendering receives from parallel usage will be seen from the following citations. (Cant. i. 4,) "Draw me, we will run after thee;" *i. e.* secretly, but powerfully constrain me. (Jer. xxxi. 3.) "I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee." (Hos. xi. 4.) "I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love;" *i. e.* by the power of moral suasion; by arguments and motives suited to their rational natures. In like manner, we suppose Barak was ordered to go and use his utmost endeavours to stir up the minds of his countrymen, and as a popular advocate of any cause draws partisans after him, so he was to prevail upon as many as possible to engage with him in the proposed enterprise. See on chap. v. 14. *Mount Tabor.*—An isolated mountain which rises on the north-eastern side of the great plain of Esdraelon in Galilee, and situated about six miles south-east of Nazareth. It is described as having the appearance of a cone

with the point cut off; but travellers vary in their estimate of its height, which is probably about two thousand five hundred or three thousand feet. It is remarkable for standing alone, though there are several eminences in the neighbourhood, which it completely overtops. It is very fertile, and is entirely covered with green oaks and other trees, shrubs, and odoriferous plants. Roads and paths are made on the south side of the mountain, which lead to its top by winding ascents, and are sufficiently easy to admit of riding to the top. When arrived at the summit the traveller is astonished to find an oval of half a mile in extent, commanding the finest view any where to be obtained in the whole compass of Palestine. On this plain at the east end is a mass of ruins, apparently the remains of churches, towers, strong walls, and fortifications, all bearing the traces of having been erected in a very remote antiquity. Several grottos and cisterns are also pointed out. "From its top," says Maundrell, "you have a prospect, which, if nothing else, will reward the labour of ascending it. It is impossible for man's eyes to have a higher gratification of this nature. On the north-west, you discern, at a distance, the Mediterranean, and all around you have the spacious and beautiful plains of Esdraelon and Galilee. Turning a little southward you have in view the high mountains of Gilboa, fatal to Saul and his sons. Due east you discern the sea of Tiberias, distant about one day's journey." The mountain is now called Djebel Tour. *Ten thousand men.*—Ten thousand more or less. Not that he was to be tied to this precise number, nor exclusively to these two tribes; for it is plain from chap. v. 14—23, that several other tribes, as Ephraim, Benjamin, Manasseh, and Issachar, volunteered recruits on the occasion, while those that withheld them are reproved, and Meroz cursed for taking the stand of neutrality: but the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali are more especially mentioned, because they had probably been the principal sufferers under the oppressive rule of Jabin, and were nearer at hand to the scene of the approaching conflict than any of the rest. In addition to this, Barak himself was of the tribe of Naphtali, and the esteem in which he was doubtless held, would naturally bring numbers of them to his standard.

VER. 7. And <sup>1</sup> I will draw unto thee, to the "river Kishon, Sisera the captain of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his multitude; and I will deliver him into thy hand.

<sup>1</sup> Ex. xiv. 4.  
m Chap. v. 21. 1 Kings xviii. 40. Ps. lxxxiii. 9, 10.

*And I will draw unto thee.*—The same word as that employed in the preceding verse, and having a kindred import. God would "draw the hosts of Sisera to the river Kishon," by so ordering the events of his providence as to afford motives to them to concentrate in all their force at that point. They were not to be drawn together by physical but by moral influence. Their counsels were to be so overruled by a secret divine direction, that they should result in their being brought together at that place, as sheep for the slaughter, and yet their utmost freedom of will left undisturbed.

"When God will destroy his enemies, their resistance is in vain; and their gathering to battle is only rushing into the snare."—*Haweis. The river Kishon.* See on chap. v. 21.

VER. 8. And Barak said unto her, If thou wilt go with me, then I will go; but if thou wilt not go with me, then I will not go.

*If thou wilt go with me, &c.*—By making his obedience conditional when the command was absolute, Barak showed that his faith was marred by infirmity, and this conviction is confirmed by Deborah's answer, in which she intimates to him that he shall not receive the same honour or distinction from the enterprise, that he would otherwise have done. In like manner, Moses's lack of faith when ordered to go upon a mission to Pharaoh, led God to divide the honour of that embassy with Aaron, which would otherwise have redounded to Moses alone. (Ex. iv. 14.) Still it is evident, from the apostle's commendation, (Heb. xi. 32,) that Barak possessed true, though weak, faith, and that it was from a profound conviction of the Spirit of God's dwelling and speaking in Deborah, that he so earnestly desired her presence. Could he but enjoy this, he would feel that he possessed a pledge and earnest of the divine blessing, and this was showing a respect to God's prophets, which implied a genuine faith, and was no doubt highly acceptable as far as it went. But though it would naturally be a source of great satisfaction and encouragement to him to have the prophetess with him to animate his soldiers, and to be consulted as an oracle upon all occasions, yet it is plain that he ought to have gone directly forward without her, relying on the God of Deborah, who had expressly and unconditionally promised him the victory, ver. 7. How rare, alas! is simple child-like confidence in God! How difficult is it for men, and the best of men, to break away from undue dependence on an arm of flesh, even when assured by the most express declaration of God, that he will uphold and deliver them, and be to them more than armies of strength, or munitions of rocks!

VER. 9. And she said, I will surely go with thee: notwithstanding, the journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honour; for the LORD shall "sell Sisera into the hand of a woman. And Deborah arose, and went with Barak to Kedesh.

<sup>n</sup> Chap. ii. 14.

*I will surely go with thee.*—An indulgence to human infirmity such as the divine condescension often afforded to his weak and wavering servants. Were God's thoughts like ours, and his ways like ours, he would have been far more apt to discard Barak altogether, and say to him, that if he had not faith enough to trust the promise of Him who cannot lie, he would call some one to the service who had, and to whom he would give the glory of an exploit which he had in so cowardly a manner declined. But, with characteristic kindness, the Most High is pleased to yield somewhat to his perverseness, and Deborah, under the di-

vine prompting, engages to accompany him. While the parties thus seem in effect to have changed sexes, it is obviously meet that some tokens of Divine disapprobation should mark Barak's faint-heartedness, and he is consequently told that he is to share the glory of the victory with a weak woman. *The journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honour.*—Heb. "thine honour shall not be upon the way which thou goest." That is, probably, the way, the conduct, the course which thou art proposing in this matter shall not be such as to redound to thy credit. If, however, it be taken as read in our translation, then the remark of Henry may be very well founded, that "so confident was she of success, that she calls his engaging in the war but the undertaking of a journey." *The Lord shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman.*—Some understand this of Deborah herself, but we think the designed allusion is to Jael. Of her the words may be understood literally; applied to Deborah, they can only be explained by a figure of speech. Besides, if spoken of Deborah, the sentence merely declares what he knew before. He was no doubt aware that if she went with him it would diminish the credit of his success, yet notwithstanding he was sensible of this, he insisted upon her accompanying him. But in regard to the part Jael was to act in the transaction, he of course knew nothing. This was a pure prediction uttered by Deborah in the spirit of prophecy, and such he would understand it to be when the event was accomplished. *Deborah—went with Barak to Kedesh.*—Consequently Barak had previously, in obedience to her summons, left Kedesh and repaired to her at her residence between Ramah and Beth-el. The above conversation was undoubtedly held by the parties in person after they met.

VER. 10. And Barak called <sup>o</sup> Zebulun and Naphtali to Kedesh; and he went up with ten thousand men <sup>p</sup> at his feet: and Deborah went up with him.

<sup>o</sup> Chap. v. 18. <sup>p</sup> See Ex. xi. 8. 1 Kings xx. 10.

*And Barak called Zebulun and Naphtali.*—The original for "called" being in the Hiphil form, properly signifies, "caused to call," *i. e.* assembled by means of emissaries sent among the tribes. Whether this was done, as some suppose, by the blowing of trumpets, the common signal for war, or otherwise, is uncertain. *Went up with ten thousand men at his feet.*—Heb. "went up with his feet ten thousand men." Such is the literal rendering of the original, from which most of the versions depart, and so lose the exact shade of meaning which we conceive the words intended to convey, *viz.* that the ten thousand accompanied him with as much alacrity as though all their feet had belonged to his body; in other words, they were entirely at his control, obsequious to his beck and bidding. The phrase may appear uncouth, but it is highly significant, and in all cases we would aim to adhere as closely as practicable to the very letter of the original. The intelligent reader would prefer to know precisely what the sacred penman says, and then to be left

to put such a construction upon it as to his mind the evidence of the case admits or requires. Compare chap. v. 15; viii. 5.—"The phrase 'men at his feet,' did not, I believe, refer to any particular class of soldiers, but applied to all, whether they fought in chariots, on horses, or on foot. This form of speech is used in eastern books, to show how many obey or serve under the general. It may be taken from the action of a slave, being prostrate at the feet of his master, denoting submission or obedience. In this way devotees, when addressing the gods, always speak of themselves as being at their feet. When the Orientals speak of his Majesty of Britain, they often allude to the millions who are at his feet. The governors, generals, or judges in the East, are said to have the people of such countries, or armies, or districts, at their feet. Nay, it is common for masters, and people of small possessions, to speak of their domestics as being at their feet. It is therefore heard every day, for 'I will send my servants,' en-kal-adyila, 'those at my feet.'"—*Roberts.*

VER. 11. Now Heber <sup>r</sup> the Kenite, which was of the children of <sup>s</sup> Hobab, the father-in-law of Moses, had severed himself from the Kenites, and pitched his tent unto the plain of Zaanaim, <sup>t</sup> which is by Kedesh.

<sup>q</sup> Chap. i. 16. <sup>r</sup> Num. x. 29. <sup>s</sup> Ver. 6.

*Now Heber the Kenite, &c.*—This verse comes in here parenthetically to prepare the way for what is soon to be said about Jael, a woman of this family. It would otherwise seem singular that when the writer had before said, (chap. i. 16.) that this family had passed into the tribe of Judah, and was dwelling in the wilderness south of Arad, that one of the stock was found abiding so far north as the tribe of Naphtali. He accounts for it by saying that the individual in question had emigrated to a distance from his brethren. The verse should have been included in the usual marks of a parenthesis. *Pitched his tent unto.*—That is, gradually shifted his habitation towards. See on Gen. xiii. 12. He doubtless followed the nomade mode of life.

VER. 12. And they showed Sisera that Barak the son of Abinoam was gone up to mount Tabor.

*And they showed Sisera.*—A common idiom for "it was told Sisera." See on Gen. xvi. 14.

VER. 13. And Sisera gathered together all his chariots, *even* nine hundred chariots of iron, and all the people that *were* with him, from Harosheth of the Gentiles unto the river of Kishon.

*Gathered together.*—The same word in the original with that spoken of Barak, (ver. 10.) and there rendered "called." In both cases it means "to assemble by proclamation." *Unto the river Kishon.*—That is, gathered unto the river Kishon. The writer is not giving the boundaries of the several nations that were confederate with Si-

sera, nor stating that they extended from Harosheth of the Gentiles unto the river Kishon.

VER. 14. And Deborah said unto Barak, Up; for this is the day in which the LORD hath delivered Sisera into thy hand: 'is not the LORD gone out before thee? So Barak went down from mount Tabor, and ten thousand men after him.

† Deut. ix. 3. 2 Sam. v. 24. Ps. lxxviii. 7. Isa. lii. 12.

*Hath delivered Sisera into thy hand.*—Will as certainly deliver as if it were already done. By Sisera here is meant his army, for as to Sisera himself, he was not delivered into the hand of Barak, but of Jael, as Deborah had before announced, (ver. 9.) *Is not the Lord gone out before thee?*—As God had expressly said, (ver. 7.) that he would draw Sisera's army, with his chariots and his multitudes together, to the river Kishon, and then deliver them into Barak's hand, so Deborah in these words simply intimates that God had thus far been as good as his promise, that he had gone out before Barak, in the sense of putting every thing in readiness for his achieving the promised victory. The Lord's going before one in battle, when thus explained, is equivalent to making sure a successful result. So 2 Sam. v. 24, "And let it be when thou hearest the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, that then thou shalt bestir thyself; for then shall the Lord go out before thee, to smite the host of the Philistines." Nothing so encourages a good man in the way of duty or of danger, as the conviction that the Lord goes before him, and that he is acting under his direction. *Barak went down from the mount.*—Instead of making it his chief object to maintain the post which he had chosen, with all its advantages, on the top of the mount where he was completely unassailable by the enemy's iron chariots, he heroically sallies down to the level plain with his far inferior force, in order that, by giving Sisera every advantage, the glory of the victory to be achieved over him might be so much the greater.

VER. 15. And "the LORD discomfited Sisera, and all his chariots, and all his host, with the edge of the sword before Barak; so that Sisera lighted down off his chariot, and fled away on his feet.

u Ps. lxxxiii. 3, 10. See Josh. x. 10.

*The Lord discomfited Sisera.*—Or, as the Heb. implies, confounded, threw them into disorder, drove them tumultuously together, causing chariots to break and overthrow chariots, and horses and men to be mingled in their fall in wild confusion. It was not so much the bold and unexpected charge of Barak that produced this effect, as a supernatural panic, a terror from God, that seized their spirits, threw them into irretrievable confusion, and made them an easy prey to the sword. It is said, chap. v. 20, that "the stars from heaven fought against Sisera;" and Josephus gives the following very probable account of the terrific scene. "When they were come to a close fight, there came down

from heaven a great storm, with a vast quantity of rain and hail, and the wind blew the rain in the face of the Canaanites, and so darkened their eyes; their arrows and slings were of no advantage to them; nor would the coldness of the air permit the soldiers to make use of their swords, while this storm did not so much incommode the Israelites, because it came on their backs. They also took such courage upon the apprehension that God was assisting them, that they fell upon the very midst of their enemies, and slew a great number of them, so that some of them fell by the Israelites, some fell by their own horses, which were put into disorder, and not a few were killed by their own chariots."—(Antiq. b. v. chap. 5.) *Sisera lighted down—and fled away on his feet.*—To guard more effectually against being discovered. Had he fled in his chariot he would have been liable to be recognised and taken or slain. "His chariots had been his pride and his confidence; and we may suppose that he had therefore despised and defied the armies of the living God, because they were all on foot, and had neither chariot nor horse, as he had; justly, therefore, is he made ashamed of his confidence, and forced to quit it, and thinks himself then most safe and easy when he has got clear of his chariot. Thus they are disappointed who rest on the creature."—Henry.

VER. 16. But Barak pursued after the chariots and after the host unto Harosheth of the Gentiles: and all the host of Sisera fell upon the edge of the sword; and there was not a man left.

*Fell upon the edge of the sword.*—Rather, fell by the edge of the sword. *There was not a man left.*—Heb. "there was not left unto one." Josephus says that Sisera's army on this occasion consisted of three hundred thousand footmen, ten thousand horsemen, and three thousand chariots. Of these only nine hundred may have been iron chariots, as stated by the sacred historian.

VER. 17. Howbeit, Sisera fled away on his feet to the tent of Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite: for there was peace between Jabin the king of Hazor and the house of Heber the Kenite.

*To the tent of Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite.*—That is, probably, to Jael's apartment or tent, the harem, the women's quarters. "We must consider these Kenites as Arabs, and estimate their proceedings accordingly. Sisera's claim on Jael, in the absence of Heber, was perfectly proper. When a stranger comes to an Arab camp, where he has no acquaintance, he proceeds to the first tent, and if the proprietor is absent, his wife and daughters are not only authorized, but required, to perform the duties of hospitality to him. As a character for liberal hospitality is an actual distinction of an Arab, no one can with honour repel from the tent a stranger who claims hospitality, nor, in ordinary circumstances, does any one desire to do so; on

the contrary, there is rather a disposition to contend who shall enjoy the privilege of granting him entertainment. In the present instance Sisera's application to the tent of the Sheikh, whose privilege it more especially was to entertain strangers, was in the common course of things. As belonging to a friendly people, Sisera's claim for protection was as valid as a common claim for hospitality, and could not be refused. Having once promised protection to a person, and admitted him to his tent, the Arab is bound, not only to conceal his guest, but to defend him, even with his life, from his pursuers; and if his tent should be forced and his guest slain there, it is his duty to become the avenger of his blood. On these sentiments of honour Sisera seems to have relied; particularly after Jael had supplied him with refreshments, which, in the highest sense, are regarded as a seal to the covenant of peace and safety: and in fact, after all this an Arab would be bound to protect with his own life even his bitterest enemy, to whom he may inadvertently have granted his protection. It is probable that Jael introduced Sisera for safety into the inner or women's part of the tent. This she might do without impropriety, although it would be the most grievous insult for any man to intrude there without permission. Sisera appears to have felt quite certain that the pursuers would not dare search the harem, and indeed it is almost certain that they would not have done so; for the Hebrews had too long and too recently been themselves a nomade people, not to have known that a more heinous and inexpiable insult could not be offered to the neutral Kenite Emir, than to disturb the sanctity of his harem, or even to enter, unpermitted, the outer part of his tent. We very much doubt whether they would have ventured, even if they had been certain that Sisera was there, to have entered to kill him, or take him thence, while under Heber's protection. This is an answer to Bp. Patrick, who would have recommended Jael not to have been so hasty to act herself, but to have waited till the pursuers came and took him. They could not take him, or even search for him, without inflicting on Heber a dishonour worse than death; neither could Jael have given him up to them without bringing everlasting infamy upon her family and tribe.—*Pict. Bible. There was peace between Jabin—and the house of Heber.*—That is, there was no war; not that there was any league, offensive or defensive, between them, but they were not, like the Israelites, objects of hostility to Jabin. The Kenites, though they were proselytes, and worshipped the true God according to the Mosaic law, yet as they were strangers by birth and laid claim to no inheritance in the promised land, they seem to have deemed it the best policy, in the midst of the contentions around them, to preserve a strict neutrality and maintain peace, as far as possible, both with the Israelites and the Canaanites; and as their quiet, harmless way of life exempted them from suspicion, Jabin appears to have offered them no molestation. It was, doubtless, on these grounds that Sisera thought of taking refuge among them, not considering, says Henry, that though they themselves did not suffer by

Jabin's power, yet they heartily sympathized with God's Israel that did.

VER. 18. And Jael went out to meet Sisera, and said unto him, Turn in, my lord, turn in to me; fear not. And when he had turned in unto her into the tent, she covered him with a mantle.

*Turn in, my lord, turn in to me.*—Perhaps no more appropriate comment can be furnished on these words, than the following extract from Pocke, giving an account of the manner in which he was treated in an Arab tent on his journey to Jerusalem:—"My conductor led me two or three miles to his tent, and there he sat with his wife and others round a fire. The Arabs are not so scrupulous as the Turks about their women; and though they have their harem, or women's part of the tent, yet such as they are acquainted with come into it. I was kept in the harem for greater security; the wife being always with me, no stranger even daring to come into the women's apartment unless introduced." So Jael invited Sisera to take refuge in her own tent, or in her division of her husband's tent, into which no stranger might presume to enter, and where he naturally supposed himself to be in perfect safety. There is undoubtedly an apparent treachery in the conduct of Jael on this occasion, but the probability is that she was moved by a divine impulse to execute the deed she did. At first, indeed, on inviting him into the tent, she may have intended no more than the ordinary hospitalities which the Orientals have ever been accustomed to show to strangers and travellers, nor is it certain that she was even aware who he was till after he had entered the tent. When she had ascertained this, the most natural conclusion certainly is, reasoning from the nature of women, that she would have suffered him to lie still till Barak, who was on the pursuit, had come up, or would in some way have communicated information of his hiding-place to the Israelites. To fall upon him herself, unaided and alone, would appear to have been an exploit surpassing female fortitude, and would have been a conduct so decidedly and pointedly opposed to all the principles of honour by which Orientals are governed, that we know not how to account for it, unless she had been prompted by a suggestion from above, and this inference would seem to be confirmed, both by the fact that it had been expressly predicted that Sisera should be delivered into the hand of a woman, and by the eulogium of Deborah, (chap. v. 24.) "Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be, blessed shall she be above women in the tent," on which see note. If this were the case, she is sufficiently vindicated by the fact, for God has a right to dispose of the lives of his creatures as he pleases, as we see in the case of Eglon in the preceding chapter; and probably the cup of Sisera's iniquity was full, and his life already forfeited to divine justice. On the whole, therefore, the presumption is, that Jael did right, yet as the case was wholly extraordinary, it can never be established as a precedent for others. *Covered him with a mantle.*—Or, a quilt, rug, or blanket.

VER. 19. And he said unto her, Give me, I pray thee, a little water to drink; for I am thirsty. And she opened a bottle of milk, and gave him drink, and covered him.

x Chap. v. 25.

*Opened a bottle of milk and gave him drink.*—As if this were a more palatable draught than water. By thus doing more for him than he requested, she evinced a kinder care for his comfort and increased his confidence and security. Josephus says it was “sour milk,” which is not unlikely, as that is considered in the East a very grateful and cooling drink. See on chap. v. 25.

VER. 20. Again he said unto her, Stand in the door of the tent, and it shall be, when any man doth come and inquire of thee, and say, Is there any man here? that thou shalt say, No.

*Thou shalt say, No.*—It does not appear, however, that Jael promised to deny his being there. Our regard for others may prompt us to many acts of kindness for them, but there is a point beyond which we must not go. A fearer of God will not listen to a request that would involve the commission of sin, especially the sin of falsehood. The custom adopted in some families of instructing servants to say, “Not at home,” when a master or mistress does not wish to receive company, is directly at variance with the dictates of Christian simplicity and sincerity, nor is it any thing in its favour that it here has the sanction of a wicked, heathen warrior doomed to destruction. The practice of prevarication thus inculcated upon servants may be expected to react upon those who employ them; for if they are taught to lie for others they will be very apt to do it for themselves.

VER. 21. Then Jael Heber's wife took a nail of the tent, and took an hammer in her hand, and went softly unto him, and smote the nail into his temples, and fastened it into the ground: for he was fast asleep, and weary. So he died.

y Chap. v. 26.

*Took a nail of the tent.*—One of those long sharp pins or spikes which were driven into the ground, and to which cords were attached to stretch the cloth of the tent and keep it firmly secured. They were probably made of iron; Josephus calls this an “iron nail.” Shaw, describing the tents of the Bedouin Arabs, says, “These tents are kept firm and steady, by bracing or stretching down their eaves with cords tied down to hooked wooden pins well pointed, which they drive into the ground with a mallet; one of these pins answering to the nail, as the mallet does to the hammer, which Jael used in fastening to the ground the temples of Sisera.” *Took a hammer in her hand.*—Heb. “put an hammer in her hand.” As tents were often moved she had probably acquired an expertness in the use of the implements necessary for fastening and un-

fastening them. *And fastened it into the ground.*—Heb. “and it went down, penetrated, to the ground.” The verb is neuter, and should be referred to the pin rather than to Jael.

VER. 22. And, behold, as Barak pursued Sisera, Jael came out to meet him, and said unto him, Come, and I will show thee the man whom thou seekest. And when he came into her tent, behold, Sisera lay dead, and the nail was in his temples.

VER. 23. So God subdued on that day Jabin the king of Canaan before the children of Israel.

z Psal. xviii. 47.

*Subdued—Jabin the king of Canaan.*—There is in the original an apparent paronomasia, or play upon words, of which the English reader entirely loses sight. The Heb. word for “subdue” and that for “Canaan” are from the same root; as if it were said, “he humbled the son of humiliation;” he made good the destiny of subjugation implied in the very name “Canaan.”

VER. 24. And the hand of the children of Israel prospered, and prevailed against Jabin the king of Canaan, until they had destroyed Jabin king of Canaan.

*Prospered and prevailed.*—Heb. “going, went, and was hard.” On the use of the verb “to go, or to walk,” for the gradual increase or progression of any thing, see on Gen. iii. 8. From this event was to be dated the complete deliverance of Israel from the yoke of Jabin. Having suffered so severely by their guilty and foolish forbearance towards their enemies, they now resolve to tolerate them no longer, but to make an effectual riddance of them, as a people to whom no mercy was to be shown without equally offending God and endangering their own interests. It was probably with an eye to the judicial sentence under which these devoted nations lay, that this formidable enemy, in the space of two verses, is three times called “king of Canaan;” for as such he was to be destroyed, and so thoroughly was he destroyed, that the title “king of Canaan” occurs not again in the subsequent narrative.

## CHAPTER V.

The subject matter of the present chapter is the triumphal song, sung by Deborah and Barak, on occasion of the signal victory above recorded of the forces of Israel over the armies of Jabin and Sisera. The spirit of prophecy is nearly allied to the spirit of poetry, and when the efforts of genius are heightened by the prompting of inspiration, we may reasonably look for results that shall distance all human competition. Nor in the present instance shall we look in vain.

Considered merely as a specimen of lyric composition, this ode of Deborah may challenge comparison with the finest effusions of the classic muse of any age or country. Though occasionally obscure in the original, and in the English translation, in some instances, scarcely intelligible, yet it evidently breathes the highest spirit of poetry. Its strains are lofty and impassioned, its images bold, varied, and lively, its diction singularly happy, and it is pervaded throughout by a vein of mingled beauty and sublimity to be found in the bards of inspiration only. Borne away by the ecstasy and energy of the divine impulse, she breaks forth in the most abrupt and impassioned appeals, and personifications; at one moment, soaring upwards towards heaven, and then returning to earth; now touching upon the present, and now upon the past; and finally closing with the grand promise and result of all prophecy, and of all the dealings of God's providence, the overthrow of the wicked, and the triumph of the good. In arranging the course and connexion of the thoughts in the poem, the following divisions may be easily and naturally traced.

(1.) A devout thanksgiving for the burst of patriotic feeling, which led the nation to rise and avenge their wrongs, with a summons to the heathen kings to listen to their song of triumph over their allies. (ver. 1—3.)

(2.) A description of the magnificent scenes at mount Sinai, and in the plains of Edom, when the Most High manifested himself in behalf of his people, exerting his miraculous power to bring them into the promised land. (ver. 4, 5.)

(3.) A graphic sketch of the degradation and oppression under which the nation groaned in consequence of their apostasy, the insecurity of travelling and desertion of the villages during a twenty years' servitude. (ver. 6—8.)

(4.) The contrast to this exhibited in their present happy state of security from the incursions and depredations of their enemies, especially at the watering places which were most exposed, and a vivid invocation to herself and Barak, as well as others, to join in a song of praise and triumph to the author of their deliverance. (ver. 9—13.)

(5.) A commendation of such of the tribes as volunteered on the occasion, and a stern rebuke of those which ignobly remained at home. (ver. 14—18.)

(6.) A glowing description of the battle, and an invocation of curses on the inhabitants of Meroz, for not coming up to the help of their brethren in the time of their extremity. (ver. 19—23.)

(7.) A eulogy upon Jacl, with a vivid description of the circumstances of Sisera's death. (ver. 24—27.)

(8.) A highly poetical change in the imagery, in which the mother of Sisera is introduced in anxious impatience for her son's return, and confidently anticipating the successful issue of the engagement; concluding with a solemn apostrophe to God, praying that all his enemies may perish in like manner, and expressing the assurance that all that love him shall at last gloriously triumph. (ver. 28—31.)

VER. 1. THEN <sup>a</sup> sang Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam on that day, saying,

<sup>a</sup> See Ex. xv. 1. Psal. xviii. title.

*Then sang Deborah and Barak.*—Heb. "then sang she, Deborah, and Barak." The verb is in the fem. sing. in order to give the precedence to Deborah, as is also the case in the song of Miriam, (Numb. xii. 1.) It is not perhaps necessary to suppose that Deborah and Barak were the only singers on this occasion. The probability is, that it was composed by Deborah, and sung under her and Barak's direction by the assembled host of Israel, or by a choir of priests and Levites, shortly after the victory. The phrase "on that day," does not necessarily restrict us to the precise day of the battle, but according to Heb. usage may imply simply "about that time."

VER. 2. Praise ye the LORD for the <sup>b</sup>avenging of Israel, <sup>c</sup>when the people willingly offered themselves.

<sup>b</sup> Psal. xviii. 47.

<sup>c</sup> 2 Chr. xxii. 16.

*Praise ye the Lord.*—Heb. "bless ye the Lord;" *i. e.* by suitable ascriptions of praise and thanksgiving. *For the avenging of Israel.*—The interpretation of the original phrase is attended with great difficulties. Without attempting to exhibit at length the various modes of rendering adopted by different commentators, it may be sufficient to remark, that the several ideas of delivering, of avenging, of commanding and leading in war, have had their respective advocates among them. We know of no guide to the true sense but that of prevailing usage, and even that is not easily ascertained. We believe, however, that it will be found by accurate analysis, that the leading idea of the verb פָּדָה is to free, to let loose, to let break away, as the locks of hair, when the headgear is taken off, or a licentious people when the restraints of law and order are removed, and thence by natural derivation, to make naked, to uncover, and also to exempt, to make one clear of. In nearly every instance in which the word occurs the idea of loosing, getting or setting free, exemption, is some way involved, and perhaps the most correct rendering, in the present passage, would be for the freeing of freedoms, or, for the breaking away of emancipations, *i. e.* for the successful efforts of the people to extricate themselves from the yoke of their oppressors, praise ye the Lord. The predominant import is that of breaking away from bonds, and this idea falls in very naturally with that of the parallel clause, *viz.* of offering themselves willingly in order to effect their deliverance; and as the act of a people in asserting their freedom, can hardly be conceived of as separate from that of punishing their oppressors, it is probable that the sense of avenging has been in this way not unnaturally affixed by interpreters to the original term. The error, however, in our translation is in referring directly to God, what is really represented as the acting of the people. *Of Israel.*—Heb. "in Israel;" *i. e.* among the Israelites.

VER. 3. "Hear, O ye kings; give ear, O ye princes; I, *even* I, will sing unto the Lord; I will sing, *praise* to the Lord God of Israel.

*d* Deut. xxxii. 1, 3. Psal. ii. 10.

*Hear, O ye kings, &c.*—The kings and princes here addressed may be understood of the princes of Israel, and then it is merely a declaration to them, that the prophetess is about to begin a song of triumph, in which it is implied that they should join. But as kings would seem to be too lofty a title to be applied to the leaders and elders of Israel, even in the elevated style of poetry, the preferable interpretation is to regard it as an address to the kings and potentates of Canaan, summoning their attention to the song of triumph about to be celebrated over them. The Greek version renders it, "Hear, O kings, and give ear, O satraps;" the Chaldee, "Attend ye kings, who came to the war with Sisera, and ye rulers, who were with Jabin, king of Canaan;" which shows that they understood the words as referring to foreign princes, and thus the very same terms are used, Psal. ii. 2. The import of the latter clause is, that "I, *even* I, a feeble woman, celebrate your overthrow," and her leading drift is to admonish them, that however high and mighty they may deem themselves, yet there is one above them with whom it is folly to contend, and to whom they should be warned by Sisera's fate to submit, without daring hereafter to offer insult to a people, whose cause sooner or later Omnipotence would plead.

VER. 4. LORD, "when thou wentest out of Seir, when thou marchedst out of the field of Edom, the earth trembled, and the heavens dropped, the clouds also dropped water.

*e* Deut. xxxiii. 2. Psal. lxxviii. 7.  
*f* 2 Sam. xxii. 8. Psal. lxxviii. 8. Isa. lxiv. 3.  
Hab. iii. 3, 10.

*When thou wentest out of Seir.*—After declaring that Jehovah should be the object of her praise, the prophetess by a sudden apostrophe addresses him not as their present deliverer, but as the God who had formerly manifested his miraculous power in their behalf, while on the way from Egypt to the land of promise. By comparing the former signal displays of the divine majesty with the present, she would have her hearers infer that it was the same power that had now subdued their enemies, which prostrated them then; that it was the same goodness which had now restored to them the free enjoyment of their land, that had at first put them in possession of it. The phrases, "when thou wentest out of Seir," and "when thou marchedst out of the field of Edom," are merely an instance of poetic parallelism, Seir and Edom denoting the same country: that is to say, the mountainous region stretching from the southern extremity of the Dead Sea southwards towards the Elanitic gulf. Here, however, as well as Deut. xxxiii. 2, it appears to be taken in a wider sense as including mount Sinai, the scene of the giving of the law, and of the grand and awful displays of the majesty of Jehovah by which it was accompanied, to which Deborah

here alludes. Not that her description, in this and the ensuing verse, is to be confined to the sublime spectacle witnessed on that occasion. The scope of her language seems to be to portray, in the most glowing and poetic imagery, the general course of the divine manifestations in behalf of Israel, the convulsions of nature and the consternation of the inhabitants, while the Most High was conducting his people miraculously through the desert to put them in possession of their promised inheritance. These exhibitions of God's glory did, as it were, make the earth to tremble, the heavens to drop like snow before the sun, and the mountains to melt; and accordingly we find the same general imagery employed in the other portions of inspired song, as Psal. lxxviii. 8; lxxviii. 8; cxliv. 5. Deut. xxxiii. 2. Isa. lxiv. 1—3. Hab. iii. 6, in some of which the present description is adopted almost word for word. It seems in fact to have been a customary beginning of Hebrew songs of triumph.

VER. 5. "The mountains melted from before the Lord, *even* the Sinai from before the Lord God of Israel.

*g* Deut. iv. 11. Ps. xxvii. 5. *h* Ex. xix. 18.

*The mountains melted.*—Heb. "flowed down:" as if melted by the flames in which, we learn Exod. xix. 18, that the sacred mountain was enveloped, so that it ran down in streams. Others, from the general usage of the original, suppose that allusion is had to tremendous storms of rain which poured down the mountain sides in such torrents, bearing soil, rocks, and trees with them, that the mountains themselves might be figuratively said to flow down. It does not appear very obvious, however, how this can apply to mount Sinai, where fire, and not water, was the predominant element. It is worthy of remark, in regard to this expression, that with the exception of the Vulgate, which has *diffuserunt*, flowed, all the ancient versions take the original from another root (ללל instead of נלל), and render it "were shaken, agitated, made to tremble." Thus the Gr., Chal., Arab., and Syr., and this rendering is confirmed by Isa. lxiv. 1, 3, "that the mountains might flow down;" where the Heb. (ללל) undoubtedly signifies to quake, though our English version, contrary to all authority, gives it the sense of melting. See Gesenius on the above roots.

VER. 6. In the days of 'Shamgar the son of Anath, in the days of 'Jael, the highways were occupied, and the travellers walked through byways.

*i* Chap. iii. 31. *k* Chap. iv. 17. *l* Lev. xxvi. 22  
*m* Chiron. xv. 5. Isa. xxxiii. 8. Lam. i. 4; iv. 18.

*In the days of Shamgar.*—After thus celebrating the majesty of Jehovah in his former appearances, the prophetess, in order to give her people a livelier sense of their deliverance, and excite them to greater thankfulness, turns to depict the forlorn and degraded state to which Israel had previously been reduced: their highways deserted; their villages depopulated, their cities blocked up; their country overrun with the enemies' soldiers, them-

selves disarmed and dispirited, helpless and hopeless, till it pleased God to look upon them with compassion, and raise up Deborah for a deliverer. *In the days of Jael.*—She is mentioned by way of honourable testimonial by the side of a distinguished man, and in connexion with an important epoch, because from her recent achievement, she no doubt at this time stood very conspicuous before the eyes of the nation. Still though these were illustrious characters, yet no complete deliverance was effected for Israel till Deborah arose. *The highways were unoccupied.*—Heb. “the highways ceased.” That is, ceased to be occupied: they were abandoned by travellers, on account of their being beset by plundering hordes of their enemies. The same idea is expressed Isa. xxxiii. 8, “The highways lie waste, the way-faring man ceaseth.” *Travellers.*—Heb. “walkers of paths.” The original for “paths” usually means an elevated beaten road. Here it seems to designate the open public roads, in distinction from the obscure and crooked by-ways which travellers were now compelled to take.

VER. 7. *The inhabitants of the villages ceased, they ceased in Israel, until I Deborah arose, that I arose “a mother in Israel.*

*m* Isa. xlix. 23.

*The inhabitants of the villages ceased.*—Heb. “the village ceased;” col. sing. for plur. In other words, the villages were deserted. The tillers of the soil, scattered in villages over the country, were obliged to forsake their farms and houses, and seek shelter for themselves in walled cities and fortified places. Chald. “the unwalled towns were desolate.” “There are roads in these countries, but it is very easy to turn out of them, and go to a place by winding about over the lands, when that is thought safer. The account Bishop Pococke gives of the manner in which the Arab under whose care he had put himself, conducted him to Jerusalem, illustrates this with pertinency, which his lordship tells us was by night, and not by the high road, but through the fields: ‘and I observed,’ says he, ‘that he avoided as much as he could going near any village or encampment, and sometimes stood still, as I thought, to hearken.’ Just in that manner people were obliged to travel in Judea, in the days of Shamgar and Jael.”—*Harmer. A mother in Israel.*—A benefactress; so termed from her services towards her people. As a deliverer of his country is called the father of it, so Deborah is here called a mother in Israel.

VER. 8. *They “chose new gods; then was war in the gates: “was there a shield or spear seen among forty thousand in Israel?*

*n* Deut. xxxii. 16. Chap. ii. 12, 17.  
*o* See 1 Sam. xlii. 19, 22. Chap. iv. 3.

*They chose new gods.*—Strange or foreign gods; that is, they addicted themselves to idolatry. They not only submitted to it when forced upon them, but they chose it. Compare Deut. xxxii. 17, “They sacrificed unto devils, and not to

God; to gods whom they knew not, to new gods that came newly up, whom your fathers knew not.” This was the procuring cause of all their trouble. They forsook God, and God forsook them. *Then was war in the gates.*—Heb. “a besieging of the gates;” or, as Kimchi renders it, “a besieger or assaulter of the gates.” Chal. “the nations came against them, and expelled them from their cities.” The evident implication is, that when they lapsed into idolatry they involved themselves in every species of calamity, and were harassed with wars within the precincts of their towns and cities. As the gates, moreover, were the places where their courts of judicature were held, the continual incursions of the enemy deprived the magistrate of the dignity, and the people of the benefit of government. There being no peace to him that went or him that came in, the stated administration of justice was effectually broken up. *Was there a shield or spear seen among forty thousand in Israel?*—An interrogation strongly implying a negative. To such a state were they reduced, that there was scarcely a shield or spear seen among forty thousand Israelites. The number specified is not to be considered as including the whole military force of Israel, but the speaker simply gives a round number, and by poetical amplification a very large one, among whom no arms were to be found; in order to indicate more strongly the destitution of the Israelites in this respect. From 1 Sam. xiii. 19—22, some have inferred that their enemies had actually disarmed the subject tribes, and that it was to this that their destitution was owing. But this hypothesis is but little consonant with intrinsic probability, or with other circumstances alluded to in the narrative. Barak is said, chap. iv. 6, 10, to have taken ten thousand men with him to mount Tabor; and who will suppose that they went thither unprovided with arms? especially when we are informed, (ver. 15, 16,) that the hosts of Sisera perished “with the edge of the sword before Barak,” so there was not a man left. The expression of Deborah, therefore, is merely a poetic hyperbole.

VER. 9. *My heart is toward the governors of Israel, that “offered themselves willingly among the people: Bless ye the Lord.*

*p* Ver. 2.

*My heart is toward the governors, &c.*—Heb. “the law-givers.” After describing the bondage of Israel, and its effects upon the courage of the people, the prophetess, by a natural transition, repeats her exclamations of gratitude to the princes and the people, that they had at length risen and triumphed. Her heart was especially drawn out in sentiments of love and honour towards those heads of the tribes who had so nobly come forward in the hour of need, and by their example aroused and stimulated their countrymen to throw off the yoke. They are called “lawgivers,” not from their enacting new laws, which was never done in Israel, but from their giving sentence in causes that came before them, and administering justice generally. *Bless*

*ye the Lord.*—As it was the divine prompting that moved the leaders to the enterprise, she would not, in bestowing her commendations upon the instruments, lose sight of the Author of the blessing, and therefore calls upon the people at large to join her in a grateful song of praise.

VER. 10. "Speak, ye that ride on white asses,  
ye that sit in judgment, and walk by the way.

q Psal. cv. 2; cxlv. 5. r Chap. x. 4; xii. 14.  
s Psal. cvii. 32.

*Speak.*—Rather, Heb. "meditate," *i. e.* rehearse, celebrate, a song of praise. *That ride on white asses.*—Judea is a country but little favourable to the production of horses, instead of which, asses were anciently in general use. Of these, such as were of a whitish colour were probably the most rare and costly, and therefore were used only by eminent persons. Some have supposed that they were so called from the white garments or caparisons spread over them; but it appears unnatural to ascribe the colour of a covering to the creature that wears it. We do not call a man white or black, because he happens to be dressed in vestments of white or black cloth; neither did the Hebrews. The expression naturally suggests the colour of the animal itself, not of its trappings, and this is confirmed by the reports of travellers. "White asses," according to Morier, "come from Arabia; their scarcity makes them valuable, and gives them consequence. The men of the law count it a dignity, and suited to their character, to ride on asses of this colour. As the Hebrews always appeared in white garments at their public festivals, and on days of rejoicing, or when the courts of justice were held; so, they naturally preferred white asses, because the colour suited the occasion, and because asses of this colour being more rare and costly, were more coveted by the great and wealthy." The same view is taken of this question by Lewis, who says, the asses in Judea "were commonly of a red colour; and, therefore, white asses were highly valued, and used by persons of superior note and quality."—*Paxton*. Compare chap. xii. 14. Gesenius remarks that the original term is not, perhaps, to be understood as signifying a pure white, but a light reddish colour with white spots, as asses entirely white are rarely if ever found. The white colour, it is well known, is highly prized by the Orientals, whether in asses, camels, or elephants, and such are usually the property of princes. *Ye that sit in judgment.*—So rendered by several of the older versions, but the phrase in the original is exceedingly difficult of interpretation. Later commentators, with much plausibility, derive the word from a root signifying "to extend, to spread out," and understand it of carpets, coverings, or the large outer garments of the Hebrews, which were frequently spread out, and used for sleeping upon at night. Accordingly, Professor Robinson translates the clause, "Ye that recline on splendid carpets." But after all the researches of philologists, some doubt will still remain as to the true import of the original. *Ye that walk by the way.*—Ye who can safely travel in the public highways, now no longer infested by prowling

banditti. The allusion is perhaps to traffickers of various descriptions, or to the humbler classes, who were much upon the public roads, but who seldom rode; so that the poet's invocation is to the nobles, the wealthy, and the poor, or in other words, to the whole nation, to join in the song of triumph. They were now, as the fruits of the recent victory, enjoying a happy security, directly the reverse of their former oppressed and calamitous condition, and nothing was more proper than that they should celebrate in thankful strains the praises of their divine deliverer. It may be remarked that the Syriac and Arabic versions render the two clauses by, "Ye that sit at home, and ye that walk by the way."

VER. 11. *They that are delivered* from the noise of archers in the places of drawing water, there shall they rehearse the 'righteous acts of the LORD, even the righteous acts toward the inhabitants of his villages in Israel: then shall the people of the LORD go down to the gates.

t 1 Sam. xii. 7. Psal. cxlv. 7.

*From the noise of the archers in the places of drawing water.*—Heb. מקול מרחצים בן משאבים. "From the voice of the dividers at the watering-troughs." It would be easy, but of little use, to heap together an immense variety of renderings, proposed by different expositors, of this very perplexing passage. The difficulty arises principally from the word מרחצים translated "archers," which occurs only here, and of which lexicographers are unable to determine the exact root. If it be a denominative from רץ "an arrow," its meaning here is undoubtedly "archers," but if, as most modern philologists contend, it comes from the verb רחץ, it has the import of "dividing," although Gesenius says that רץ "an arrow" comes from this root, and is so called from its dividing or cleaving the air. According to this interpretation, the מרחצים are either the victorious warriors returning laden with booty, and halting at the watering-places to divide the spoil with songs of rejoicing, or the shepherds who can now, with cheerful carols, securely drive their flocks and herds to water, dividing, separating, or marshalling them as they please. Which of these two senses is the correct one it is not perhaps possible absolutely to determine. Either will suit well the connexion, provided the original for "from" be rendered, as it properly may, "at," "for," "on account of." The prophetess had just called upon all the people to join in a song, and she now declares the occasion: "Praise the Lord for or on account of the voice, the joyful cry of those who divide at the watering-places." It may be further remarked by way of illustration of the words, that as wells were very scarce in every part of the East, robbers and banditti generally took their stations near tanks, pools, and springs, in order that they might suddenly fall upon those who came to drink; and when the country was badly governed, annoyances of this kind were very frequent. "In open, unprotected lands of the East, the watering-places are at this day the scenes of continual conflict and oppression. To such places the necessity for water

conducts different people, who cannot any where meet in peace. These parties of hostile tribes fall in with each other, and quarrel and fight; and thither the natives of the wilds resort to plunder the parties of travellers and merchants who come in search of water. In the deserts of Syria and Arabia, natives and strangers are thus annoyed near the wells. This therefore is the principal reason of war,—the neighbourhoods of wells being the principal seats of war and depredation in those countries. Travellers also knowing that such tribes are encamped near, or are likely to visit the wells, often dread to approach them, in the fear of being plundered, if not also killed. For this reason we have known parties of travellers that were reduced to almost the last extremity for want of water in the parched deserts, obliged to avoid the places where their wants might be satisfied, from having heard that parties of Arabs were encamped in the neighbourhood; and we have heard of others who, from the same cause, were obliged to go one or two days' journey out of their way, to one watering-place, in preference to another that lay directly in their way. No travellers, unless in great force, dare encamp near a well, however pleasant and desirable it might be, from the fear of disagreeable visitors. They water their cattle, and replenish their water-skins in all haste, and then go and encamp at a distance from any roads leading to the well. Dr. Shaw mentions a beautiful rift in Barbary, which is received into a large basin, called *Shrub we Krub*; that is, Drink and away, from the great danger of meeting there with robbers and assassins. With equal propriety, and for the same reason, almost every oriental watering-place might be called *Shrub we Krub*.—*Pict. Bible*. The victory now gained put the whole country under their own government, and cleansed the land of these marauders. Instead of such danger and insecurity, Deborah here intimates that they may sit down unmolested at the places of drawing water, and there rehearse the righteous acts of the Lord; the land being now in peace, and order and good government every where restored. *Go down to the gates*.—Shall repossess themselves of the cities and walled villages from which they had been expelled by their enemies; they shall henceforth have free access either in or out of the gates, as their occasions might require; and as it is well known that the gate was the place of judgment in the East, they should again resort in peace and safety to the stations where justice was administered.

VER. 12. Awake, awake, Deborah; awake, awake, utter a song: arise, Barak, and <sup>a</sup> lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Abinoam.

<sup>a</sup> Ps. lxxiii. 18.

*Awake, awake, Deborah, &c.*—The prophethess here turns to herself and Barak, the leaders and heroes of the triumph, in a tone of animated appeal and excitation. She calls upon herself to dictate a strain descriptive of the preparation and the conflict; and on Barak to lead forth his captives, and display them in triumph before his countrymen. That such appeals to one's self are very common in Hebrew poetry, is obvious from

Ps. xlii. 6, 12; ciii. 1—5; civ. 1, and elsewhere. *Lead thy captivity captive*.—Lead those captive who before held thee in captivity. Compare Ps. lxxviii. 19. Eph. iv. 8.

VER. 13. Then he made him that remaineth <sup>y</sup> have dominion over the nobles among the people: the Lord made me have dominion over the mighty.

<sup>y</sup> Ps. xlix. 14.

*Made him that remaineth, &c.*—That is, then he (the Lord) made the dispirited remnant of the Israelites, who had survived the oppression of their enemies, to obtain the ascendancy over the nobles or chieftains of the people of Canaan, and made me, who am but a feeble woman, to have dominion over the mighty.

VER. 14. <sup>a</sup> Out of Ephraim was there a root of them <sup>b</sup> against Amalek; after thee, Benjamin, among thy people; out of <sup>b</sup> Machir came down governors, and out of Zebulun they that handle the pen of the writer.

<sup>a</sup> Ch. iii. 27. <sup>b</sup> Ch. iii. 13. <sup>b</sup> Num. xxxii. 39, 40.

*Out of Ephraim was there a root of them against Amalek*.—The poetess begins here to enumerate and review the tribes which had joined the standard of Barak. In the account of this matter, chap. iv. 10, mention is made only of the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali; but from the tenor of the song, it is obvious that several other tribes, on hearing of the exigency of their brethren, immediately raised a levy, and volunteered to go to their assistance. For this ready and generous proffer of their services, Deborah pays to them the first tribute of her thanks. The opening sentence of her commendation, quoted above, is replete with difficulty. Without adverting to the various renderings which have been proposed both by Jewish and Christian interpreters, we shall give that which seems on the whole the most probable. The clause is undoubtedly elliptical, and may be thus supplied:—"Out of Ephraim (came those) whose dwelling is in Amalek." The original for "root," we take to be a poetic expression for a fixed, firmly-established seat or dwelling, just as nations taking up their abode in a land are said to be planted in it, to take root in it, as Isa. xxvii. 6. "He shall cause them that come out of Jacob to take root." Compare Ps. lxxx. 8, 9. Job v. 3. If it be asked how Ephraim could be said to have dwelt or taken root in Amalek, since it is well known that the Amalekites inhabited the country to the south of Palestine, between mount Scir and Egypt, the answer is drawn from chap. xii. 15, where it is said that "Abdon was buried in the land of Ephraim, in the mount of the Amalekites." From this it is to be inferred that a colony of this people, who were related to the Kenites, had formerly migrated into the interior of the country, and maintained itself among the Israelites of the tribe of Ephraim. In this way it could be said, that the Ephraimites, whose root, *i. e.* foundation, dwelling-place, was among the Amalekites, on the mountain of that name, came forth to the

war. *After thee, Benjamin, among thy people.*—Rather, “After thee, (O Ephraim, came) Benjamin, among thy peoples,” *i. e.* thy forces, thy hosts. By a sudden change of persons, common to the poetic style, Ephraim is here addressed as present, and Benjamin, whose quota of men was probably small, is spoken of as being incorporated with it, instead of forming a distinct corps by itself. *Out of Machir came down governors.*—Machir was the son of Manasseh, and the father of Gilead, (Gen. l. 23. Numb. xxvii. 1.) and is here put for the tribe of Manasseh, that is, the half of that tribe which dwelt on the west of Jordan. The original for “governors,” (מִשְׁפָּטִים) is in effect the same with חֲקִיקִים “lawgivers,” (ver. 9.) and is to be understood of military leaders, expert and valiant chieftains, who promptly took the field at the head of their troops. *Out of Zebulun they that handle the pen of the writer.*—There is something peculiarly incongruous in the idea of penmen coming down to a battle, nor is the rendering in fact warranted by the original. The Hebrew term for “handle,” (מַשְׁכֵּת) is the same with that occurring chap. iv. 6, respecting the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali, and which we there endeavoured to show signified to draw, in the sense of enlisting. We take it in the same sense here; implying those who, as the emissaries of Barak, succeeded in drawing after them recruits. As to the instrument employed on this occasion, though our translators have rendered the Hebrew שֶׁבֶט by “pen,” yet the word has nowhere else that signification throughout the Scriptures. Its genuine meaning is a rod, staff, or wand, and instead of the “pen of the writer,” the correct version undoubtedly is, “with the rod of the numberer.” A definite number of men (10,000) were by Deborah’s orders, (chap. iv. 6,) to be levied from these two tribes, and the doing of this is described by a metaphor, taken from the custom of shepherds in numbering, separating or selecting their sheep by means of a rod besmeared with paint, with which they marked every fifth, tenth, or twentieth, as the case might be, as they came out of the outlet of their enclosure. See the process more particularly described in the note on Levit. xxvii. 32.

VER. 15. And the princes of Issachar were with Deborah; even Issachar, and also Barak: he was sent on foot into the valley. For the divisions of Reuben there were great thoughts of heart.

*c* Chap. iv. 14.

*The princes of Issachar were with Deborah.*—Or, Heb. “my princes in Issachar were with Deborah.” She calls them “my princes,” from the grateful esteem with which their services had inspired her. *Even Issachar, and also Barak.*—Rather, Heb. “and Issachar, in like manner as Barak;” *i. e.* Issachar was equally prompt, ardent, and valiant in the good cause; he marched forth with equal alacrity. *Was sent on foot into the valley.* Heb. “was sent with his feet.” See note on chap. iv. 10, 14. The meaning we suppose to be that, when Barak was ordered to charge down

the declivity of Tabor towards the valley, the men of Issachar followed with as much promptitude, as if all their feet had pertained to their leader’s body. It may be remarked that the original word, rendered “valley,” signifies also a low level plain, and thus the known topography of the place requires that it should be rendered here. They descended from mount Tabor into the plain of Esdraelon.—At this point a transition is made to a new theme in the inspired song; viz. a rebuke of the recreant tribes, who refused to join their brethren and flock to the standard of Barak; and here ver. 16, should properly begin. *For the divisions of Reuben.*—Heb. “in or among the divisions.” It is impossible to speak with confidence of the exact import of the word, here rendered “divisions.” It is perhaps designedly left ambiguous, as is not unusual with Scripture phrases, in order that it may be taken in greater latitude and fullness of meaning, and include the various senses of which it is susceptible. By some it is understood of the local division of Reuben from the rest of the tribes by the Jordan and other rivers; by others, of the classes or ranks into which the tribe was divided; and by others still, of the divided counsels, the conflicting opinions, of the Reubenites respecting the propriety of taking up arms on the occasion. The root from which the original is derived, signifies to divide, to cleave, and the present term occurs (Job xx. 17,) in the sense of water-courses, or streams flowing in channels. The most probable interpretation, therefore, if we mistake not, is that of Schnurrer and others, who by the “divisions of Reuben,” understand the “streams of Reuben;” *i. e.* the well-watered country of Reuben, a region fertilized by numerous creeks and small rivers. It will be recollected that Reuben dwelt on the east of Jordan and the Dead Sea, from the river Arnon northwards, and possessed part of the plain of the Jordan, which (Gen. xiii. 10,) was “every where well watered;” a region expressly celebrated (Numb. xxxii. 1) for its rich pasturage, which necessarily implies the presence of springs and streams. After all, if any one is inclined to construe the phrase in a pregnant sense as comprising all the above senses of “divisions,” we have no objections to urge against it, nor do we hesitate to believe that a similar mode of solving Scripture difficulties is in many instances the true one. *Great thoughts of heart.*—The original for “thoughts,” signifies resolvings, decisions, decrees, and the purport of the clause perhaps is, that the Reubenites at first heroically resolved to join their countrymen, but afterwards recanted their purpose, and meanly staid at home. This conduct the prophetess first describes in a tone of apparent praise, which by a poetical artifice is converted into an ironical and cutting sarcasm. She intimates that their original resolution and purpose was magnanimous; inquires why it was not fulfilled; why they preferred to remain at home and listen to the piping of the herdsmen? She then repeats in effect her first sentence of approbation; but in the ensuing verse, by the change of a single letter, (רוּקַח for רוּקַח revolvings for resolvings) she pronounces their noble resolution to have been mere empty deliberation amounting to nothing.

VER. 16. Why abodest thou <sup>d</sup> among the sheep-folds, to hear the bleatings of the flocks? For the divisions of Reuben *there were* great searchings of heart.

<sup>d</sup> Numb. xxxii. 1.

*Why abodest thou among the sheep-folds?*—Bishop Horsley renders the original by “hillocks,” instead of “sheep-folds,” and we are satisfied that he, of all other interpreters, has come nearest to the genuine scope of the speaker. He remarks, that the noun מְשֻׁרִים is from the root שָׁרַר to stick up, to be prominent, and it is in the dual form. Hence the substantive may signify any gibbosity or prominence. It is used in Jacob’s last words, to signify the two panniers of a laden ass lying down, and those panniers are the ridges of hills which were the boundaries of his territories. In like manner, we think, it is to be taken here to signify “hills in double parallel ridges.” Reuben is asked why he abode between מְשֻׁרִים to hear the bleatings of the flocks. And where shall any one abide to hear the bleatings of the flocks, but among hills, where flocks range? See also note on Gen. xlix. 14. It is still possible that there may have been such a similarity in form between the stalls, or ranges of the Syrian folds or pinfolds for flocks, and parallel ranges of hills, as to render the same term applicable to both, so that the present translation does not err widely from the truth. But the construction of Horsley, given above, we think decidedly preferable to any other. *To hear the bleatings of the flocks.*—Heb. “the whistlings or pipings of the flocks;” *i. e.* of the shepherds who play on the pipe while guarding their flocks. *Great searchings of heart.*—That is, great deliberations or consultations, but no result. They were forward in counsel and debate, but not in action; a severe and sarcastic irony.

VER. 17. <sup>e</sup> Gilead abode beyond Jordan: and why did Dan remain in ships? <sup>f</sup> Asher continued on the sea-shore, and abode in his breaches.

<sup>e</sup> See Josh. xiii. 25, 31.

<sup>f</sup> Josh. xix. 29, 31.

*Gilead abode beyond Jordan.*—That is, the Gadites, who possessed part of Gilead. (Josh. xiii. 24, 25.) Perhaps a part of the half tribe of Manasseh is included under the term. The verb שָׁן “to abide, to tabernacle,” necessarily here implies “to dwell at ease, quietly,” as Ps. lv. 6, “Oh that I had wings like a dove, for then would I fly away, and be at rest;” (Heb. אָשָׁן “dwell quietly.”) *Why did Dan remain in ships?*—Why was Dan so much intent upon his ships and merchandise? This was one of the maritime tribes. Its limits included the haven of Joppa (Jaffa), and also the coast farther south. But Zebulun was also “a haven for ships,” a seafaring tribe, and yet was forward and active in this expedition. *Asher continued on the sea-shore.*—The same reproach is here brought against Asher, that he remained on his coasts. His lot extended along the Mediterranean, contiguous to Zebulun and Naphtali, so that if disposed he might easily have suc-

coured his brethren. But he also had an excuse for staying at home. The original שָׂרַר *shore*, comes from רָפָה “to wear away,” and is applied to a coast, inasmuch as this is continually wearing away by the action of the water. *Abode in his breaches.*—Heb. מְשֻׁרִים “rents, ruptures, fissures,” from שָׁרַר “to rend,” implying probably the bays, inlets, and havens lying along a rugged and broken coast. The celebrated harbour of Acco, or Ptolemais, (Acre,) lay in the territory of Asher. Achzib also and Tyre are mentioned as falling within the limits of this tribe. (Josh. xix. 29.) The Chald. paraphrase gives a different turn to this clause: “The house of Asher, on the margin of the sea, dwelt in the broken-down cities of the Gentiles, which they rebuilt and inhabited.” The above rendering, however, is to be preferred.

VER. 18. <sup>g</sup> Zebulun and Naphtali were a people that jeoparded their lives unto the death in the high places of the field.

<sup>g</sup> Chap. iv. 10.

*Jeopardied their lives unto the death.*—Heb. “despised, reproached, or contemned;” *i. e.* they rushed fearless upon danger and death. These tribes, from being the more immediate sufferers from Jabin’s oppression, were, doubtless, the most eager to throw off the yoke of bondage, and would naturally rise in greater numbers and exhibit a more determined valour. *In the high places of the field.*—Heb. “the heights of the field.” Either spoken in reference to mount Tabor, on which the army of Israel at first encamped, or poetically taken for the most dangerous places of the field.

VER. 19. The kings came and fought, then fought the kings of Canaan in Taanach by the waters of Megiddo: <sup>h</sup> they took no gain of money.

<sup>h</sup> Chap. iv. 16. Ps. xlv. 12. See ver. 30.

*The kings came and fought.*—The poetess now proceeds to describe the battle. In the preceding chapter mention is made of a single king, Jabin, as coming against Israel, but, from the use of the plural here, and from the probabilities of the case, it is to be inferred that other allied kings took the field with Sisera. We are expressly informed, Josh. xi. 10, that Hazor, where Jabin reigned, was “beforetime the head” of numerous petty principalities, and these, it may be supposed, were confederate with him on this occasion. Yet it is possible that, in the lofty style of poetry, “kings” here may be simply equivalent to warlike leaders and champions, the heroes and potent personages at the head of the Canaanitish forces. *In Taanach, by the waters of Megiddo.*—These two places, which are usually mentioned together, lay within the limits of the plain of Esdraelon, and in the immediate vicinity of the river Kishon. Indeed, it is scarcely to be questioned that by the “waters of Megiddo,” is to be understood the stream Kishon, in that part of its course. *They took no gain of money.*—They obtained no spoil or booty; they were utterly disappointed in their expectations. The original, if rendered literally, is very emphatic; “not a piece, coin, or particle of silver

did they take." Schmid, however, among the most acute and judicious of commentators, understands the words of the arduous and overweening confidence with which the Canaanites fought. They entered the field so sanguine of success, they resolved not to take the least ransom for the Israelites, either for life or liberty. Thinking it possible that Barak might, on seeing the formidable power arrayed against him, repent of his undertaking, and wish to purchase peace by money, these words, according to the critic above mentioned, express their determination not to listen for a moment to any terms of treaty, but to cut them all off without mercy. This construction does no violence to the original, and is liable to no serious objection. Gr. "they took no gift of silver." Chal. "they willed not riches of silver;" *i. e.* they determined to reject or refuse the most tempting bribes. Thus, (Isa. xiii. 17.) "Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them, which shall not regard silver; and as for gold, they shall not delight in it;" *i. e.* they shall not be prevailed upon to spare by the prospect of fee or reward.

VER. 20. <sup>i</sup>They fought from heaven; <sup>h</sup>the stars in their courses fought against Sisera.

<sup>i</sup> See Josh. x. 11. Psa. lxxvii. 17, 18. & Chap. iv. 15.

*They fought from heaven.*—As the expression is indefinite, it may be considered as equivalent to saying that a supernatural power was engaged against them; they had to contend not only with foes on earth, but foes in heaven. Omnipotence armed the elements against them. A parallel idea is expressed in the words that follow. *The stars in their courses fought against Sisera.*—Or, Heb. "the stars from their orbits fought," &c. lit. "from their elevations, their exaltations, their highways." Chal. "from the place where the stars go forth, war was waged against Sisera." Probably nothing more than a highly rhetorical or poetical expression for the adverse influence of the atmospheric elements, the rains, winds, thunders, and lightnings, which from chap. iv. 15, appear to have been supernaturally excited on this occasion. See the extract from Josephus, note on chap. iv. 15. The stars are here the host of heaven, and this is but another phrase for heaven itself; the heavens fought against Sisera.

VER. 21. <sup>i</sup>The river of Kishon swept them away, that ancient river, the river Kishon. O my soul, thou hast trodden down strength.

<sup>i</sup> Chap. iv. 7.

*Kishon.*—This river takes its rise in the valley of Jezreel, near the foot of mount Tabor, and after running westward, with a great variety of turnings and windings, through the plain of Esdraelon, falls into the Mediterranean at the south-east corner of the bay of Acre. "In travelling," says Shaw, "under the south-east brow of Carmel, I had an opportunity of seeing the sources of the river Kishon, three or four of which lie within less than a furlong of each other, and are called "Ras el Kishon," or the head of the Kishon. These alone, without the lesser contributions nearer the sea, discharge water enough to form a

river half as big as the Isis. During likewise the rainy season, all the water which falls on the eastern side of the mountain, or upon the rising ground to the southward, empties itself into it in a number of torrents, at which conjunctures it overflows its banks, acquires a wonderful rapidity, and carries all before it." When Maundrell crossed this stream on his way to Jerusalem, its waters were low and inconsiderable; but in passing along the side of the plain he observed the tracts of many tributary rivulets falling down into it from the mountains, by which it must be greatly swelled in the rainy season. At the time of the battle here described, it was undoubtedly in this condition—swollen to a deep and impetuous torrent, sweeping away every thing within its reach. *That ancient river.*—The reason of this epithet is not obvious. The Gr. renders it, "the stream of the ancients, or of antiquities." The Chal. "the river in which happened signs and great deeds to Israel from ancient times." The root קִישׁוֹן properly implies the idea of precedence, or priority, whether in point of time or place, and hence its derivatives obtain the sense of either "antiquity" or "the east," which is always spoken of as lying before all other countries. "The river of antiquities" is undoubtedly the most exact rendering, and the import may be, that it was a river about which the divine counsels were exercised of old; it was a stream of ancient designation, one which God designed to make illustrious by this, and, perhaps, other similar events; for the plain of Esdraelon, through which it runs, is the most famous battle-ground of the whole territory of Palestine. It was the scene of the conflict of Gideon and the Midianites, of Saul and the Philistines, of the Israelites and the Syrians, (1 Kings xx. 26,) and of Josiah and the Egyptians. It has, in fact, been a chosen place for encampment in every contest carried on in the Holy Land, from the days of Nebuchadnezzar to the time of the Crusaders, and thence down to that of the modern Napoleon, who here sustained the attack of the whole Syrian army. "Jews, Gentiles, Saracens, Egyptians, Persians, Druses, Turks, Arabs, Christian Crusaders, and anti-christian Frenchmen—warriors out of every nation under heaven, have pitched their tents in the plain of Esdraelon, and have beheld the various banners of their nations wet with the dews of Tabor and Hermon." It may also be remarked, that if the predicted "battle of Armageddon," (Rev. xvi. 16,) denote a literal conflict, destined hereafter to take place, there is every probability that this is to be its scene; for here lies Megiddo, to which allusion is had in the name "Armageddon," and we are, in fact, strongly inclined to believe that name is formed by contraction and a slight change of letters, particularly of *r* for *l*, which is common in the East, from the Heb. מְגִדּוֹ *al-me-Megiddo*, "waters of Megiddo," (ver. 19,) which we have there shown to be but another appellation of this very river. We see, therefore, with how much propriety the Kishon is called the "ancient," *i. e.* "the ordained, the destined, the designated river;" the river intended, in the purposes of heaven, to be signalized by a series of remarkable events. *Thou hast trodden down strength.*—That is, thou hast van-

quished the strong and mighty ; a strain of exultation, spoken, perhaps, in the person of all Israel, in view of the glorious victory achieved.

VER. 22. Then were the horse-hoofs broken by the means of the prancings, the prancings of their mighty ones.

*The horse-hoofs broken.*—Anciently, horses were not shod ; nor are they at the present day in some parts of the East. The flight was so rapid, that the hoofs of their horses were splintered, battered, and broken by the roughness of the roads. *By the means of their prancings.*—Or, Heb. “of their scamperings.” From chap. iv. 16, it appears that the Canaanites fled with the utmost precipitation. *Of their mighty ones.*—Of their best and strongest horses. The original (סורס) is thus applied, (Jer. viii. 16.) “The snorting of his horses was heard from Dan ; the whole land trembled at the sound of the neighing of his strong ones.” (Chap. xlvii. 3.) “At the noise of the stamping of his strong horses.”

VER. 23. Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the LORD, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof ; <sup>m</sup>because they came not to the help <sup>n</sup>of the LORD, to the help of the LORD against the mighty.

<sup>m</sup> Chap. xxi. 9, 10. Neh. iii. 5.  
<sup>n</sup> 1 Sam. xvii. 47 ; xviii. 17 ; xxv. 28.

*Curse ye Meroz.*—The prophetess here turns abruptly to curse the inhabitants of Meroz ; a place probably of some note at that time, but of which no trace whatever now remains. The effect of the curse, like that pronounced upon Amalek, (Exod. xvii. 14,) seems to have “blotted out the remembrance” of its history and its site. We may suppose it to have been a city lying near the scene of action, and that the inhabitants, having an opportunity to cut off the Canaanites in their flight, neglected to improve it, or in some other way withheld their services on the occasion. *Said the angel of the Lord.*—The Angel-Jehovah, before spoken of. (Chap. ii. 1.) The scope of the words is to intimate that the malediction proceeded not from her own private feelings of ill-will or resentment, but was prompted by a divine impulse. It was Jehovah that commanded the curse. She would not otherwise have interrupted her strains of thanksgiving, by the utterance of so fearful a judgment. *Curse ye bitterly.*—Heb. “curse with cursing.” Use the most awful execrations. *Came not to the help of the Lord.*—To the help of the Lord’s people ; for he takes what is done to his people as done to himself ; and what is withheld from them as withheld from himself. The Lord needed not their help : as the event showed that he could accomplish the work without them ; nor does Omnipotence ever really need the services of any of his creatures. But he is pleased to allow them the privilege of being employed as co-workers together with him, and when a crisis arrives in which it is in effect proclaimed, “Who is on the Lord’s side ?” it is at our peril that we presume to stand upon neutral ground, and refuse to come up to the help of the Lord.

VER. 24. Blessed above women shall <sup>o</sup>Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be, <sup>p</sup>blessed shall she be above women in the tent.

<sup>o</sup> Chap. iv. 17. <sup>p</sup> Luke i. 28.

*Blessed above women, &c.*—That is, she shall be praised and celebrated above women. She shall be deemed worthy of the most exalted eulogy for her heroic conduct ; all the Israelitish women shall glory in her. This is in marked contrast with the foregoing curse of Meroz. The spirit of prophecy delights to turn from the language of displeasure and rebuke to that of commendation and praise. *Blessed—above women in the tent.*—Or, as Geddes translates it, “tent-inhabiting women.” She shall bear the palm above all women of the same class or character with herself, *i. e.* the women of those tribes that dwell only in tents. The words are evidently applied to the wife of a wandering nomad, who had no fixed place of residence, and it is highly probable that such were the habits of the Kenites, in contradistinction from the more settled mode of life of the Israelites.

VER. 25. <sup>r</sup>He asked water, and she gave him milk ; she brought forth butter in a lordly dish.

<sup>q</sup> Chap. iv. 19.

*She brought forth butter.*—The original חמחמ *hemah*, here rendered “butter,” undoubtedly implies something liquid. It would perhaps be better translated cream, or rather curdled milk. “Sisera complained of thirst, and asked a little water to quench it, a purpose to which butter is but little adapted. Mr. Harmer, indeed, urges the same objection to cream, which, he contends, few people would think a very proper beverage for one that was extremely thirsty ; and concluded, that it must have been buttermilk which Jael, who had just been churning, gave to Sisera. But the opinion of Dr. Russell is preferable, that the *hemah* of the Scriptures, is probably the same as the *haymah* of the Arabs, which is not, as Harmer supposed, simple cream, but cream produced by simmering fresh sheep’s milk for some hours over a slow fire. It could not be butter newly churned, which Jael presented to Sisera, because the Arab butter is apt to be foul, and is commonly passed through a strainer before it is used ; and Russell declares, he never saw butter offered to a stranger, but always *haymah* : nor did he ever observe the Orientals drank buttermilk, but always *leben*, which is coagulated sour milk, diluted with water. It was *leben*, therefore, which Pococke mistook for buttermilk, with which the Arabs treated him in the holy land. A similar conclusion may be drawn concerning the butter and milk which the wife of Heber presented to Sisera ; they were forced cream or *haymah*, and *leben*, or coagulated sour milk diluted with water, which is a common and refreshing beverage in those sultry regions.”—*Paxton.* *In a lordly dish.*—Heb. “in a bowl of the mighty, of the nobles.” That is, such as nobles use ; a rich, costly, or princely bowl ; one with which a person would entertain the most honourable guests. ‘Though it is scarcely sup-

possible that articles of this costly description were common in the tents of nomade tribes, yet in the present case the family of Heber may have possessed, from their ancestors, a sumptuous article of the kind, which Jael would naturally bring forth on the occasion of a visit from so distinguished a personage. See "Illustrations of the Scriptures," p. 137.

VER. 26. \*She put her hand to the nail, and her right hand to the workman's hammer; and with the hammer she smote Sisera, she smote off his head, when she had pierced and stricken through his temples.

r Chap. iv. 21.

*She put her hand.*—Her left hand, as appears from the nature of the case and from the mention of the right in the ensuing clause. *With the hammer she smote Sisera.*—The words "with the hammer" ought properly to have been printed in Italics, as they do not occur in the original, although it is true that the Heb. verb for "smite" does often, perhaps generally, convey the idea of smiting with a hammer, for which reason our translators have rendered in the margin, "she hammered Sisera." Yet in ver. 22 of this chapter it is applied to the beating or striking of the horses' hoofs against the ground. At the time, however, when our translation was made the force of many Hebrew words was not so clearly ascertained as at the present. *She smote off his head.*—Rather, Heb. "She violently smote, she crushed his head." That his head was actually severed from his body there is no good reason to believe. *When she pierced, &c.*—Or, Heb. "and she pierced, &c." The leading idea of the original word is to beat down, to depress, as appears from its use, Psal. lxxviii. 24; ex. 6. Deut. xxxiii. 11. According to the rendering of our translators it is entirely synonymous with the ensuing term "stricken through." But this we believe to be unwarranted. The first undoubtedly implies the beating down, the indenting of the side of Sisera's head which was exposed to the stroke, the other, the transfixing, the perforating of his temples, by the tent-pin. The words intimate a gradation in the act, each expression rising in intensity upon the preceding.

VER. 27. At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay down: at her feet he bowed, he fell: where he bowed, there he fell down dead.

*At her feet he bowed, &c.*—Heb. בין רגליה כרע נשָׁא. "between her feet he bowed, or sunk down, he fell." He probably made some struggles after receiving the blow, and as we may suppose him to have been lying on a bed, or divan, elevated somewhat above the floor, he would naturally fall upon the latter. The several kindred words appear to be merely a poetic amplification of the circumstances of his death. See a similar phraseology (Psal. xx. 6.) "They are brought down and fallen. (נפלו כרעו.)"

VER. 28. The mother of Sisera looked out at a window, and cried through the lattice, Why

is his chariot so long in coming? why tarry the wheels of his chariots?

*The mother of Sisera looked out, &c.*—By an abrupt but beautiful transition, the mother of Sisera is now introduced as looking from her lattice, confidently expecting her son's victorious return, ostentatiously reckoning upon the spoil. "In this," says Professor Robinson, "is shown the deep insight into human nature which the sacred writer possessed, an insight especially into the frivolity of the oriental female character. Her consolation springs, not from the hope of his triumphant return as a warrior and conqueror, but arises from the slaves, the many-coloured garments, the splendid ornaments and attire which will fall to his share. In the mouth of the exulting Hebrew poetess, this is a burst of keen and scoffing irony against a foe who never dreamed of a defeat, and awaited only the spoils of victory." *Cried through the lattice.*—The windows of eastern houses generally open into interior private courts, with the exception sometimes of a latticed window or balcony towards the street. At such an one the mother of Sisera is here represented as standing and looking out. *Why is his chariot so long in coming?*—Heb. "why does his chariot shame (us) in coming?" i. e. why does it so linger beyond expectation and almost beyond endurance? The relation between the ideas of delay and shame in certain Hebrew terms is very peculiar. See note on chap. iii. 25.

VER. 29. Her wise ladies answered her, yea, she returned answer to herself,

*Her wise ladies.*—The noble female attendants, the matrons of her court or suite. The epithet "wise," perhaps, has reference to their sagacity or shrewdness in assigning reasons for Sisera's delay.

VER. 30. \*Have they not sped? have they not divided the prey; to every man a damsel or two; to Sisera a prey of divers colours, a prey of divers colours of needle-work, of divers colours of needle-work on both sides, meet for the necks of them that take the spoil?

s Ex. xv. 9.

*Have they not sped.*—Heb. "have they not found;" i. e. have they not succeeded in obtaining the object of their desires? *To every man a damsel or two.*—Heb. "to the head of a man;" an idiom peculiar to the original wherever the idea of enumeration or distribution is involved. One would have thought that ladies, who had any just conception of the honour of their sex, would have found other subjects of felicitation than this. But the hint serves as a faithful index of the degradation of women in all heathen lands, especially in the East. *A prey of divers colours of needle-work.*—Embroidery and rich dresses were reckoned the most valuable parts of the spoil of conquered foes. It was probably the beauty and richness of the Babylonish garment, that first tempted Achan to secrete the spoil that cost him his life. It was also, probably, from the high value put upon this species of spoil, that David (2 Sam. i. 24.) calls upon the daughters of

Israel to join with him in lamenting the death of Saul, "who clothed them in scarlet, and with other delights; who put on ornaments of gold upon their apparel." *For the necks of them that take the spoil.*—Heb. "for the necks of the prey." The ellipsis is perhaps well supplied in our translation, though some critics instead of taking "prey" figuratively for persons seizing the prey, understand it of captured animals, which they suppose to have been usually led in triumph decorated with ornaments and trappings upon their necks. In this sense, however, it might, as Prof. Robinson suggests, be better referred to the decorations of the female slaves.

VER. 31. 'So let all thine enemies perish, O LORD: but let them that love him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might. And the land had rest forty years.

† Ps. lxxxiii. 19.    u 2 Sam. xxiii. 4.    z Psal. xix. 5.

*So let all thine enemies perish.*—The prophetic, instead of saying in express terms that the hopes of Sisera's mother were doomed to sad disappointment, bursts forth into an abrupt apostrophe, which implies this in a very vivid and forcible manner; viz. an invocation of like destruction upon all the enemies of Jehovah. The particle "so" refers, not to what is expressed, but to what is thus implied, the frustrated hopes and bitter wailings of the mother and her attendants. This highly poetical mode of concluding the song gives a gracefulness and effect to the whole which can scarcely be surpassed. In remarking practically on the prayer of Deborah, it is to be observed that imprecations of evil, when personal and vindictive, are contrary to the mind of God, but when uttered as denunciations of God's determined purposes against his enemies, they are not unsuited to the most holy character. In this light are many of the Psalms of David to be viewed; and even Paul could say, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema-maranatha." "Though our enemies," says Henry, "are to be prayed for, God's enemies, as such, are to be prayed against; and when we see some of God's enemies remarkably humbled and brought down, that is an encouragement to us to pray for the downfall of all the rest." Thus are Deborah's words to be interpreted. Being prompted by the spirit of inspiration, they are to be regarded not only as an imprecation, but also as a prediction; a prediction which shall assuredly be accomplished in its season upon all that continue to withstand Omnipotence. *Let them that love him be as the sun, &c.*—These words require simply a practical exposition. They intimate the true distinction, between the enemies and the friends of God. The latter are characterised as those that love him. If between men we could admit a medium between love and hatred, we can by no means admit of it between God and his creatures. Indifference towards God would be constructive enmity. Those only who love him can be numbered among his friends. In behalf of these the prophetess prays that they may be as "the sun when he goeth forth in his might."

Under this beautiful image she prays, (1.) That they may shine with ever-increasing splendour. The sun in its early dawn casts but a feeble light upon the world; but soon proceeds to irradiate the whole horizon, and to burst in full lustre upon those who were a little while before immersed in darkness. Thus the goings-forth of the devoted friends and servants of the Most High, diffuse at first but an indistinct and doubtful gleam; but through the tender mercy of God they advance, and their light shines brighter and brighter to the perfect day. (2.) That they may diffuse benefits wheresoever they go. The sun is the fountain of light and life to the whole teraqueous sphere. If we look at the places where his genial beams for months together never shine, the whole face of nature wears the appearance of desolation and death; and nothing but the return of his kindly influences restores her to life. Thus in countries where the friends of God are not found, the whole population is in a state of spiritual and moral death. But in their light, light is seen, and from them is spread abroad a vital influence which wakes up all around them to new life and power. Let us seriously inquire to which of these classes we belong; for however confounded now, there will be an awful difference between them ere long; the one arising to everlasting shame and contempt, the other shining forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

## CHAPTER VI.

VER. 1. <sup>a</sup> AND the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD: and the LORD delivered them into the hand <sup>b</sup> of Midian seven years.

<sup>a</sup> Chap. ii. 19.

<sup>b</sup> Hab. iii. 7.

*Did evil in the sight of the Lord.*—After the expiration of the forty years of rest above mentioned. (Chap. v. 31.) Their new defection subjects them as a matter of course to new judgments. With the froward, God will show himself froward, and will walk contrary to those that walk contrary to him. *Into the hand of Midian.*—Of the Midianites; the usual collect. sing. for the plural. A great portion of this race had been cut off by Moses about 200 years before, (Numb. xxxi. 1—18,) but in the meantime they had recovered themselves, those that escaped to other regions having returned, and these with the remnant that remained having rapidly increased and acquired power, till they became too strong for their sin-weakened neighbours the Israelites. Instigated probably by resentment, they joined the Amalekites in order to retaliate upon their ancient conquerors. They inhabited the eastern borders of the Red Sea, having Arnon for their capital.

VER. 2. And the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel: and because of the Midianites the children of Israel made them "the dens which are in the mountains, and caves, and strong holds.

c 1 Sam. xiii. 6. Heb. xl. 32.

*The hand of Midian prevailed against Israel.*—Heb. “the hand of Midian was strong upon Israel;” indicating not merely the commencement, but the continuance and the highest degree of oppression. *Made them the dens, &c.*—That is, prepared, fitted up as residences, the caves and dens of the mountains. They did not make them *de novo*, in the sense of cutting out, excavating, or constructing them, for it is said they were already in the mountains, but they so worked upon them as to adapt them for dwelling-places and strong holds against the assaults of their enemies. Shaw says that a great way on each side of Joppa, on the sea-coast, there is a range of mountains and precipices; and that in these high situations are generally found the dens, the holes, or caves, which are so frequently mentioned in Scripture, and which were formerly the lonesome retreats of the distressed Israelites. Nothing can give a more vivid impression of the sufferings to which the Israelites were now reduced. Not daring to reside in the plain country they were obliged to betake themselves to the most retired holds and fastnesses which their mountainous territory afforded. Josephus thus describes this period of their history:—“Now when Barak and Deborah were dead, whose deaths had happened about the same time; afterwards the Midianites called the Amalekites and Arabians to their assistance, and made war against the Israelites, and were too hard for those that fought against them; and when they had burnt the fruits of the earth, they carried off the prey. Now when they had done this for three years, the multitude of the Israelites retired to the mountains, and forsook the plain country. They also made themselves hollows under ground, and caverns, and preserved therein whatsoever had escaped their enemies; for the Midianites made expeditions in harvest-time, but permitted them to plough the land in winter, that so when the others had taken pains, they might have fruits for them to carry away.” (Antiq. b. v. ch. 6. s. 1.) See note on Gen. xix. 30. They who abuse God’s gifts in prodigality and luxury, often live, as a just punishment, to feel the want of them in hunger and nakedness.

VER. 3. And so it was, when Israel had sown, that the Midianites came up, and “the Amalekites, and the children of the east, even they came up against them;

*d* Chap. iii. 13. *e* Gen. xxix. 1. Chap. vii. 12; viii. 10. *1* Kin. iv. 30. Job i. 3.

*When Israel had sown, &c.*—The Midianites were principally wandering herdsmen, that is, just such a people as the Bedouin Arabs of the present day. Consequently, the details of this oppression may be illustrated from what travellers relate of the modern customs of these roving and plundering tribes. It may be stated as a maxim, that whenever the nomade is the master of the cultivator, the impoverishment and ultimate ruin of the latter are inevitable. The Bedouin Arabs come up from their deserts in the spring, and perhaps remain through the summer, in the territories of those cultivators who are so unfortunate as to lie at their mercy. If there is

not an established understanding between the tillers of the soil and the nomades as to the tribute which the former are to pay for exemption, the Bedouins encamp and pasture their cattle in the cultivated grounds, after securing such corn and other vegetable productions as they may see fit to appropriate for their own use. Thus the “increase of the earth is destroyed,” and no “sustenance left” to reward the labour and patience bestowed upon its production. *The children of the East.*—Various mixed tribes of the Arabians, Ishmaelites, Moabites, and Ammonites inhabiting the regions which lay to the east and south-east of Palestine. They were the descendants of Abraham by Keturah. See more respecting them, Chap. viii. 10, 11. Gen. xxix. 1. Job i. 3. Ezek. xxv. 4. *Came up against them.*—The effects of these marauding expeditions are expressly stated in the next verse.

VER. 4. And they encamped against them, and destroyed the increase of the earth, till thou come unto Gaza; and left no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass.  
*f* Lev. xxvi. 16. Deut. xxviii. 30, 33, 51. Mic. vi. 15.

*And they encamped.*—This is not to be understood precisely in the sense of a military encampment, which is generally a station occupied but for a very short time. The original term is frequently applied to the pitching of tents by the nomade tribes in their wanderings, and is but another word for expressing their unsettled, migratory kind of life. Living mostly in tents, they pitched them now here, and now there, remaining for a longer or shorter time as the advantages of pasturage or plunder invited them; and the scope of the present passage is doubtless to say, that these numerous eastern hordes had so far obtained the mastery of Israel that they fearlessly pitched their tents, and made a protracted stay in the very heart of their country, moving on to its utmost limits, and consuming all its products as they advanced. See the next verse. *Till thou come unto Gaza.*—Their ravages extended quite across the whole breadth of the land from the east, where they entered, to the limits of the Philistines’ possessions, who inhabited the coast of the Mediterranean. Them they disturbed not, knowing them to be also hostile to the Israelites. A common enmity is a virtual league of alliance. *Neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass.*—The Bedouins, in oppressing the cultivator, seize all the cattle that are brought abroad, and add them to their own flocks and herds, so that the inhabitants frequently become deprived of all their cattle, as was now the case with the Israelites. In western Asia the people who are subject to such annual incursions generally make a compromise with the invaders, agreeing to pay them a heavy tribute, on condition that the harvests shall not be touched, or the cattle driven off. Even powerful communities, which might be able to cope with the Bedouins, often enter into a compromise of this sort, to prevent the necessity of continual warfare and watchfulness. With these, the arrangement is a matter of convenience; but miserable is the condition of those with whom it is a matter of

necessity, and to whom it is the only alternative on which they can secure a scanty subsistence from their fields. The tribute, usually paid in produce, is generally very heavy, besides which the chiefs expect extraordinary presents, and what is received in one year as a present is certain to be exacted in the next year as a right. Thus the pressure accumulates, till it can no longer be borne; cultivation is then relinquished; and whole settlements are abandoned by their inhabitants, who disperse themselves into other villages or towns, or form a settlement where they hope to be more at ease. These particulars, gathered principally from the "Pictorial Bible," serve to show the distressed situation of the Israelites under the depredation of these ancient Bedouins.

VER. 5. For they came up with their cattle and their tents, and they came as grasshoppers for multitude; for both they and their camels were without number: and they entered into the land to destroy it.

g Chap. vii. 12.

*Came up with their cattle and their tents.*—That is, with their wives, children, and domestics, the inhabitants of their tents. This is but an expansion of the idea of the preceding verse. The inroad of these eastern invaders was not a sudden and successful assault followed by a hasty retreat, but a prolonged occupation of the country of the Israelites, with their innumerable tents, and flocks, and herds. For numbers and voracity they are compared to "grasshoppers," or rather "locusts," as the word should be rendered, and nothing can convey a more vivid image of the countless multitude and the wide-spread ravages of these armies of marauders. It was undoubtedly at this time that the famine took place which compelled the family of Elimelech to migrate to the land of Moab, and gave rise to the interesting events related in the book of Ruth. The oppression to which the Israelites were at this time subject was, therefore, of a very different character from those which they had previously suffered, and from the minute and expressive details which are given, we cannot but infer that they had never before experienced any thing so grievous. *Entered into the land to destroy it.*—The effect of their entering in was to destroy, to lay waste, the land; whether the Heb. particle *ב* "to" imports the actual design is not so clear. It often indicates merely the event. See note on Josh. vii. 7.

VER. 6. And Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites; and the children of Israel cried unto the LORD.

a Chap. iii. 15. Hos. v. 15.

VER. 7. And it came to pass, when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD because of the Midianites,

VER. 8. That the LORD sent a prophet unto the children of Israel, which said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I brought you

up from Egypt, and brought you forth out of the house of bondage;

*The Lord sent a prophet.*—Heb, "sent a man a prophet." The writer would have it understood that it was a human messenger and not an angel; for angels in Scripture are not called prophets, though prophets are sometimes called angels. (Mal. iii. 1.) God commissioned some individual, whose name is not known, to act the part of a prophet, *i. e.* to be an organ of declaring the divine will on this occasion to his people. Whether he had ever exercised this function before is uncertain. The supposition that he had is at least unnecessary. Men were often raised up and endowed with extraordinary gifts for particular emergencies, and God having now determined, in answer to the prayers of his oppressed people, to grant them deliverance, begins by sending them a prophet before he raises up for them a Saviour. It was fitting that their deep and unfeigned repentance should precede the purposed relief, and a prophet would be the most suitable instrument of effecting this. The immediate object of our prayers is not always that which God sees fit immediately to grant. He may see that something else entirely different is necessary as a preparative to the main blessing, and as a general rule we cannot hope for the marks of the divine forgiveness without being deeply humbled for our previous sin. "The sending of prophets to a people, and the furnishing a land with faithful ministers, is a token for good, and an evidence that God has mercy in store for them."—Henry. In what way precisely this prophet executed his mission, whether addressing the people in a general assembly, or by delivering it from city to city, and from tribe to tribe, it is not possible to decide; but his errand was to convince them of sin, and to bring them to repentance and humiliation before God, in view of their past transgressions. *Brought you up from Egypt.*—You in the loins or persons of your fathers. See this phraseology explained, Josh. iv. 23.

VER. 9. And I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all that oppressed you, and I drave them out from before you, and gave you their land;

i Psal. xliiv. 2, 3.

*Of all that oppressed you.*—It is not perfectly clear to whom this is intended to apply. It cannot well be referred to the Canaanites, in Judea, as they can scarcely be said to have "oppressed" the Israelites prior to the occupation of their lands by the latter, although they doubtless had every disposition to do it. Some of the Jewish commentators with much probability understand it of Sihon, Og, Arad, and others whom the Israelites encountered on their way from Egypt to Canaan, to whom should perhaps be added Balak, king of Moab, the Midianites, the Edomites, and whatever enemy endeavoured to molest them on their march. These they overcame, expelled, and took possession of their country, and so made good the declaration of the text.

VER. 10. And I said unto you, I *am* the LORD your God; <sup>a</sup> fear not the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but ye have not obeyed my voice.

*k* 2 Kings xvii. 35, 37, 38. *Jer.* x. 2.

*Fear not the gods of the Amorites.*—Fear them not so as to serve and worship them; pay them not divine honours. By the Amorites is meant the Canaanitish nations in general. See on Josh. xxiv. 14, 15. *But ye have not obeyed my voice.*—In this and the two preceding verses there is no express promise of deliverance, but merely a recital of the Lord's goodness, and the charge of disobedience and rebellion brought against the people. The reason perhaps of an address so purely legal was to deepen their repentance, to make them feel more bitterly the evil and malignity of their conduct, and on the borders of despair to cry more earnestly for the divine succour. As we learn, however, from the facts recorded that it was the purpose of God to afford relief, we may properly understand the rebuke as implying the promise of pardon and deliverance, on condition of their returning to God. As a general rule, in God's dealings with sinners, where present evils are spoken of as a penalty of past offences, it is to be understood that forgiveness will follow reformation. We may therefore without hazard supply the last clause thus:—"But ye have not obeyed my voice; nevertheless I have heard your cry, and have purposed deliverance." This is merely putting the actual conduct of the Most High into words.

VER. 11. And there came an angel of the LORD, and sat under an oak which was in Ophrah, that pertained unto Joash <sup>t</sup> the Abi-ezrite: and his son <sup>m</sup> Gideon threshed wheat by the wine-press, to hide it from the Midianites.

*l* Josh. xvii. 2.

*m* Heb. xi. 32.

*An angel of the Lord.*—Not a created angel, but the Son of God himself, the eternal Word, the Lord of angels, anticipating the appearance he was afterwards in the fulness of time to make in human form. This is evident from his being called (ver. 14—16) "Jehovah," and from his saying, "I will be with thee." See on chap. ii. 1. *Sat under an oak which was in Ophrah.*—Or, Heb. "sat under a grove or cluster of oaks." Ophrah was a city of Manasseh, west of Jordan, situated about sixteen miles north of Jericho, and not far from the river Jordan. *Joash the Abi-ezrite.*—Of the posterity, of the family, of Abiezer, who belonged to the tribe of Manasseh, Josh. xvii. 2. This Ophrah probably fell to the inheritance of this family, and it may be also so called to distinguish it from another Ophrah, in the tribe of Benjamin. (Josh. xviii. 23.) *Gideon threshed wheat by the wine-press.*—The Hebrew properly denotes, "threshed wheat with a stick in a wine-press;" a very expressive illustration of the remarks made above respecting the oppression of the Midianites. Gideon was obliged to thresh his wheat in a small quantity, and in an unusual place, to conceal it from the enemy. This shows

how extreme was the distress of the Israelites, seeing that they could not retain any part of their own produce except by stealth. The smallness of the quantity is shown by the manner in which it was threshed, which was not with cattle, as was usual with large quantities, but by means of the flail, which was seldom employed but in threshing small quantities. And then the threshing was in or near the wine-press, that is, in an unusual place, in ground appropriated to another purpose. The flail also falling on grain placed on the dead ground, not on a boarded floor, as with us, made but little noise, whereas the bel- lowing of the oxen might, in the other case, have led to detection. It will be observed, however, contrary to the opinion of some commentators, that this threshing-ground was in the open air, else Gideon could not have expected dew to fall upon the ground or on the fleece, which he spreads out there, (ver. 37—40.) *To hide it from the Midianites.*—Heb. "to cause it to flee from the Midianites;" *i. e.* that it might be hastily gathered up on the approach of the enemy and conveyed to a place of safety. The original word is the same with that employed Exod. ix. 20, "He that feared the word of the Lord—made his servants and his cattle flee into the houses," where it is evidently exegetical of "gather," in the preceding verse.

VER. 12. And the "angel of the LORD appeared unto him, and said unto him, THE LORD is <sup>c</sup> with thee, thou mighty man of valour.

*n* Chap. xiii. 3. *Luke* i. 11, 28. *o* Josh. i. 5.

*The Lord is with thee.*—Chal. "the Word of the Lord is for thy help, thou mighty man of valour." An ancient form of salutation, expressing the assurance, or conveying an invocation, of the presence, protection, and blessing of God. From Gideon's answer, (ver. 13,) it would appear that the former is the sense in this passage. Thus Boaz saluted his reapers, (Ruth ii. 4,) and thus the angel accosted the mother of Christ. (Luke i. 28.) *Thou mighty man of valour.*—This appellation may at once have been founded upon some previous display of courage and personal prowess put forth by Gideon, and may also have been predictive of the character he should hereafter exhibit as a divinely commissioned and qualified deliverer of his countrymen. The instruments which God chooses to effect his purposes he endows, strengthens, and animates for the work to which he calls them. Though often to human view unlikely instruments, yet they will ever be found best qualified for the employment assigned them.

VER. 13. And Gideon said unto him, O my Lord, if the LORD be with us, why then is all this be- fallen us? and <sup>p</sup> where be all his miracles <sup>q</sup> which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt? but now the LORD hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites.

*p* Psal. lxxxix. 49. *Isa.* lix. 1; lxxiii. 15.  
*q* Psa. xlv. 1. *r* 2 Chron. xv. 2.

*If the Lord be with us.*—Chal. “is the Shechinah of the Lord for our help?” The angel, it will be observed, addressed Gideon in the singular, “the Lord is with thee;” but he, in his reply, continually makes use of the plural—“if the Lord be with us”—showing that he identified himself with his people, and that he scarcely knew how to conceive of the divine presence with him, when there was no evidence of its being enjoyed by them. An humble and self-distrusting spirit is always backward to recognize the special tokens of the divine favour, and, far from wishing to monopolize them, is anxious that such gracious manifestations should be shared by others. *Why then is all this befallen us.*—Heb. “why hath all this found us?” A plain acknowledgment that the evils suffered were occasioned by the withdrawal of the divine presence. It is supposed, by the very terms, that the continued enjoyment of the light of God’s countenance would have precluded them. *Where be all his miracles, &c.*—Why does not the same power which delivered our fathers from the yoke of the Egyptians deliver us out of the hands of the Midianites? “It is sometimes hard, but never impossible, to reconcile cross providences with the presence of God and his favour.”—Henry. *Delivered us into the hands of the Midianites.*—Heb. כַּף, properly “the hollow of the hand;” different from כַּף “the hand,” usually employed in such connexions. “The valiant man was here weak, weak in faith, weak in discourse, whilst he argues God’s absence by affliction, and his presence by deliverances, and the unlikelihood of success by his own inability; all gross inconsequences. Rather should he have inferred God’s presence in their correction; for whosoever God chastises, there he is, yea, there he is in mercy. Nothing more proves us his than his stripes; he will not bestow chastisement where he loves not. Fond nature thinks God should not suffer the wind to blow on his dear ones, but none out of the place of torment have suffered so much as his dearest children. He says not, ‘We are idolaters; therefore the Lord hath forsaken us, because we have forsaken him.’ This sequel had been as good as the other was faulty; ‘He hath delivered us unto the Midianites, therefore he hath forsaken us.’ Sins, not afflictions, argue God absent.”—Bishop Hall.

VER. 14. And the LORD looked upon him, and said, “Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: ‘have not I sent thee?”

s 1 Sam. xli. 11. Heb. xi. 32, 34.  
t Josh. i. 9. Chap. iv. 8.

*And the Lord looked upon him.*—That is, not merely directed his eyes towards him, but looked upon him efficaciously, with an indescribable power and influence, as it is said, (Luke xxii. 61,) “And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter;” *i. e.* in such a way as he only could look upon him, with an efficacy absolutely divine, the consequence of which was he went out and wept bitterly. Here, however, the look was one of encouragement and favour—one which banished his fears, and inspired him with new life, spirits, and confidence. It will be noticed that the lan-

guage here employed, “The Lord (Jehovah) looked upon him;” plainly discloses the real character of him who is above called an angel. *Go in this thy strength.*—In the supernatural strength and fortitude with which thou perceivest thyself to be endowed as the result of this interview. God gives men a commission of service by giving them all the qualifications necessary for the execution of it, and when this is the case, human ceremonies merely recognise instead of creating the authority under which such persons act. “A good cause, a good calling, and a good conscience will make a good courage.”—Trapp.

VER. 15. And he said unto him, O my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, “my family is poor in Manassch, and I am the least in my father’s house.

z See 1 Sam. ix. 21.

*My family is poor.*—Heb. “my thousand is the meanest or poorest.” From Exod. xviii. 25, we learn that the Israelites were divided into tens, fifties, hundreds, and thousands—a division expressly recognised, Micah v. 2. “Thou, Bethlehem Ephrath, though thou be little among the thousands of Israel,” &c. These thousands embraced, of course, numerous families, and the assertion of Gideon seems to be, that the thousand to which his belonged had become not only greatly diminished in numbers, but also impoverished in resources, so that they could do little towards withstanding the enemy. *Least in my father’s house.*—Either the youngest, or in his apprehension the least competent for the work in question. He would represent himself as lacking in that ability, rank, and influence which would induce his countrymen to join his standard in an enterprise against the Midianites.

VER. 16. And the LORD said unto him, “Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man.

z Ex. iii. 12. Josh. i. 5.

*Smite the Midianites as one man.*—As easily and effectually as if they were but one man.

VER. 17. And he said unto him, If now I have found grace in thy sight, then “show me a sign that thou talkest with me.

y Exod. iv. 1—8. Ver. 36, 37. 2 Kings xx. 8. Psa. lxxxvi. 17. Isa. vii. 11.

*Show me a sign that thou talkest with me.*—That it is thou, the true and real Jehovah, with whom I am honoured to speak; that there is no mistake, no illusion, as to the personage with whom I am now holding converse. This request seems to have been prompted by a momentary misgiving whether it were really the Divine Being himself with whom he now had the honour of an interview. “The unusualness of those revelations, in those corrupted times, was such, that Gideon might think of any thing rather than an angel, no marvel if so strange a promise from an unknown messenger found not a perfect assent. Fain would he believe, but fain would have good

warrant for his faith. In matters of faith we cannot go on too sure grounds: as Moses, therefore, being sent on the same errand, desired a sign, whereby Israel might know that God sent him; so Gideon desires a sign from this bearer, to know that this news is from God.—*Bishop Hall.*

VER. 18. "Depart not hence, I pray thee, until I come unto thee, and bring forth my present, and set it before thee. And he said, I will tarry until thou come again.

*a* Gen. xviii. 3, 5. Chap. xiii. 15.

*Bring forth my present.*—Heb. מנחה, "my mincha;" a word usually employed to signify a meal-offering, *i. e.* an offering of bread, wine, oil, flour, and such like, as is observed on Gen. iv. 3, 4. This has led some commentators to suppose that Gideon, by such an oblation, recognised in his visitor a divine person, whom he intended to honour by a real sacrifice; and in fact the Greek version renders it, "I will bring forth a sacrifice, and sacrifice before thee." Others regard it merely as a hospitable meal provided for the entertainment of a respectable stranger. But in this case it is not so easy to perceive how Gideon could have anticipated the working of a sign or miracle in connexion with the offering, as it is evident he did. He would seem, in fact, to have forgotten the request which he had a moment before made. The remark of Henry on the word is at least very plausible:—"It is the same word that is used for a meat-offering, (meal-offering,) and perhaps that word which signifies both, because Gideon intended to leave it to this divine person, to determine which it should be, when he had it before him, whether a feast or a meat-offering, and accordingly he would be able to judge concerning him; if he ate of it as common meat, he would suppose him to be a man, a prophet; if otherwise, as it proved, he should know him to be an angel."

VER. 19. "And Gideon went in, and made ready a kid, and unleavened cakes of an ephah of flour: the flesh he put in a basket, and he put the broth in a pot, and brought it out unto him under the oak, and presented it.

*a* Gen. xviii. 6—8.

*Made ready a kid, &c.*—The manner in which the Arabs still entertain strangers will cast light upon this passage. Shaw, in his preface, observes, "Besides a bowl of milk, and a basket of figs, raisins, or dates, which upon our arrival were presented to us, to stay our appetites, the master of the tent where we lodged fetched us from his flock, according to the number of our company, a kid or a goat, a lamb or a sheep, half of which was immediately seethed by his wife, and served with cuscasoe; the rest was made *habab*; *i. e.* cut into pieces and roasted, which we reserved for our breakfast or dinner next day." *Put the broth in a pot, &c.*—We are to infer, according to the editor of the Pictorial Bible, either that Gideon boiled or stewed the kid, and served

up the meat and soup separately; or else that he stewed one part of the kid, and roasted or boiled the other. Both methods are consonant to oriental usages; and, perhaps, the latter is the best hypothesis, as the animal thus divided may be the more speedily dressed. In this case, the roasted part was probably prepared in the most usual way of preparing a hasty dish, that is, by cutting the meat into small pieces, several of which are strung upon a skewer, and so roasted or rather broiled: as several of these skewers of meat can be dressed together, a meal may in this way be very soon prepared. This dish, he remarks, is called *kaboob*, and is very common in western Asia. When meat is thus dressed in two ways, the stew is generally intended for immediate use, and the *kaboob* for a future meal, or for the traveller to carry with him for his refreshment on the way. As Gideon brought the meat, as distinguished from the "broth," in a basket, it was probably intended by him that the stranger should take it away with him for his future use. This was a proper mark of careful hospitality and attention. The basket was, probably, a small hand-basket, made of palm-leaves or rushes. *Brought it out unto him under the oak.*—See note on Gen. xviii. 6—8. The Arabs are accustomed, even to the present day, to receive their guests under a shade in the open air.

VER. 20. And the angel of God said unto him, Take the flesh and the unleavened cakes, and lay them upon this rock, and pour out the broth. And he did so.

*b* Chap. xiii. 19.

*c* See 1 Kings xviii. 33, 34.

VER. 21. Then the angel of the LORD put forth the end of the staff that was in his hand, and touched the flesh and the unleavened cakes; and there rose up fire out of the rock, and consumed the flesh and the unleavened cakes. Then the angel of the LORD departed out of his sight.

*d* Lev. ix. 24. 1 Kings xviii. 38. 2 Chron. vii. 1.

*There rose up fire out of the rock, &c.*—Showing hereby that he was not a man who needed meat, but the Son of God, who was to be served and honoured by sacrifice; and signifying also to Gideon that he had "found grace in his sight;" for God usually testified his acceptance of sacrifices by kindling them with fire from heaven. The acceptance of the sacrifice was also a token of the acceptance of his person; it went to confirm the commission now given him, and to afford him every needed assurance of success. *Departed out of his sight.*—Though he had hitherto appeared in the form of a traveller, with a staff in his hand, yet he did not walk off as a man, but vanished and disappeared as a spirit; perhaps in the flame of fire which he had kindled. Comp. chap. xiii. 20.

VER. 22. And when Gideon perceived that he was an angel of the LORD, Gideon said, Alas,

*e* Chap. xiii. 21.

O LORD God! <sup>f</sup>for because I have seen an angel of the LORD face to face.

*f* Gen. xvi. 13; xxxii. 30. Ex. xxxiii. 20; chap. xiii. 22.

*Perceived that he was an angel of the Lord.*—Rather, “Perceived that he was the angel of the Lord.” (Ver. 11. Comp. Gen. xxxii. 30. Exod. xxxiii. 20.) *Alas, O Lord God! &c.*—An elliptical sentence, strikingly expressive of the agitation and terror into which Gideon was thrown upon discovering the real character of the angel. It is as if he had said, “Have mercy upon me, O Lord God, or I shall surely die, because I have seen the angel of Jehovah face to face!” As remarked upon Gen. xvi. 13, it was anciently a prevalent sentiment, that if any man saw God, or his representative angel, he must die. On this account Gideon is alarmed, and prays for his life. “Ever since man has by sin exposed himself to God’s wrath and curse, an express from heaven has been a terror to him, as he scarcely dares expect good tidings thence; at least, in this world of sense, it is a very awful thing to have any sensible conversation with that world of spirits, to which we are so much strangers.”—*Henry*.

VER. 23. And the LORD said unto him, *g* Peace be unto thee; fear not: thou shalt not die.

*g* Dan. x. 19.

*The Lord said unto him, Peace be unto thee, &c.*—“Peace,” *i. e.* safety, life, well-being; the exact reverse of what he feared. It is uncertain whether this was spoken in an audible voice, or by inward suggestion; probably the latter. “The angel that departed for the wonder, yet returns for the comfort of Gideon. It is not usual with God to leave his children in amazement, but he brings them out in the same mercy which led them in, and will magnify his grace in the one, no less than his power in the other.”—*Bp. Hall*.

VER. 24. Then Gideon built an altar there unto the LORD, and called it Jehovah-shalom: unto this day it *is* yet <sup>h</sup>in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

*a* Chap. viii. 32.

*Gideon built an altar there—and called it Jehovah-shalom.*—That is, upon the top of the rock, on which the miracle had been wrought. (ver. 26.) The purpose for which the altar was erected, is explained in the verses immediately following. The words יהוה שלום “Jehovah Shalom,” literally signify, “the Lord, peace,” and he probably so denominated the altar, in reference to the assurance of peace and blessing given him on that memorable spot.

VER. 25. And it came to pass the same night, that the LORD said unto him, Take thy father’s young bullock, even the second bullock of seven years old, and throw down the altar of Baal that thy father hath, and ‘cut down the grove that *is* by it:

*z* Ex. xxxiv. 13. Deut. vii. 5.

*And it came to pass the same night.*—Rather, “for it came to pass the same night;” intimating the reason that led him to erect the altar. The incident is mentioned in the preceding verse by anticipation. There is no ground to suppose that Gideon erected the altar before he had received the divine command for so doing, and that was not till the night after the vision, as is evident from what follows. But it is entirely accordant with Scripture usage to relate an event at first in the gross, in a general and compendious way, and afterwards to describe it in detail, with an express enumeration of all the circumstances.

*Take thy father’s young bullock, even the second bullock.*—Or, Heb. “and the second bullock,” implying that two bullocks were now to be slain; but as mention is made of only one in ver. 26, 28, our present rendering is probably correct. But why this animal is distinguished by the epithet “second,” is a question not easily answered. It may be conjectured that the Midianites had taken away all the cattle of the Israelites that they could lay their hands upon, so that Gideon’s father had very few cattle left, perhaps only two, and of these the “second,” in point of age, Gideon is now directed to offer as the fittest for sacrifice. After all, the grounds of the epithet cannot be satisfactorily settled. As Gideon’s father appears to have been addicted to idolatry, as well as many of his fellow-townsmen, it may be, as many of the elder commentators suppose, that this bullock had been kept and fattened by him for a sacrifice to Baal. *The altar of Baal that thy father hath.*—Which belonged to his father, probably as being built on his ground, and the place of his worship, though evidently designed for the common use of the whole city. (ver. 29, 30.) *Cut down the grove that is by it.*—Probably a grove dedicated to Ashtaroth, and perhaps containing her image, as the original word is אשׁרה Asherah, on which see note on chap. iii. 7. “First must Baal’s altar be ruined, ere God’s be built: both may not stand together: the true God will have no society with idols, neither will allow it us. I do not hear him say, ‘That altar and grove, which were abused to Baal, consecrate now to me:’ but as one whose holy jealousy will abide no worship till there be no idolatry, he first commands down the monuments of superstition, and then enjoins his own service: the wood of Baal’s grove must be used to burn a sacrifice unto God. When it was once cut down, God’s detestation and their danger ceased: the good creatures of God, that have been profaned to idolatry, may, in a change of their use, be employed to the holy service of their Maker.”—*Bp. Hall*.

VER. 26. And build an altar unto the LORD thy God upon the top of this rock, in the ordered place, and take the second bullock, and offer a burnt-sacrifice with the wood of the grove which thou shalt cut down.

*Upon the top of this rock.*—Heb. “upon the top of this strong-hold.” The native rock had probably been in some way fortified and converted into a fortress, to secure them from the Midianites. *In the ordered place.*—Or, Heb. “in an

orderly manner." The original signifies arrangement, disposition, order, and doubtless has reference to the prescribed mode of erecting the altar, (Exod. xx. 24, 25,) and also of laying on the wood and the pieces of flesh prepared for sacrifice. The ceremony was to be gone about with care and reverence; it was not to be performed in a cursory, hurried, or irregular manner, but with a due observance of all the appointed formalities. Although Gideon was not a priest, nor was this the established place of sacrifice or worship, yet God may dispense with his own institutions, whenever it seems good in his eyes. His call and commission can make any person, and his choice any place, sacred.

VER. 27. Then Gideon took ten men of his servants, and did as the LORD had said unto him: and so it was, because he feared his father's household, and the men of the city, that he could not do *it* by day, that he did *it* by night.

*Feared his father's household.*—Lest they should have opposed him from an apprehension, that the destruction of the altar would incense the Midianites, and so bring augmented evil upon themselves, (ver. 30.) It is not to be inferred that Gideon feared the resentment of his kindred or neighbours, or that he shrunk from any danger connected with the undertaking; but as a matter of policy and prudence, he saw fit to engage in the enterprise by night, when he would be least exposed to interruption or opposition from the votaries of Baal. It appears obvious that his father was of this number; accordingly he took ten of his own servants, in whom he could confide, and who we may suppose, had like their master preserved their integrity, and not "bowed the knee to Baal," and by their aid faithfully executed the work enjoined upon him.

VER. 28. And when the men of the city arose early in the morning, behold, the altar of Baal was cast down, and the grove was cut down that *was* by it, and the second bullock was offered upon the altar that *was* built.

VER. 29. And they said one to another, Who hath done this thing? And when they inquired and asked, they said, Gideon the son of Joash hath done this thing.

*They said, Gideon the son of Joash hath done this thing.*—By what means they satisfied themselves of this we are not informed. The original, by using two nearly synonymous words, ירשע ויבקר "they inquired and investigated," implies that a very careful and diligent inquiry was made. It is probable that Gideon had been previously known to be somewhat disaffected to the prevalent idolatry, and upon putting this and all other circumstances together, they hesitate not to fix their suspicions upon him, which may have been confirmed by the disclosures of some of the party engaged with him. In some way or other,

the evidence was conclusive against him, and nothing but his blood could satisfy the persecuting rage of his idolatrous fellow-townsmen.

VER. 30. Then the men of the city said unto Joash, Bring out thy son, that he may die: because he hath cast down the altar of Baal, and because he hath cut down the grove that *was* by it.

*Bring out thy son that he may die.*—As a profane and sacrilegious wretch. To such a pitch of impiety were these degenerate Israelites arrived, that they do not scruple to call upon Joash to deliver up his own son to death, for aiming to suppress practices, which, if the law had had its course, would have subjected them to death. The divine law expressly prescribed that the worship of idols should be treated as a capital offence, and yet these wicked men impiously turn the penalty upon the worshippers of the God of Israel! "Was it not enough to offer the choicest of their bullocks to Baal, but must the bravest youths of their city fall as a sacrifice to that dunghill deity, when they pretended he was provoked? How soon will idolaters become persecutors."—*Henry*. Rosenmüller suggests, with much plausibility, that it was in reference to this incident Gideon derived his name, with posterity, גידו Gadai, "to cut or hew down," *q. d.* a cutter-down, a demolisher. Innumerable instances occur in the Scriptures, in which persons are called by acquired, and not by their original names, the latter being in fact often entirely lost.

VER. 31. And Joash said unto all that stood against him, Will ye plead for Baal? will ye save him? he that will plead for him, let him be put to death whilst *it is yet morning*: if he be a god, let him plead for himself, because *one* hath cast down his altar.

*Joash said unto all that stood against him, &c.*—Joash had evidently before been a patron of Baal's altar, but here he appears decidedly taking part with his son who had demolished it. To what the sudden change in his mind was owing, we are not informed. The probability we think, is, that Gideon, perceiving in the morning to what a pitch of exasperation the citizens were wrought, and how seriously they threatened his life, took occasion frankly to inform his father of the visit of the angel, and of all the circumstances of his call and commission, and that this, added to his feelings as a father, had served at once to convince him of his former error, and to determine him to stand by his son against the rage of the populace. His argument is briefly this:—Do not act thus precipitately against my son; for if Baal be really a God, he will avenge his own cause, and if he be not a god, then they who plead for him deserve instant death. A deity who cannot defend himself, is unworthy of the defence of others. This reasoning was unanswerable, and it prevailed. It was, in fact, a fair challenge to Baal to "do either good or evil," and the result convinced his worshippers of their

folly in praying to one to help them who could not defend himself.—The following is proposed as an amended translation of this verse, of which of course the Hebrew scholar alone is qualified to pronounce judgment:—“And Joash said unto all that stood against (rather, by, upon, *i. e.* round about him), will ye plead for Baal? will ye save him (Gideon)? seeing that if he were a god who-soever should have dared to contend with him (Baal) would have died before morning; if he is a god he will himself plead with him (Gideon), because he hath cast down his altar.” The drift of Joash, as we understand the passage, is to represent to Baal’s votaries how absurd it is for them to undertake to avenge the insult done to their idol, when if he were a god, as they thought him to be, he would assuredly have taken the matter into his own hands, and punished the offender on the spot, without suffering him to see the light of the morning. We have little doubt that this is the true sense of the words. The common version is not only contradictory in making Joash propose, that he who pleadeth for Baal should be immediately put to death, and then asserting that Baal should plead for himself; but it erroneously renders *וְעַד מָחָר* by “whilst it is yet morning,” when its true signification is “until” or “against the morning;” *i. e.* he would have perished against or previous to the morning; Baal would have killed him outright. The proposed rendering is clearly confirmed by the tenor of the next verse. The conduct of Joash, under these circumstances, leads us to remark, (1.) That if we have been zealous in a bad cause, we should with greater zeal seek to amend what we have done amiss by an open advocacy of the truth. (2.) Nothing must prevail upon us to give up the innocent, whoever combine to destroy them. (3.) Though it may be highly dangerous to reprove a wicked people, we must do our duty, and trust God with the event.

VER. 32. Therefore on that day he called him  
 \* Jerubbaal, saying, Let Baal plead against  
 him, because he hath thrown down his altar.  
 \* 1 Sam. xii. 11. 2 Sam. xi. 21. See Jer. xi. 13.  
 Hos. ix. 10.

*He called him.*—Rather, according to the Heb. idiom, “he was called;” not that his father particularly gave him that name, but it became an appellation by which he was generally called. *Jerubbaal.*—Heb. *יִרְבֵּעַל* *Yerubbaal*, doubtless contracted from *יִרְבֵּעַל עִי* “one with whom Baal pleads or contends;” *i. e.* implicitly, one with whom Baal may plead if he pleases; with whom he is challenged to plead if he can or dare. According to a very common usage, it is a kind of play upon the original word for plead (*רִיב* *reeb*) which occurs so often in the preceding verse. The name was evidently intended to imply a standing defiance to Baal, to do his worst upon Gideon and his adherents. Instead of this name, we find in 2 Sam. xi. 21, the equivalent title *יִרְבֵּשֶׁת* *Yerubbosheth*, *i. e.* “the shame,” or “the abomination, shall contend,” applied to Gideon. Baal is in several instances called, in the prophets, “the shame,” “the shameful thing,” &c. See Jer. xi. 13. Hos. ix. 10. *Saying, Let Baal, &c.*—Rather,

“meaning, Let Baal,” &c. Thus the original (*וְעַד מָחָר*) is often to be understood. It is equivalent to the phrase, “Which being interpreted is,” &c.

VER. 33. Then all the Midianites, and the Amalekites, and the children of the east were gathered together, and went over, and pitched in  
 “the valley of Jezreel.

l Ver. 3.

m Josh. xvii. 16.

*Then all the Midianites and the Amalekites—went over.*—Heb. “all Midian and Amalek.” They passed over the Jordan and crossed the country as far as the borders of Manasseh and Issachar, and pitched in the “plain” (rather than the “valley”) of Esdraelon, anciently called Jezreel, of which see on chap. v. 21.

VER. 34. But “the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon, and he “blew a trumpet; and Abi-ezer was gathered after him.

\* Chap. iii. 10. 1 Chron. xii. 18. 2 Chron. xxiv. 20.  
 o Numb. x. 3. Chap. iii. 27.

*The Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon.*—Heb. “the Spirit of the Lord clothed Gideon.” That is, filled him up fully, possessed him entirely, raising him above himself in all the endowments necessary for his arduous undertaking. Chal. “a spirit of fortitude from before the Lord clothed Gideon.” The phrase is remarkable, as intimating his being endued with supernatural courage, zeal, and wisdom, in the prosecution of the work before him. Being thus clothed with the armour of God “he waxed valiant in fight,” and was enabled to “turn to flight the armies of the aliens.” The same phrase in the original occurs 1 Chron. xii. 18; 2 Chron. xxiv. 20, though in both instances rendered in our version, “The Spirit of the Lord came upon,” which comes far short of the force and significance of the Hebrew. A similar phraseology is met with in the New Testament, (Luke xxiv. 49.) “Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, till ye be endued (Gr. clothed) with power from on high.” *And he blew a trumpet.*—Caused trumpets to be blown to call in volunteers, as was before remarked of Ehud. (Chap. iii. 27.) *Abi-ezer was gathered after him.*—Heb. “was called together, was convoked by proclamation.” By Abi-ezer is meant the house or family of Abi-ezer, the kindred of Gideon, as Israel often stands for Israelites.

VER. 35. And he sent messengers throughout all Manasseh, who also was gathered after him; and he sent messengers unto Asher, and unto Zebulun, and unto Naphtali; and they came up to meet them.

*Throughout all Manasseh.*—Probably on both sides the Jordan. *Unto Asher—Zebulun—and Naphtali.*—These were near to the half tribe of Manasseh on the north. As they naturally concluded that if their neighbours were overrun by the Midianites their own turn would come next, they were forward to unite against a common enemy. The tribe of Ephraim lay to the south

of Manasseh. They were not invited, and this gave rise to the crimination mentioned chap. viii. 1.

VER. 36. And Gideon said unto God, If thou wilt save Israel by my hand, as thou hast said,

VER. 37. *p* Behold, I will put a fleece of wool in the floor: and if the dew be on the fleece only, and it be dry upon all the earth beside, then shall I know that thou wilt save Israel by my hand, as thou hast said.

*p* See Exod. iv. 3, 4, 6, 7.

*I will put a fleece of wool, &c.*—It is exceedingly difficult to determine whether Gideon desired the working of this miracle for the confirmation of his own wavering faith, or mainly to strengthen the confidence of his followers. From the circumstances of his interview with the Angel, from the success of his endeavours to destroy idolatry in his father's house, from the readiness of several of the tribes to enlist under his banners, and more especially from its being said just before that he was "clothed with the Spirit of the Lord," it would seem scarcely credible that he could have desired any stronger assurance himself of the divine presence and blessing. Yet, considering the weakness of human nature, it is more than possible this might have been the case; that the view of the great multitudes of the enemy may have rather intimidated his spirit, and made him anxious for a still farther manifestation of the divine favour as the seal of his commission. Some have even supposed that God, who intended to vouchsafe to him these new tokens of his mission, put it into his heart to ask them. However this may be, the result went, (1.) To illustrate the divine condescension. God, instead of being offended with his servant, kindly acceded to his request. A fellow-creature who had given such solemn promises would have been quite indignant at finding his veracity seemingly called in question. How offensive was the apparent tenor of the request:—"If thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, and do as thou hast said, behold, I will put a fleece of wool on the floor; and if the dew be on the fleece only, and it be dry upon all the earth beside, then shall I know that thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said." Nor did even this suffice; he must go still farther, and prove God a second time by reversing the request, before he can believe that God will do as he has said. Yet the Most High, in his amazing clemency, far from being offended, gives him the satisfaction he desires, and accommodates himself to the wishes of his doubting servant. "Is this, O Lord, the manner of men?" (2.) To show the efficacy of prayer. It was prayer that prevailed in this instance. With great humility and much tenderness of spirit, Gideon besought the divine interposition. When he repeated his request for a second sign, the reverse of the former, he did it with an humble apology, like Abraham in similar circumstances, deprecating God's displeasure, because it looked so much like a capricious distrust, and his supplication prevailed. So we, under circumstances of pressing exigency, may look for a gracious an-

swer to our importunate prayers. Not that we are to expect miraculous manifestations, for the age of miracles is past, but we may confidently expect that, even in relation to temporal matters, our prayers will not go forth in vain; while, in reference to spiritual matters, they shall descend almost in visible answers on our souls. Were we to suppose the whole church, or neighbourhood where we dwell, to be in a state of the utmost barrenness and desolation, as it respects the blessings of salvation, yet if we cry earnestly to God the dew of his grace shall descend upon us in the richest abundance. If, on the other hand, the judgments of heaven are poured forth around us, to us a merciful exemption shall be given, according to the divine promise, "A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand, but it shall not come nigh thee." No man can conceive to what an extent God will magnify his grace and condescension towards an humble supplicant, calling upon him from the depths of his soul, till he has himself made the happy experiment. "We may ask what we will, and it shall be done unto us." *Dry upon all the earth beside.*—Upon all the ground immediately adjacent to the place.

VER. 38. And it was so: for he rose up early on the morrow, and thrust the fleece together, and wringed the dew out of the fleece, a bowl-full of water.

*A bowl-full of water.*—For an account of the abundant dews which fall in the East, see note on Gen. xxvii. 28. "We remember," says the editor of the Pictorial Bible on this place, "while travelling in Western Asia, to have found all the baggage, which had been left in the open air, so wet, when we came forth from the tent in the morning, that it seemed to have been exposed to heavy rain, and we could with difficulty believe that no rain had fallen. So also, when sleeping in the open air, the sheep-skin cloak which served for a covering has been found in the morning scarcely less wet than if it had been immersed in water."

VER. 39. And Gideon said unto God, Let not thine anger be hot against me, and I will speak but this once: Let me prove, I pray thee, but this once with the fleece; let it now be dry only upon the fleece, and upon all the ground let there be dew.

*q* Gen. xviii. 22.

*Let me prove—with the fleece.*—Let me make trial. *Let it be dry upon the fleece.*—This might be considered a more extraordinary event than the former, as it is natural for wool to absorb whatever moisture there may be in the air about it; but this was in direct contravention of the ordinary laws of nature. "So willing is God to give to the heirs of promise strong consolation, even by two immutable things. He suffers himself not only to be prevailed with by their importunities, but to be prescribed to by their doubts and dissatisfactions."—*Henry.*

VER. 40. And God did so that night: for it was

dry upon the fleece only, and there was dew on all the ground.

### CHAPTER VII.

VER. 1. THEN <sup>a</sup> Jerubbaal (who is Gideon) and all the people that were with him, rose up early, and pitched beside the well of Harod: so that the host of the Midianites were on the north side of them, by the hill of Moreh, in the valley.

<sup>a</sup> Chap. vi. 32.

*The well of Harod.*—Heb. “fountain of Harod;” *i. e.* of trepidation. If this were a town or village, it is nowhere else mentioned. Probably as *Harad* signifies to shake or tremble through fear, the fountain may have had its name from the terror and panic with which the Midianites were seized at this place; or, what is still more likely, from the fear which induced many of his adherents to turn back from that place, as related ver. 3, where this very word occurs, *כי יראו* “whosoever is fearful and afraid.” Nothing is more common in the Scriptures than for persons and places to be named from memorable events. The fountain was situated not far from Gilboa, on the borders of Manasseh. *Hill of Moreh.*—Heb. “hill of the archer.” Probably an eminence in the Gilboa range of mountains, and conjectured to be so called from the archers that there wounded Saul, (1 Sam. xxxi. 3.) *In the valley.*—The valley of Jezreel or Esdraelon, of which see chap. v. 21.

VER. 2. AND THE LORD said unto Gideon, The people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel <sup>b</sup> vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me.

<sup>b</sup> Deut. viii. 17. Isa. x. 12. 1 Cor. i. 29. 2 Cor. iv. 7.

*The people are—too many.*—Though the whole army of the Israelites consisted only of 32,000, while that of the Midianites amounted to at least 135,000, or four to one to the Israelites, yet the Lord deems this small number entirely too large for the purposes he had in view, and even when diminished to 10,000, orders a still further reduction. The reason of this command is given in what follows. The discharge of so large a number of volunteers by no means implies that they did not do right in willingly offering themselves to the expedition; the act of enlisting in the service was proper and commendable, but God saw that the spirit by which they were actuated was, in multitudes of them, defective, and therefore so ordered it that they should be put to the test, while at the same time he secured to his own great name the entire glory of the victory. We often read in the sacred narrative of God’s bringing about great events by few agents, but this is the first instance in which he purposely made them fewer. His design, in addition to what has been mentioned above, doubtless was, (1.) To show that as to any particular instruments,

he could, in effecting his purposes, easily dispense with them, and that they were more indebted to him for employing them, than he to them for tendering their services. (2.) To shame and humble his people for their past cowardice in tamely submitting to the yoke of Midian. By the result of this enterprise he would afford them convincing proof that the disproportion of numbers formed no apology for their remissness; that if they had, as they ought to have done, made sure of the favour of God, one of them might have chased a thousand. But chief of all, his purpose is to silence and exclude boasting—“lest Israel vaunt themselves against me.” “How jealous is God of his honour! He is willing to give deliverance to Israel, but the praise of the deliverance he will keep to himself; and will shorten the means, that he may have the measure of the glory.”—*Bp. Hall.*

VER. 3. Now therefore go to, proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return, and depart early from mount Gilead. And there returned of the people twenty and two thousand, and there remained ten thousand.

<sup>c</sup> Deut. xx. 8.

*Proclaim in the ears of the people, &c.*—This was according to a standing enactment of the law, (Deut. xx. 8,) the design of which was to prevent the contagious effects of cowardice, or “faint-heartedness,” in the army. The punctilious observance of this precept by Judas Maccabeus, is mentioned 1 Mac. iii. 56, a portion of ancient history which unfortunately is apt to be greatly overlooked and undervalued in consequence of being contained in the “Apocrypha.” These writings, though not canonical, are intrinsically of very great value, and Christians generally, if but made aware of their true character as to authority, would prize their Bibles none the less for containing them. *Depart early from mount Gilead.*—A clause of very difficult solution, from the fact that mount Gilead was on the eastern side of the Jordan, whereas Gideon was now on the west, not far from mount Gilboa, and did not cross the Jordan till after the victory. Some would solve the difficulty by supposing that there was a mountain called Gilead on the west of the Jordan as well as on the east. But as there is no evidence of this, the hypothesis merely cuts the knot without untying it. Others, again, propose a new reading for the text, viz. Gilboa, instead of Gilead. But this is equally gratuitous. For our own part, as the true import of the Heb. *צא* rendered “depart early,” is left by the lexicographers entirely undetermined, we feel disposed to abide by the rendering of the Chaldee, “Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return, and let a selection be made from mount Gilead;” *i. e.* from the men of mount Gilead, or the Abiezrites, among whom Gideon dwelt, and upon whom he supposed he could put more dependence. This interpretation would seem to be strikingly confirmed by the complaint of the Ephraimites in chap. viii. 1, 2, on which see notes. *There returned of the people twenty and two*

*thousand.*—The application of a rigid test is apt to make thinning work in the ranks of God's professed friends. One would have thought that against such an enemy as Midian, and under such a leader as Gideon, no Israelite would have owned himself fearful and proved recreant to his duty. Yet two parts out of three turned their backs upon their country's standard, when they saw the numbers and the strength of the enemy! Alas, if it should be found that the true and constant hearts enlisted under the banner of Christ bear no larger proportion than this to the whole number! Who will not do well to fear and tremble for his own fidelity? "Christianity requires men. David's royal band of worthies was the type of the forces of the church, all valiant men, and able to encounter with thousands. Doth but a foul word, or a frown, scare thee from Christ? Doth the loss of a little land or silver disquiet thee? Doth but the sight of the Midianites in the valley strike thee? Home then, home to the world, thou art not for the conquering band of Christ. If thou canst not resolve to follow him through infamy, prisons, racks, gibbets, flames, depart to thine house, and save thy life to thy loss."—*Bishop Hall.*

VER. 4. And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people are yet too many; bring them down unto the water, and I will try them for thee there; and it shall be that of whom I say unto thee, This shall go with thee, the same shall go with thee; and of whomsoever I say unto thee, This shall not go with thee, the same shall not go.

*The people are yet too many.*—It is hardly possible to conceive a severer trial of faith than that to which Gideon's was now subjected. While he doubtless thought his men too few, God saw that they were too many, and ordered a still farther reduction! "This may help us to understand those providences which sometimes seem to weaken the church and its interests—its friends are too many, too mighty, too wise, for God to work deliverance by; God is taking a course to lessen them, that he may be exalted in his own strength."—*Henry.* *I will try them.*—Will put them to the proof; or, Heb. "will separate, will purify," the word usually applied to the assaying or refining of metals. (Isa. xlvi. 10. Mal. iii. 2, 3.) *For thee.*—God himself knew perfectly beforehand who would stand the test and who would not, but for the satisfaction of Gideon, he would have the trial made in an open and convincing manner. *Of whom I say unto thee, This shall go, &c.*—That is, whom I shall indicate by the result of the experiment, not in express words. We have before remarked of the word, "say," when applied both to God and men, that it by no means necessarily implies verbal communication, but often simply the mental purpose of the speaker. Probably a better rendering throughout the clause would be—"will go," "will not go," &c., making the sense rather that of a prediction, than of a command. In the first instance, the timorous were separated by public proclamation; in the present, the same effect was to be

produced by a private signal, understood only by God and his servant Gideon. Multitudes had remained rather than to incur the imputation of cowardice, whom the Most High still saw to be cravens at heart.

VER. 5. So he brought down the people unto the water: and the LORD said unto Gideon, Every one that lappeth of the water with his tongue as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise every one that boweth down upon his knees to drink.

*Every one that lappeth—as a dog, &c.*—The two modes of drinking here described have been differently understood, and the first in particular, has been the subject of various interpretations. The dog drinks by shaping the end of his long thin tongue into the form of a spoon, which it plies rapidly to and from the water, throwing each time a spoonful of fluid into its mouth. The human tongue is not adapted to this use; and it is physically impossible, therefore, for a man to lap literally as a dog laps. The true explanation undoubtedly is, that these men instead of kneeling down to take a long draught, or successive draughts from the water, employed their hand as the dog employs his tongue,—that is, forming it into a hollow spoon, and dipping water with it from the stream. This mode of drinking is often practised in the east, and practice alone can give that peculiar tact to it which generally excites the wonder of travellers. The interchange of the hand between the water and the mouth is managed with amazing dexterity and with nearly or quite as much rapidity as the tongue of the dog in the same act. The water is not sucked out of the hand, but by a peculiar jerk, is thrown into the mouth before the hand is brought close to it, so that the hand is approaching with a fresh supply almost before the preceding has been swallowed; which constitutes another resemblance to the action of the dog's tongue. In travelling, when one comes to water and wishes to drink, he cannot well stop the whole party to wait for him; and, therefore, if on foot, any delay would oblige him to unusual exertion in order to overtake his party. Therefore he drinks in the manner above described, and satisfies his thirst, in much shorter time than would one who should kneel or lie down for the purpose, and indulge himself in a more leisurely draught. This consumes so much time that few, but those who are mounted, indulge in it, as they can ride on before and satisfy themselves by the time their party comes up; or if behind, can easily overtake them. This explanation will serve to show how the distinction operated, and why those who "lapped, putting their hand to their mouth," were considered to evince an alacrity and readiness for action which peculiarly fitted them for the service in which Gideon was engaged.—It may be observed that the original word for lappeth (פָּה יָלוֹק) is precisely the sound which a dog makes in drinking.

VER. 6. And the number of them that lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, were three

hundred men : but all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water.

*That lapped, putting their hand to their mouth.*—Heb. “that lapped, with their hand toward their mouth.” *Him shalt thou set by himself.*—Heb. מִיָּדוֹ. As this is the same word with that employed chap. vii. 37, to signify the putting by itself of the fleece, it would seem that that miracle had a designed though latent reference to the two classes of men here distinguished ; of whom the one saturated themselves with water, while the other, through a commendable hardihood and self-denial, left themselves comparatively dry. The reader, however, will exercise his own judgment as to recognizing any such allusion.

VER. 7. And the LORD said unto Gideon, “By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thy hand : and let all the *other* people go every man unto his place.

d 1 Sam. xiv. 6.

*Will I save you.*—You, the nation ; the word being in the plural.

VER. 8. So the people took victuals in their hand, and their trumpets : and he sent all the *rest* of Israel every man unto his tent, and retained those three hundred men. And the host of Midian was beneath him in the valley.

*So the people took victuals, &c.*—That is, the three hundred who lapped. They took the necessary quantity of victuals for the day’s consumption, while the others were dismissed to their tents, *i. e.* to go where they pleased. It is highly probable, however, that many of them remained within hearing, though at a safe distance, and followed up the blow after the assault had been made and the route commenced by the select band. Those who shun the conflict are often forward to share the victory. *And retained.*—Besides the sense of “retaining,” the Heb. implies that he clung to them with strong affection and confidence. *The host of Midian was beneath him in the valley.*—In the valley of Jezreel. This circumstance should be particularly noted in connexion with the dream mentioned below.

VER. 9. And it came to pass the same “night, that the LORD said unto him, Arise, get thee down unto the host ; for I have delivered it into thy hand.

e Gen. xlv. 2, 3.

*And it came to pass the same night, &c.*—It should seem that the previous reduction of his numbers had filled Gideon with some secret misgivings. God therefore graciously offered him a farther sign, whereby his faith should be confirmed, and his fear altogether dispelled. This was a sign that should be given him by the enemy themselves. He was to go down with his servant, to the enemy’s camp, and hear what they themselves said. The result perfectly satisfied

the mind of Gideon ; he had no doubt now but that God would fulfil his promise ; and in full assurance of faith he instantly arranged every thing for the encounter. *I have delivered it into thine hand.*—It is as certain as if it were already done.

VER. 10. But if thou fear to go down, go thou with Phurah thy servant down to the host :

*Go thou with Phurah thy servant.*—Heb. “thy young man.” His being accompanied by his servant would not only tend to diminish his own fears, but their united testimony, as to what they should hear, would confirm the statements made to the people on their return.

VER. 11. And thou shalt “hear what they say ; and afterward shall thy hands be strengthened to go down unto the host. Then went he down with Phurah his servant unto the outside of the armed men that *were* in the host.

f Ver. 13—15. See Gen. xxiv. 14. 1 Sam. xiv. 9, 10.

*Thine hands be strengthened.*—Thou shalt be encouraged, emboldened. God, who both inspired the dream and directed Gideon’s steps to the spot where he might hear it related, knew perfectly well the effect it would have upon his mind, which he expressly foretells. *Unto the outside of the armed men.*—Heb. “to the outermost of the ranks by five.” Of this phrase see note on Exod. xiii. 18. Josh. i. 14.

VER. 12. And the Midianites, and the Amalekites, “and all the children of the east, lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude ; and their camels *were* without number, as the sand by the sea-side for multitude.

g Chap. vi. 5, 33 ; viii. 10.

*Lay along.*—Heb. “were lying fallen ;” *i. e.* lying prostrate and fallen asleep. It does not refer merely to the position they had chosen for their encampment, but to the bodily posture they were actually in at this time. The same phrase occurs in the same sense in the next verse, where mention is made of the prostration of the Midianites’ tents. *Like grasshoppers.*—Rather, “like locusts ;” as also chap. vi. 5. *And their camels.*—That these nations, especially Midian, abounded in camels, see Isa. lx. 6.

VER. 13. And when Gideon was come, behold, *there was* a man that told a dream unto his fellow, and said, Behold, I dreamed a dream, and, lo, a cake of barley-bread tumbled into the host of Midian, and came unto a tent and smote it that it fell, and overturned it that the tent lay along.

*A cake of barley-bread tumbled, &c.*—To understand this, it is necessary to revert to the circumstance before mentioned, (ver. 8,) viz. that Gideon’s forces were stationed on the hill of Moreh, while the Midianites had pitched below in the valley. The barley-cake which the man saw in

his dream, doubtless seemed to roll down the hill into the valley, overturning the tent or tents with which it came in contact. This naturally enough connected it with Gideon, while the apparent inadequacy of the cause to produce this effect would strike the most casual observer. If it had been a great stone, the overturning of tents in its progress would have occasioned no wonder; but that such an effect should be produced by a barley-cake, seemed as little likely in human probability as that Gideon with his little band should overthrow the vast host of Midian. That it was not only a cake, but a barley-cake, seems a circumstance designed to show more strongly the insignificance of the cause. The use of barley was gradually superseded by that of wheat, and barley-bread became the food only of the lower orders, of convicts, and of beasts. It was therefore naturally associated with the ideas of dishonour and insignificance. *Came unto a tent and smote it, &c.*—Another instance, as we understand it, of the Heb. usage by which the collect. sing. is employed for the plural. It was not a single tent that was smitten by the rolling cake, and overthrown, but it came among them, like a ball among nine-pins, prostrating every thing in its course.

VER. 14. And his fellow answered and said, This is nothing else save the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel: for into his hand hath God delivered Midian, and all the host.

*This is nothing else save the sword of Gideon.*—That is, this means nothing else than the sword, the victorious charge and onset, of Gideon. The interpretation as well as the dream were doubtless both of divine suggestion. "A wise providence hath prepared a dream in the head of one Midianite, an interpretation in the mouth of another, and hath brought Gideon to be an auditor of both; and hath made his enemies prophets of his victory, encouragers of the attempt, proclaimers of their own confusion!"—*Bp. Hall. Delivered Midian and all the host.*—Or, Heb. "delivered Midian, even all the host."

VER. 15. And it was so, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream, and the interpretation thereof, that he worshipped, and returned into the host of Israel, and said, Arise; for the Lord hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian.

*The interpretation thereof.*—Heb. "the breaking thereof;" inasmuch as the solution or explanation of any thing obscure and difficult is like breaking the shell of a nut and getting at the kernel within. *He worshipped.*—Bowed himself in a posture of reverence and adoration, and gratefully gave thanks to God for the encouragement he had now been permitted to hear from a source of which he little thought. "To hear himself called but a barley-cake troubled him not, when he heard withal that his rolling down the hill should break the tents of Midian. It matters not how base we be thought so we may

be victorious: the soul that hath received full confirmation of God in the assurance of his salvation, cannot but bow the knee, and by gestures of body tell how it is ravished."—*Bp. Hall.*

VER. 16. And he divided the three hundred men into three companies, and he put a trumpet in every man's hand, with empty pitchers, and lamps within the pitchers.

*Into three companies.*—Heb. "into three heads," i. e. into three grand divisions. So it is said of the rivers of Eden, (Gen. ii. 10,) that they were parted, and became into four "heads," i. e. four principal or distinguished streams. See note in loc. The design of dividing them in this manner was that they might appear to surround the enemy's camp more entirely, leading them to think that they were environed on every side by a great army. *Put a trumpet in every man's hand.*—Heb. "gave trumpets into the hand of all of them." *Empty pitchers.*—Made of earthenware, so as to be easily broken. They were designed to conceal the lights till the proper time. *Lamps within the pitchers.*—Or, Heb. "torches, flambeaux." Instead of lamps furnished with wicks and fed with oil, we are probably to understand torches made of pitchy or resinous billets of wood, the flame of which was stronger, and not so liable to be extinguished by the wind.

VER. 17. And he said unto them, Look on me, and do likewise: and, behold, when I come to the outside of the camp, it shall be, that as I do, so shall ye do.

*Look on me.*—Heb. "see from me;" i. e. see from me, from my example, what to do yourselves, and when to do it. It is probable that he now unfolded to them minutely every step of the stratagem, so that they could all act in concert when the signal was given, as otherwise the strangeness of the scheme, the darkness of the night, and the distance of the men from each other, would have been apt to render the whole abortive. In these words he is merely agreeing upon the signal.

VER. 18. When I blow with a trumpet, I and all that are with me, then blow ye the trumpets also on every side of all the camp, and say, The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon.

*The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon.*—Heb. "for the Lord and for Gideon." The original for "sword" (חֶרֶב *hereb*) is not found in this verse, though it is necessarily implied, and occurs in the parallel passage, ver. 20. It is inserted, however, in this place in the Chald. Syr. and Arab.; and in eight of Kennicott's and De Rossi's manuscripts; and is probably a genuine reading. This war-cry was taken from the interpretation of the dream, to which Gideon, with his usual modesty and in recognition of his dependence on divine succour, prefixed the name of the Lord—"The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon."

VER. 19. So Gideon and the hundred men that

were with him came unto the outside of the camp in the beginning of the middle watch; and they had but newly set the watch: and they blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers that were in their hands.

*In the beginning of the middle watch.*—A little after midnight; for the Hebrews divided the night into three watches. At this time they would naturally be sunk in their profoundest slumbers, and of course be thrown into the utmost confusion on being suddenly awakened.

VER. 20. And the three companies blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers, and held the lamps in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right hands to blow *withal*: and they cried, The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon.

*The three companies blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers, &c.*—Every man probably dashing his pitcher against that of his comrade who stood next him. The effect of this, with the intermingled sound of the trumpets and the shouts of the assailants reverberating on every side of the camp, together with the sudden glare of three hundred torches blazing on the scarcely-opened eyes of the Midianites, must indeed have been astounding. As the enemy could not imagine that every Israelite had a trumpet and a light, the noise of so many trumpets, the blaze of so many lights, with the crash of the broken pitchers from different quarters, must have conveyed to their minds the most exaggerated ideas of the numbers by which they were beset. Gideon's army would have been great indeed, if, as the Midianites must have supposed, the number of the fighting men had been in proportion to that of the trumpeters. It was mainly in consequence of this erroneous impression that the stratagem succeeded as it did.

VER. 21. And they <sup>b</sup> stood every man in his place round about the camp; <sup>i</sup> and all the host ran, and cried, and fled.

<sup>b</sup> Exod. xiv. 13, 14. 2 Chron. xx. 17.  
<sup>i</sup> 2 Kings vii. 7.

*Stood every man in his place*—Thus the host of Midian was discomfited without the Israelites' striking a blow. They stood unmoved in their places, blowing their trumpets and holding their torches, as if to encourage and give light to countless numbers of fighting men behind, while in fact they afforded light to the Midianites to slay each other, though not enough to enable them to distinguish friend from foe. *All the host ran, &c.*—That is, ran about the camp, hither and thither, in wild confusion, pursuing and pursued by their own men. The "running" was thus distinguished from the "fleeing," which was nothing else than the attempt to escape from the place of their encampment. The panic was no doubt greatly increased by the alarm and fright of their numerous camels. *Fled to Beth-shittah, &c.*—The names of these places occur not elsewhere in the Scriptures, except that of Abel-Meholah, which was in the half-tribe of

Manasseh, on this side Jordan. As the Midianites would naturally strike towards the Jordan, to cross over into their own country, the other places here mentioned were doubtless in that direction from the plain of Jezreel.

VER. 22. And the three hundred <sup>b</sup> blew the trumpets, and <sup>i</sup> the LORD set <sup>m</sup> every man's sword against his fellow, even throughout all the host: and the host fled to Beth-shittah in Zererath, and to the border of Abel-meholah, unto Tabbath.

<sup>b</sup> Josh. vi. 4, 16, 20. See 2 Cor. iv. 7.  
<sup>i</sup> Psa. lxxxiii. 9. Isa. ix. 4.  
<sup>m</sup> 1 Sam. xi. 20. 2 Chron. xx. 23.

VER. 23. And the men of Israel gathered themselves together out of Naphtali, and out of Asher, and out of all Manassch, and pursued after the Midianites.

*The men of Israel gathered themselves together out of Naphtali, &c.*—Including probably numbers of the two and twenty thousand who had previously withdrawn themselves, or been dismissed by Gideon as lacking the requisite degree of hardihood and courage for the impending conflict. Now, however, when bolder spirits had made the onset and put the enemy to flight, they are ready to join in the pursuit. But though their timidity in the former instance was not to their credit, we do not know that their neutrality on this occasion would have been guiltless. It was probably their duty to come forward to the aid of their brethren, and help them to a complete victory.

VER. 24. And Gideon sent messengers throughout all <sup>n</sup> mount Ephraim, saying, Come down against the Midianites, and take before them the waters unto Beth-barah and Jordan. Then all the men of Ephraim gathered themselves together, and <sup>o</sup> took the waters unto <sup>p</sup> Beth-barah and Jordan.

<sup>n</sup> Chap. iii. 27. <sup>o</sup> Chap. iii. 28. <sup>p</sup> John i. 28.

*Take before them the waters.*—Take possession of the fords of whatever streams may lie in their route, but more especially of the fords of the Jordan, to prevent their escaping into their own country. The "waters" and the "Jordan" are expressly distinguished, nor can they properly be considered the same, as is done by many commentators. The copulative "and" may be regarded here, as often elsewhere in the Scriptures, as a particle of distinction:—"occupy all the fords that lie in the way till they come to Beth-barah, but *above* all those of the Jordan;" or with Rosenmüller, we may render, "Unto Beth-barah, *even* Jordan." The same precaution was taken before in the case of the Moabites, (chap. iii. 28,) and was the usual practice when the enemy belonged to the country east of the river. The Beth-barah here spoken of is probably the same with that mentioned John i. 28, where the Hebrews forded Jordan under the direction of Joshua.

VER. 25. And they took two princes of the Midianites, Oreb and Zeeb; and they slew Oreb upon the rock Oreb, and Zeeb they slew at the wine-press of Zeeb, and pursued Midian, and brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon on the other side Jordan.

g Chap. viii. 3. Ps. lxxxiii. 11.  
r Isa. x. 26. s Chap. viii. 4.

*Slew Oreb upon the rock Oreb, &c.*—These two Midianitish leaders had taken shelter, one in the cavern of a rock, the other in the vat of a wine-press; both of which places were afterwards, from this circumstance, called by their names: of which Oreb signifies a raven, and Zeeb a wolf. Among ancient nations, generals and princes often took the names of birds and beasts. Thus, among the Romans, we find Gracchus, a jackdaw; Corvinus, a crow; Aquilinus, an eagle, &c. *And pursued Midian.*—Rather, Heb. "pursued unto Midian," i. e. to the country of Midian, to their own borders on the other side of the Jordan. And if they crossed the river in the pursuit, why should they not have followed them to their own territories, which lay near to the Jordan? *Brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon.*—It was anciently, and is still an almost universal custom with eastern nations to take off the heads of opposing chiefs, and bring them to the victorious general. It is a sort of trophy, and has been regarded as such, at one time or other, in nearly all nations. David cut off the head of Goliath, probably intending to bring it to Saul; and the head of Saul himself was cut off by the Philistines, and sent by them to their own country. At present the heads of conquered chiefs and commanders are transmitted to Constantinople from the most distant parts of the Turkish empire, to be laid at the feet of the sultan, and then to decorate his palace gates. It is, however, to be presumed that the sentiments of a more refined civilization, and the silently meliorating influences of Christianity, will ere long banish all traces of such atrocious barbarity from the earth. From the foregoing interesting narrative respecting Gideon and his wonderful deliverance, we may learn, (1.) To undertake nothing in our own strength. (2.) To draw back from nothing to which we are called. (3.) To doubt of nothing wherein God promises his aid. (4.) To take the glory of nothing which God does by us.

### CHAPTER VIII.

VER. 1. AND the men of Ephraim said unto him, Why hast thou served us thus, that thou calledst us not, when thou wentest to fight with the Midianites? And they did chide with him sharply.

a See chap. xii. 1. 2 Sam. xix. 41.

*And the men of Ephraim.*—Heb. "and the man or manhood of Ephraim;" i. e. the leading men, the elders. See on Josh. ix. 6. This com-

plaint was probably uttered when the heads of the two slain princes of Midian were brought to Gideon; but whether this was before or after his crossing the Jordan, it is not easy to say. It is not determined by the expression, "on the other side Jordan," (chap. vii. 25,) for this phrase in the original (מִבְּרֵי לְיָרְדֵן) signifies either this side or that, as the case may be. The probability, however, we think is that our translation has correctly rendered it, "from the other side," and that Gideon had now passed the Jordan, but that the incident here related comes in somewhat by anticipation, in order that what relates to the Ephraimites might be finished without hereafter interrupting the thread of the narrative. The interview here mentioned, we suppose to have taken place after Gideon's return from the pursuit of the Midianites, (ver. 4.) *Why hast thou served us thus?*—Heb. "what thing is this thou hast done unto us?" *And thou calledst us not, &c.*—Rather, "that thou calledst us not." Although the victory of Gideon, by freeing them from the tyranny of Midian, had been of equal advantage to them with the rest of their brethren, yet from not having been sharers in the glory of it, this tribe was ill-affected in view of the result. The pique which is here expressed seems to have originated in a prior state of jealous feeling existing on the part of Ephraim towards Manasseh. Ephraim was brother to Manasseh, the tribe from which Gideon sprung, and, probably, priding themselves on the pre-eminence assigned them in the blessing of Jacob and Moses, on the descent of Joshua from their tribe, on their having the tabernacle fixed in their inheritance, and on their superior numbers, they seem to have indulged a very bitter spirit of rivalry towards their brethren. Hence the allusion elsewhere, (Isa. ix. 21,) to the envy and mutual disaffection of these two tribes. In the present instance their complaint was evidently unjust, as Gideon had acted throughout under divine direction, instead of ordering the services of the tribes at his own discretion. Moreover, if so disposed, they had the amplest opportunities to signalise themselves in behalf of the common interest. They knew their country was suffering under foreign oppression, and that forces were raising with a view to resist it, and shake off the yoke. What then prevented them from nobly coming forward, and volunteering in the enterprise? But such is the perverse temperament of some men, that, under the influence of a morbid and envious spirit, they construe every exaltation of their neighbour as an injury done to themselves; and nothing is more common than for those who will not attempt or venture any thing in the cause of God, to be ready to censure those who show more zeal and enterprise than themselves. How often, too, when the danger is past, does the coward vaunt his courage? The conduct of the Ephraimites on this, and another occasion very similar, which resulted in the slaughter of two and forty thousand of their number, (chap. xii. 1—7,) evinces that they were a people of rash, hasty, and impetuous spirit; and the incidents mentioned afford a striking illustration of two emphatic declarations of Scripture. (1.) That "only by pride cometh contention;" and, (2.)

'That "for every right work a man is envied of his neighbour." *Did chide with him sharply.*—Heb. "strongly, with vehemence."

VER. 2. And he said unto them, What have I done now in comparison of you? *Is not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abi-ezer?*

*Is not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim better, &c.*—A metaphorical and proverbial mode of commending the smallest action of one as superior to the greatest of another; or of saying that the Ephraimites, by intercepting the enemy at the fords of Jordan, and slaying the two princes of the Midianites, had achieved more than Gideon and his army. The answer was admirably adapted to soothe the exasperated spirits of his accusers; it was the soft answer which turneth away wrath. However much we may be disposed to admire great military exploits, and to account men honourable, in proportion to the victories they have gained, there is a victory over ourselves that far more dignifies a man, than the most extended conquests over others; and we cannot but regard Gideon's defeat of the Midianitish host, with so small a force, as less worthy of admiration, than the self-possession he exercised towards the offended and reviling Ephraimites. "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city." Thus does Solomon weigh, in an even balance, the different characters above alluded to. Not a word of recrimination dropped from the mouth of Gideon. Though he might, perhaps, have justly said, that when the Ephraimites knew his determination to oppose the Midianites, they had never offered their services, or come forward to assist him; but when the danger was over, they were ready to impute evils to him for omissions, which were chargeable only on themselves. But, instead of loading his adversaries with blame, or glancing at any thing that might either betray irritation in his mind, or strengthen it in theirs, he is glad to search out causes of commendation. He magnifies their performance, and gives them the credit of doing more in the pursuit, in their gleanings, than he in the battle, the vintage of Abiezer. Instead, moreover, of saying, "If God has been pleased to honour me, why should that be an offence to you?" he wisely forebore to take to himself the credit that he justly might, thus hiding from them the light that pained their eyes, and casting a veil over the actions that had provoked their jealousy. A striking instance this of the "charity which vaunteth not itself, which seeketh not her own." His conduct naturally leads to the remark, (1.) That the only way to appease unreasonable wrath is by curbing, in the spirit of meekness and forbearance, the outbreak of a kindred passion in ourselves. Yielding pacifieth great offences. (2.) True humility not only sheds a double lustre over all our gifts, graces, and attainments, but is a disposition tending no less to the preservation of our happiness, than to the conciliation of those who are offended at us; for if once willing to forego the honour to which we are entitled, it will appear

a small thing to us to be censured without a cause; seeing that such censures only reduce us to the place which we were previously, in our own minds, disposed to occupy. And it will almost invariably be found true, that as men are ready to hate those who arrogate honour to themselves, so will they be more easily reconciled to those who are humble and unassuming. *Better than the vintage of Abi-ezer.*—That is, of the Massites, from whom the family of Abiezer, to which Gideon belonged, descended. Chald. "are not the feeble of the house of Ephraim, better than the strong of the house of Abiezer?"

VER. 3. <sup>b</sup>God hath delivered into your hands the princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb: and what was I able to do in comparison of you? Then their anger was abated toward him, when he had said that.

<sup>b</sup> Chap. vii. 23, 25. Phil. ii. 3. c Prov. xv. 1.

*Their anger was abated.*—Heb. "their spirit relaxed, remitted itself from him."—How powerful to blunt the edge of other men's displeasure is a conduct conformed to the scriptural precept, "Let nothing be done through strife and vain glory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves."

VER. 4. And Gideon came to Jordan, and passed over, he, and the three hundred men that were with him, faint, yet pursuing them.

*Gideon came to Jordan, and passed over.*—Or, Heb. "had passed over." See on ver. 1. What is related in the preceding verses seems to be by anticipation. *Faint, yet pursuing.*—Much fatigued with what they had already accomplished, yet eager to follow up the blow, and determined not to give over till the victory was perfectly achieved. This is often the Christian's case in the prosecution of his spiritual warfare. His "mortal spirit tires and faints," yet he struggles on with the little strength that still remains to him, leaning upon Omnipotence, and resolved to conquer or die.

VER. 5. And he said unto the men of <sup>d</sup>Succoth, Give, I pray you, loaves of bread unto the people that follow me; for they be faint, and I am pursuing after Zebah and Zalmunna, kings of Midian.

<sup>d</sup> Gen. xxxiii. 17. Psal. lx. 6.

*He said unto the men of Succoth.*—From this we learn the precise spot where Gideon crossed the Jordan. It was at the point where the Jordan emerges from the Lake of Genesaret, for near to this, on the east side of the river, in the tribe of Gad, lay the city of Succoth, *i. e.* of tents or booths, so called from Jacob's having here pitched his tents on his removal from Mesopotamia. (Gen. xlv. 17.) As Gideon was now engaged in the common cause of Israel, he had a right to expect succour from the people at large. This claim he hints at in the close of the verse. *The people that follow me.*—Heb. "that are at my feet." See on chap. iv. 10.

VER. 6. And the princes of Succoth said, *Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in thy hand, that we should give bread unto thine army?*

*c* See 1 Kings xx. 11.

*f* See 1 Sam. xxv. 11.

And the princes of Succoth said, &c.—The verb in the singular, the noun in the plural, intimating that some one spoke in the name of the rest; or, perhaps, rather that they were all unanimous in this reply, as if they had been but one man speaking with one mouth. Comp. Numb. xxxii. 25. It may seem scarcely credible that the inhabitants of Succoth and Penuel should refuse bread to their famished brethren; but having been seven years under the domination of the Midianites, to whom they lived contiguous, they doubtless not only dreaded their vengeance, but deemed it highly improbable that Gideon should succeed. *Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in thine hand?*—Are their hands bound behind them as captive prisoners, indicating that their persons are entirely in thy power? A bitter and malignant taunt, as if he were celebrating a triumph before he had obtained the victory. “To have questioned so sudden a victory, had been pardonable; but to deny it scornfully was unworthy of Israelites. Carnal men think that impossible to others, which they themselves cannot do; hence their censures, hence their exclamations.”—*Bp. Hall*. How often do those from whom we might reasonably look for the most cordial assistance, seek, like the men of Succoth, to weaken our hands and discourage our hearts?

VER. 7. And Gideon said, Therefore when the LORD hath delivered Zebah and Zalmunna into my hand, *g* then I will tear your flesh with the thorns of the wilderness and with briers.

*g* Ver. 16.

*I will tear your flesh with the thorns, &c.*—Or, Heb. “will thresh.” The threat probably relates to a cruel method of torture, used in those times, for putting captives to death, by laying briers and thorns on their naked bodies, and then drawing over them some heavy implements of husbandry. The opinion of Drusius, that persons put to death in this manner were laid naked on thorns and briers, and then both crushed and trampled together, seems to be confirmed by the force of the preposition in the original (רַס), which, like the Latin *cum*, properly imports “together with,” *una cum*, rather than “by.” Chald. “I will mangle your flesh upon the thorns and upon the briers.” “Thus did Gideon threaten the inhabitants of Succoth; and thus do masters, fathers, and schoolmasters, swear they will punish those who have offended them. To see the force of the figure, it must be kept in mind that the people, in the East, are almost in a state of nudity. To tear a man’s naked body, therefore, with briers and thorns, would be no small punishment. See poor travellers sometimes, who, in consequence of a wild beast, or some other cause, have to rush into the thicket; before they can get out again, in consequence of thorns, they are literally

covered with blood. There have been instances where a master, in his anger, has taken a jagged edge of the palmirah branch to tear the naked body of his slave, and nothing can be more common than to threaten it shall be done to those who have given offence. People also often menace each other with the repetition of the old punishment of tying the naked body in a bundle of thorns, and rolling it on the ground.”—*Roberts*. See farther respecting this punishment on ver. 16.

VER. 8. And he went up thence <sup>h</sup>to Penuel, and spake unto them likewise; and the men of Penuel answered him as the men of Succoth had answered *him*.

<sup>h</sup> Gen. xxxii. 30. 1 Kings xii. 25.

*Went up thence to Penuel.*—A city also in the tribe of Gad, near the brook Jabbok, and not far from Succoth; so called by Jacob, for the reason mentioned Gen. xxxii. 30, 31. *Spake unto them likewise*—That is, he made the same request to them that he had to the men of Succoth.

VER. 9. And he spake also unto the men of Penuel, saying, When I <sup>i</sup>come again in peace, <sup>k</sup>I will break down this tower.

<sup>i</sup> 1 Kings xxii. 27. <sup>k</sup> Ver. 17.

*When I come again in peace.*—That is, according to the Heb. idiom, when I return in soundness, in safety, in triumph, as his strong faith assured him would be the case. He defers the intended vengeance for the present, for fear of losing time in the pursuit, and perhaps from a secret hope that they might, upon farther reflection, repent of their refusal, and atone for it by sending succours and supplies after him. *I will break down this tower.*—They had probably, on giving their answer, pointed insultingly to a tower in which their chief defence lay, and intimated to him that he might do his worst, for they could amply defend themselves.

VER. 10. Now Zebah and Zalmunna were in Karkor, and their hosts with them, about fifteen thousand men, all that were left of all the hosts of the children of the east: for there fell a hundred and twenty thousand men that drew sword.

<sup>l</sup> Chap. vii. 12.

*In Karkor.*—A town near the east frontiers of Gad, and at no great distance from the source of the small river Jabbok. It is no where else mentioned.

VER. 11. And Gideon went up by the way of them that dwelt in tents on the east of <sup>m</sup>Nobah and Jogbehah, and smote the host: for the host was <sup>n</sup>secure.

<sup>m</sup> Numb. xxxii. 35, 42.  
<sup>n</sup> Chap. xviii. 27. 1 Thess. v. 3.

*By the way of them that dwell in tents.*—Probably he took an unwonted and unsuspected route along the territories of the Scenite or tent-dwelling Arabs. Chald. “Gideon went up by the way

of the camps of the Arabians, who dwell in tents in the desert." Schmid, however, thinks the allusion is to a portion of the trans-jordanic Israelites who followed the nomade mode of life in these regions, as the Arabs in the neighbourhood of Midian, being among the "sons of the East," may be supposed more likely to have been confederate with them in the expedition, and not disposed to let Gideon pass peaceably through their borders. *The host was secure.*—Heb. "the host was become security;" not only secure, but, in their own estimation, security itself.

VER. 12. And when Zebah and Zalmunna fled, he pursued after them, and took the two kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna, and discomfited all the host.

o Psa. lxxxviii. 11.

VER. 13. And Gideon the son of Joash returned from battle before the sun was up,

*Before the sun was up.*—More correctly rendered according to the Heb. מלמעלה החרים "from the ascent or height of Heres." This rendering is confirmed by the Septuagint, the Syriac, and the Arabic. The original "Heres" is never used for "sun," except in the poetical style, (Job ix. 7,) while express mention is made of mount Heres, (chap. i. 35.) The writer's drift is probably to intimate that Gideon returned by a different route from that by which he went.

VER. 14. And caught a young man of the men of Succoth, and inquired of him: and he described unto him the princes of Succoth, and the elders thereof, even threescore and seventeen men.

*He described unto him.*—Heb. "he wrote for him." He gave the names in writing of seventy persons, the chief men of Succoth, who were most concerned in refusing him and his men the refreshment he requested. *And the elders thereof.*—Even the elders thereof. The princes and the elders were the same persons.

VER. 15. And he came unto the men of Succoth, and said, Behold Zebah and Zalmunna, with whom ye did upbraid me, saying, Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in thy hand, that we should give bread unto thy men that are weary?

p Ver. 6.

VER. 16. And he took the elders of the city, and thorns of the wilderness, and briers, and with them he taught the men of Succoth.

q Ver. 7.

*He took—thorns and briers of the wilderness, and with them he taught the men of Succoth.*—Heb. "made to know." He made them sensible of their crime and folly; in other words, he punished them by putting them to death by this mode of torture. This is to be inferred from the fact that their offence was the same as that of the men of Penuel, whom he certainly did put to

death. The probability is that their naked bodies were laid in the midst of a heap of thorns, briers, and prickly brush, and then threshing sledges or other heavy implements of husbandry were drawn over them. In northern nations, where the body is completely covered, the idea of such punishments with thorns on the naked person seems a far-fetched device; but in the East, where the clothing leaves much more of the person exposed, and where, in consequence, men are continually lacerating their skins in passing through thickets, &c., the idea of such laceration is always kept present, either by the actual experience of suffering, or by the constant observation of it. Hence tearing the flesh with thorns comes to be a familiar idea of penal infliction, and as such is popularly mentioned as among the punishments which evil-doers deserve, or will obtain, not only in this life, but in the life to come.—The punishment, it must be acknowledged, was severe, but the provocation was great. Considered as an act of ingratitude and inhumanity only, it was exceedingly sinful; for what could be more base than to refuse a meal to those who had, at the peril of their own lives, delivered the whole nation from the yoke of Midian; and were now, though only three hundred in number, following the remaining fugitives, fifty times as numerous as themselves, in order to extirpate them entirely? Had they been mere strangers and travellers in distress, their request would have been reasonable, and a refusal barbarous; but considering that they were their own countrymen, and fighting their country's battles under the special calling and direction of heaven, it was treason of the blackest dye; it was the very way to prevent the execution of the divine purposes; and if God had not miraculously renewed the strength of the visitors, this refusal of food to them would have done more to vanquish them than all the hosts of Midian had been able to effect. But they added insult to injury; they endeavoured to weaken his hands by deriding the vanity of his attempts; they answered him in a tone of bantering and scorn, and thus poured contempt upon a cause which, being of God, was thereby rendered sacred. So that taking all things into view, it cannot be questioned that Gideon did right in making a fearful example of such wicked traitors. The whole of this remarkable transaction tends to inspire us with confidence in God, and to encourage our exertions in his cause; but there are two lessons especially which we shall do well to learn from it: (1.) To prosecute our spiritual warfare under all discouragements ourselves; and, (2.) To be careful to put no discouragements in the way of others. God is indignant with those who would weaken the hands of his people. His command is, "Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees; say unto them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not; your God will come and help you."

VER. 17. And he beat down the tower of Penuel, and slew the men of the city.

r Ver. 9.

s 1 Kings xii. 25.

VER. 18. Then said he unto Zebah and Zalmunna, What manner of men *were they* whom ye slew at 'Tabor? And they answered, As thou art, so *were they*; each one resembled the children of a king.

† Chap. iv. 6. Psa. lxxxix. 12.

*What manner of men were they whom ye slew at Tabor?*—This question relates to an occurrence not previously mentioned, but the inference is, that these uterine or full brothers of Gideon, during the seven years' oppression of Midian, when the children of Israel had been compelled to make themselves dens in the mountains, (chap. vi. 2,) had taken shelter in mount Tabor, where they were found by these two kings, and barbarously massacred in cold blood. It may be that the event had occurred but a short time before, during Gideon's absence, and that he had merely heard a confused account of it; still it is not clear, simply from the interrogative form of the address, that Gideon was uncertain whether his brethren had perished by the hand of these two princes. He may have put the question in order to draw the acknowledgment of the deed from their own lips, and thus make his justice in their punishment more conspicuous. It should not be forgotten that the day is coming when every secret thing will be brought to light, and such conviction flash on the offenders, that they will no longer be able to conceal their guilt. *Each one resembled the children of a king.*—This is an orientalism still in use. Of a person who is beautiful or of a fair complexion, who is courageous, and stately in his gait, it is said in the East, "He is like the son of a king;" "He is the son of a god." In the measures of comparison, the king and that which belongs to him forms the superlative degree; and to say that a person or thing is kingly, or like that which belongs to a king, is to say that it is the most excellent of its kind. From the reports of travellers, it would appear that in some way or other the royal families in the East are usually remarkable for the beauty and majesty of their persons; so that the comparison is something more than a mere complimentary phrase.

VER. 19. And he said, They *were* my brethren, *even* the sons of my mother: as the Lord liveth, if ye had saved them alive, I would not slay you.

*My brethren, even the sons of my mother.*—In countries where polygamy is tolerated, the ties of brotherhood are, as might be expected, much more close and tender between those who are born of the same mother, than those who are connected only as the children of the same father. Of this we have had and shall have ample evidence in the sacred history. This explains why "son of my mother" was among the Hebrews, as now among the Arabs and others, a far more endearing expression than that of "my brother," in the general sense." *I would not slay you.*—Which he was not bound to do, inasmuch as they were not Canaanites.

VER. 20. And he said unto Jether his first-born, Up, and slay them. But the youth drew not his sword: for he feared, because he *was* yet a youth.

*Up, and slay them.*—The Hebrews had no executioner. When a man was guilty of homicide, the execution devolved on the next of kin, by right of blood-revenge; in other cases criminals were stoned by the people, the witnesses setting the example; and when a king or chief ordered a person to be put to death, the office was performed by the person to whom the command was given. And this was generally a person whose consideration in life bore some proportion to that of the person to be slain. In fact, the office even of a regular executioner is not by any means dishonourable in the East. The post of chief executioner is in most oriental courts one of honour and distinction. When thus there was no regular executioner, it came to be considered a sort of honour to put a distinguished person to death; and, on the other hand, the death itself was honourable in proportion to the rank of the person by whom the blow was inflicted. It was the greatest dishonour to perish by the hands of a woman or a slave. We see this feeling distinctly in the present narrative, where the two princes much prefer to die by Gideon's own hand than by that of a youth who had obtained no personal distinction. As to the hero's commissioning his son to perform this office, it was perhaps partly to honour him with the distinction of having slain two chief enemies of Israel; as well as because the rules of blood-revenge made it necessary that the execution of those who had slain his own brethren should either be performed by himself, or by a member of his own family.

VER. 21. Then Zebah and Zalmunna said, Rise thou, and fall upon us: for as the man *is*, so *is* his strength. And Gideon arose, and "slew Zebah and Zalmunna, and took away the ornaments that *were* on their camels' necks.

‡ Psa. lxxxviii. 11.

*As the man is, so is his strength.*—His strength is proportionate to his age, and therefore they would sooner be dispatched, and with less pain, by Gideon than by a youth. *Took away the ornaments that were on their camels' necks.*—Heb. "little moons, crescents." Probably shining plates of gold or rather metal in the form of crescents suspended from the camels' necks, and hanging down upon their breasts in front. The heads, necks, bodies, and legs, of camels, horses, and elephants, are still highly ornamented in Eastern countries.

VER. 22. Then the men of Israel said unto Gideon, Rule thou over us, both thou, and thy son, and thy son's son also: for thou hast delivered us from the hand of Midian.

*Rule thou over us, &c.*—That is, they would have him to be king; and here it is that the He-

brews first betray a desire to establish a hereditary kingdom, forgetting the peculiar character of their government, and the high distinction which they enjoyed in having Jehovah for their king. But the pious hero himself was mindful of it, replying in the true spirit of the theocracy, "I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you, the Lord shall rule over you." Gideon, in modestly and piously declining the proposal, acted with a moderation and wisdom worthy of himself. He would do nothing that seemed to trench upon the divine prerogative. Though he would serve them as a judge, he would not rule over them as a king. His decision showed how much he had in subjection the motives which usually prevail with men. The ambition of exalting a family is a great snare; but a true patriot, who aims not at his own, but the public good, will decline rather than seek those honours, and rest satisfied with deserving well of his country, without aspiring to rule it. All his sons, however, were not of his mind, and did not forget this offer, as will appear in the sequel.

VER. 23. And Gideon said unto them, I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you; <sup>a</sup> the Lord shall rule over you.

<sup>a</sup> 1 Sam. viii. 7; x. 19; xii. 12.

VER. 24. And Gideon said unto them, I would desire a request of you, that you would give me every man the ear-rings of his prey. (For they had golden ear-rings, <sup>b</sup> because they were Ishmaelites.)

<sup>b</sup> Gen. xxv. 13; xxxvii. 25, 28.

*That ye would give me every man the ear-rings of his prey.*—Or, Heb. "every man an ear-ring of his prey." The word in the original is in the singular, and it seems more likely that Gideon would have requested a moderate contribution from each man, than that he should have demanded all the jewels of this kind which fell to the share of his followers, and which perhaps constituted the most valuable portion of their prey. The request of Gideon, though doubtless well intended, was certainly unfortunate in its results, as the sequel clearly proves. On the true import of **אָזְנוֹת** here rendered ear-ring, see on Gen. xxiv. 22. *Because they were Ishmaelites.*—The Midianites were not properly Ishmaelites, being descended from another son of Abraham; but from being much intermixed with them, from following the same mode of life, and possessing the same general manners, they might well be so called. Indeed the terms "Ishmaelites" and "Midianites" seem to have been used interchangeably from a very early period. (Gen. xxxviii. 25.) Probably all those eastern kindred tribes whose way of life was similar, and were much mixed with the Arabians, were called Ishmaelites in a general sense. It is also probable that large numbers of real Ishmaelites acted with the Midianites on this occasion, and Boothroyd would restrict the words of the text to these:—

Those slain, who were Ishmaelites, wore golden pendants." In consequence of Mohammed's

having prohibited rings of gold, the modern Arabs do not exhibit such costly ornaments as the ancient Midianites.

VER. 25. And they answered, We will willingly give *them*. And they spread a garment, and did cast therein every man the ear-rings of his prey.

*We will willingly give.*—Heb. "giving we will give." The same feelings which had just before prompted them to offer him a crown, undoubtedly disposed them now to comply with his request, with the utmost readiness. Though he asked but a single article from each, yet from the total amount of the donation, it would seem that in giving many of them went beyond the letter of his request, and threw in a number.

VER. 26. And the weight of the golden ear-rings that he requested, was a thousand and seven hundred *shekels* of gold; besides ornaments, and collars, and purple raiment that was on the kings of Midian, and besides the chains that were about their camels' necks.

*And the weight—was a thousand and seven hundred shekels of gold.*—Taking the shekel an ounce weight, the sum of the gold collected in ear-rings was seventy-three pounds four ounces; and worth, as gold now rates, upwards of twelve thousand dollars. *Ornaments.*—The same word as that applied to the "ornaments" of the camels, (ver. 21.) and probably denoting articles of the same form and material. *Collars.*—Rather, as the original נִשְׁפִּיתִים comes from נָשַׁף to drop, to distil by drops, ear-drops, or pendants of pearl, from their form. *Purple.*—See on Exod. xxxv. 35. The present is the first indication of purple as a royal colour.

VER. 27. And Gideon <sup>a</sup> made an ephod thereof, and put it in his city, *even* <sup>b</sup> in Ophrah: and all Israel <sup>c</sup> went thither a whoring after it: which thing became <sup>a</sup> a snare unto Gideon, and to his house.

<sup>a</sup> Chap. xvii. 5.

<sup>a</sup> Chap. vi. 24.

<sup>b</sup> Psa. cvi. 39.

<sup>c</sup> Deut. vii. 16.

*Gideon made an ephod thereof.*—An ephod was a vestment covering the shoulders and extending over the breast, somewhat like a coat without sleeves. There were two kinds of them; one, a rich garment, peculiar to the high priest, made of blue, purple, scarlet, and twined linen, curiously wrought, and embroidered with gold. In this was set the breastplate studded with precious stones, and containing the Urim and Thummim, by which the high priest consulted the will of Jehovah. (Exod. xxv. 7; xxviii. 4.) The other was made after the same model, but of inferior materials, being composed simply of fine linen, and worn not only by the priests, but by the Levites and others in divine ministrations, as we see from the case of Samuel, (1 Sam. ii. 18,) and of David, (1 Sam. xvii. 16,) neither of whom belonged to the sacerdotal order. The ephod made by Gideon was undoubtedly designed to be of

the former kind, and was thus wrought with great splendour. His real motive in this transaction is not very easily determined. Some think the ephod was designed merely as a commemorative trophy of Israel's deliverance; but if so, it was a very strange one, having no conceivable relation to such an event. The more probable opinion undoubtedly is, that it was intended wholly for a religious use. Gideon had, at his first calling, been instructed to build an altar and offer sacrifice. This perhaps induced him to think himself authorized to officiate in the same way, occasionally, at his own house; and as he knew that an ephod was a usual appendage to such an office, he might have had one formed and finished in sumptuous style for this purpose. If this be the right conjecture, the worship performed was doubtless in honour of the true God, but it was still unauthorized and improper, however he may have considered the first commission as constituting a good warrant for his continuing the service. Even in his lifetime it unquestionably had the effect of withdrawing the attention of the people, east of the Jordan, from the tabernacle at Shiloh, and so far tended to pave the way for that decline into positive idolatry, which took place after his death. *All Israel went thither, &c.*—They made it a means of practising superstition and idolatry: they resorted to this instead of the true ephod, to inquire the will of God; thus gradually forsaking the place which Jehovah himself had ordained as the one seat of worship. To such disastrous consequences may one false step of a good man lead, who fails to weigh well the issues of his best meant conduct. The following suggestions naturally arise from the narrative. (1.) In God's worship human inventions are to be most carefully avoided, and the inspired word strictly adhered to. (2.) What may be indifferent or innocent to one man, may, to a weaker brother, be a dangerous snare. (3.) The beginning of sin is as the letting out of water. From small beginnings arose all the present horrid idolatry of the church of Rome. *Became a snare unto Gideon, and his house.*—That is, became not only a source of evil personally to Gideon, enticing his affections from the proper object, and abating his zeal for the true worship of God in his old age, but proving the occasion of sin and ruin to his family, as appears from the ensuing chapter.

VER. 28. Thus was Midian subdued before the children of Israel, so that they lifted up their heads no more. <sup>a</sup> And the country was in quietness forty years in the days of Gideon.

<sup>a</sup> Chap. v. 31.

*They lifted up their heads no more.*—Recovered not their former strength or spirit; were not in a condition again to invade or annoy the Israelites in their possessions. *In quietness forty years in the days of Gideon.*—While Gideon lived. The forty years are perhaps to be dated from the defeat of the Midianites, and the consequent complete recovery of the national liberty.

VER. 29. And Jerubbaal the son of Joash went and dwelt in his own house.

VER. 30. And Gideon had <sup>e</sup> threescore and ten sons of his body begotten: for he had many wives.

<sup>e</sup> Chap. ix. 2, 5.

*Of his body begotten.*—Heb. "coming out of his thigh." Intimating they were his own natural sons, sons by generation, and not by adoption.

VER. 31. <sup>f</sup> And his concubine that was in Shechem, she also bare him a son, whose name he called Abimelech.

<sup>f</sup> Chap. ix. 1.

*His concubine that was in Shechem.*—A lawful but secondary wife, whose children could not inherit. See on Gen. xvi. 1—3. *Whose name he called Abimelech.*—Heb. "whose name he set, put, appointed, Abimelech." The name signifies, "My father a king," and was perhaps conferred out of complaisance to his concubine, who may have desired it from ambitious motives. The incident certainly proved of evil omen, whether Abimelech was prompted to the course he pursued by reflecting upon the import of his name or not. The influence of names, in the formation of character, is probably much greater than is usually imagined, and deserves the special attention of parents in their bestowment. Children should be taught that the circumstance of their bearing the names of good men or women, who have lived before them, constitutes an obligation upon them to imitate and perpetuate their virtues.

VER. 32. And Gideon the son of Joash died <sup>g</sup> in a good old age, and was buried in the sepulchre of Joash his father, <sup>h</sup> in Ophrah of the Abi-ezrites.

<sup>g</sup> Gen. xxv. 8. Job v. 26. <sup>h</sup> Ver. 27. Chap. vi. 24.

VER. 33. And it came to pass, <sup>i</sup> as soon as Gideon was dead, that the children of Israel turned again, and went <sup>k</sup> a whoring after Baalim, <sup>l</sup> and made Baal-berith their god.

<sup>i</sup> Chap. ii. 19. <sup>k</sup> Chap. ii. 17. <sup>l</sup> Chap. ix. 4, 46.

*Baal-berith.*—That is, *The Lord of the covenant*; so called perhaps from his being considered the deity that presided over compacts, leagues, treaties, covenants, &c., especially to avenge the violation of them.

VER. 34. And the children of Israel <sup>m</sup> remembered not the Lord their God, who had delivered them out of the hands of all their enemies on every side:

<sup>m</sup> Psa. lxxviii. 11, 42; cvi. 13, 21.

VER. 35. <sup>n</sup> Neither showed they kindness to the house of Jerubbaal, *namely*, Gideon, according to all the goodness which he had showed unto Israel.

<sup>n</sup> Chap. ix. 16—18. Eccles. ix. 14, 15.

*Remembered not the Lord their God.*—Neither showed they kindness to the house of Jerubbaal.—

On the two concluding verses of this chapter we have simply to remark, (1.) That they who are kept from evil, not so much by their own choice as by the restraint of others, will, like the slackened bow, start aside the moment the string is loosed. (2.) We are not to wonder if they are ungrateful to us, who show themselves destitute of all gratitude towards God.

## CHAPTER IX.

VER. 1. AND Abimelech the son of Jerubbaal went to Shechem unto "his mother's brethren, and communed with them, and with all the family of the house of his mother's father, saying,

a Chap. viii. 31.

*Abimelech—went to Shechem.*—As Shechem was a city of note in the tribe of Ephraim, and the Ephraimites appear to have been a rash, high-spirited, and excitable people, particularly jealous of their brethren of Manasseh, and perhaps still cherishing the memory of the fancied slight put upon them by Gideon, (chap. viii. 1—3.) Abimelech, no doubt, promised himself, on this ground, the speedy concurrence of the Shechemites in his infamous designs. But his first step was to enlist his relatives in his interest, and with this view he applies himself to them, undoubtedly, with all the arts of an aspiring demagogue.

VER. 2. Speak, I pray you, in the ears of all the men of Shechem, Whether is better for you, either that all the sons of Jerubbaal, which are <sup>b</sup> threescore and ten persons, reign over you, or that one reign over you? remember also that I am <sup>c</sup> your bone and your flesh.

<sup>b</sup> Chap. viii. 30.

<sup>c</sup> Gen. xix. 14.

*The men of Shechem.*—Heb. "the masters of Shechem," implying, perhaps, the leading men, though not necessarily confined to this sense. *Whether is better, &c.*—Heb. "what is good? whether the ruling over you of seventy persons," &c. From the authority and influence which Gideon had possessed, and from the acknowledged dignity of his family, the presumption would naturally be, that if the reins of government were to be lodged in any hands, it would be in those of some one of his sons, or of all of them conjointly. On this hypothesis Abimelech builds his project. But his words convey a slanderous insinuation which is not obvious to the English reader. He speaks of Gideon's sons "reigning" (משל) or exercising domination over their countrymen, whereas it was just this species of rule which Gideon so expressly rejected both for himself and his sons, (chap. viii. 23,) as invading the prerogative of the Most High; being content with the inferior degree of authority usually indicated by the term שפט "to judge." Nor is there any evidence that either of his sons had the least intention of assuming a despotic sway

over their brethren. But Abimelech's conduct in this particular, affords but another proof that he who has a wicked purpose to serve will not stick at a lie to accomplish it, and that those who design ill themselves are ever ready to charge similar designs upon others. *Your bone and your flesh.*—Your kinsman, of your tribe and lineage, and therefore so much the more likely to promote your interests. The relation indicated by these words is more or less close according to the connexion in which they occur. In some cases it implies nothing more than descent from a common ancestor, (1 Chron. xi. 1;) in others, kindred of the same blood, as Jacob and Laban, (Gen. xxix. 14,) David and Amasa, (2 Sam. xix. 13;) and in others again, it appears simply to indicate the relation subsisting between the inhabitants of the same city or town. Perhaps this is all that is to be understood in the present case. But however interpreted, it was advancing a reason for his election which was never contemplated in the appointment of magistrates over the nation of Israel. It was, in fact, directly opposed to the true ends of that institution, which required that persons chosen to office should be selected on the ground of moral qualifications, and that in their administration of justice they should be free from the bias naturally arising from private and personal regards.

VER. 3. And his mother's brethren spake of him in the ears of all the men of Shechem all these words: and their hearts inclined to follow Abimelech; for they said, He is our <sup>d</sup> brother.

<sup>d</sup> Gen. xxix. 15.

*Their hearts inclined to follow Abimelech.*—Heb. "their heart inclined itself after Abimelech;" spoken of as the heart of one man. The reason assigned for their adherence shows that his suggestions had taken effect. They are prompted to support his claims, because from his near relationship they would doubtless be raised to places of preferment under him, and their city would be likely to be made the metropolis of the kingdom.

VER. 4. And they gave him threescore and ten pieces of silver out of the house of Baal-berith, wherewith Abimelech hired <sup>f</sup> vain and light persons, which followed him.

<sup>e</sup> Chap. viii. 33.

<sup>f</sup> Chap. xi. 3. 2 Chron. xii. 7. Prov. xii. 11. Acts xvii. 5.

*Out of the house of Baal-berith.*—From this it is evident that idolatry had gained ground again in some places during the life-time of Gideon. The treasure deposited in this temple, which had perhaps been raised from oblations to the idol, and thus consecrated to idolatrous uses, is made through the divine counsels the instrument of bringing upon the idolaters deserved punishment, by embroiling them in a civil war that caused their ruin. Nothing is more common, in the providence of God, than for the revenues of sin to be made a plague and a curse to those that amass them. *Vain and light persons.*—Worthless and abandoned men, idlers and vagabonds, the very scum of society, persons who were living on

the public, and had nothing to lose, ever the most fitting instruments of tyranny and cruelty.

VER. 5. And he went unto his father's house at Ophrah, and <sup>s</sup>slew his brethren the sons of Jerubbaal, being threescore and ten persons, upon one stone: notwithstanding yet Jotham the youngest son of Jerubbaal was left; for he hid himself.

*g* Chap. vi. 24. *h* 2 Kings xi. 1, 2.

*Slew his brethren—threescore and ten persons.*—The real number would seem to have been sixty-eight, for Jotham escaped, and Abimelech himself is of course to be excepted. This is on the supposition that the whole number of Gideon's sons was, according to chap. viii. 30, precisely seventy, which, however, cannot be positively affirmed. The presumption is that seventy is here employed as a round number. We have, in this incident, the first indication of a savage custom which is not yet extinct in Asia, and under which a new king deems it a measure of policy to put to death his brothers, from a fear that their ambition, or the favour of the people towards them, might lead them to form designs against his dignity or life. Thus, the commencement of a new reign is signalized by the same horrible transaction as that of which we here read. In Persia, where the same principle operates, the new monarchs have rather sought to secure their own safety by putting out the eyes of their brothers and others from whom they might entertain apprehensions. *Upon one stone.*—Of the precise manner in which the murder was effected we are left in ignorance. It was a common mode of capital punishment, in ancient times, to precipitate culprits from an eminence upon a rock or stone, and to this our Saviour seems to allude. (Matt. xxi. 44.) According to some, it was in this manner that the sons of Gideon perished on this occasion. Others suppose that the stone was used as a kind of altar, and that upon it Abimelech, in conjunction with the men of Shechem, made his unfortunate victims an oblation to Baal, in revenge for the sacrifice of the bullock prepared for Baal on the rock. (Chap. vi. 25, 26.) This crime of Gideon, as these idolaters considered it, they determined to expiate by the sacrifice of his sons. That the men of Shechem joined in this impious slaughter is indubitable from ver. 24, and this is about all that can be distinctly ascertained respecting it. It is highly probable, however, that Abimelech, under some false pretence, as perhaps that of celebrating some festival, had convened his brethren together in one place. The transaction shows, what indeed has been shown in a thousand similar instances, that ruthless ambition never hesitates; that neither conscience nor affection—neither the love of God nor the fear of man restrains those who are under its baneful influence.

VER. 6. And all the men of Shechem gathered together, and all the house of Millo, and went and made Abimelech king, by the plain of the pillar that was in Shechem.

*All the house of Millo.*—Heb. בית מילוא *Beth-Millo*: literally, "the house of filling up;" perhaps so called from a deep pit or valley in the neighbourhood of Shechem being filled up, and a stronghold or castle built upon it. There is a strong presumption that the same place is intended as that which, in ver. 46, is called "a hold of the house of the god Berith." *By the plain of the pillar.*—Or, Heb. "by the oak of the pillar." The allusion is perhaps to the oak or oak-grove near which Joshua erected a pillar, as a witness of the covenant renewed between God and Israel, (Josh. xxiv. 26.) Schmid, however, maintains that the original מַצֵּב never signifies a "pillar" or "statue," but properly a mound, or artificial heap, and supposes that the Shechemites raised up some lofty elevation, on the summit of which the ceremony of Abimelech's coronation was performed, in order to render the whole visible to a greater multitude. This structure, he supposes, moreover, was situated on a plain near a certain well-known oak, which in memory of the transaction was thenceforward called "the oak of the rising heap;" just as Deborah's "palm-tree," (chap. iv. 6,) was so called from her having made it a seat of justice. This view of the subject we are inclined to adopt.

VER. 7. And when they told it to Jotham, he went and stood in the top of 'mount Gerizim, and lifted up his voice, and cried, and said unto them, Hearken unto me, ye men of Shechem, that God may hearken unto you.

*i* Deut. xi. 29; xxvii. 12. *Josh.* viii. 33. *John* iv. 20.

*Stood in the top of mount Gertzim.*—A mountain in the immediate vicinity of Shechem, of which, see Deut. xxvii. 12. Josephus says that he availed himself of the occasion of a public festival, when great multitudes of the people were assembled together at the place specified, but still implying that the incident occurred some time after the above-mentioned inauguration of Abimelech as king. But to us it appears more probable that Jotham's address was delivered on the very same occasion with the former event, or at least before the people had dispersed from that convention. The place was the same, and from the language ver. 18, 19, "ye have risen up *this day*," we should naturally infer that the time was the same. Jotham's abrupt departure, also, after delivering the parable, leads us to the same conclusion. He would of course entertain fears of his personal safety in the midst of a body of excited adherents of his brother, at the very time when their enthusiasm was wrought up to the highest pitch, and after uttering his message would be likely to make good his retreat as speedily as possible. At another time there would have been less occasion for so much haste. *Hearken unto me—that God may hearken unto you.*—Employing, in this mode of summoning their attention, a kind of adjuration, which would be understood to signify that he spoke on this occasion by divine inspiration, and had a special message from God to deliver to them.

VER. 8. \*The trees went forth on a time to anoint a king over them; and they said unto the olive-tree, 'Reign thou over us.

‡ See 2 Kings xiv. 9.

‡ Chap. viii. 22, 23.

*The trees went forth, &c.*—Heb. "going, went forth;" an emphatic phrase, intimating the entire unanimity and heartiness with which they entered upon the measure. We have in this address of Jotham the oldest, and one of the most beautiful parables in existence. It is the nature of a parable or fable to give "tongues to trees," and intelligence, life, and activity to all parts of the animate and inanimate creation. The truth of such a parable lies in the instruction conveyed in it; and the feigned circumstances, being known to be such, are no ways inconsistent with veracity, but greatly subserve the cause of truth. The peculiar excellence of this mode of instruction is, that it arrests the attention more forcibly, and conveys knowledge more easily, than a train of reasoning could do; and convinces the judgment before prejudice has had time to bar the entrance of truth into the mind. Accordingly it has happened that in the East especially, where the imagination and the whole mental temperament is more fervid and glowing than elsewhere, this veiled form of instruction has always been in high repute, whether in conveying wholesome truths to the ear of power, or inculcating lessons of wisdom, and justice, and duty upon the obtuse and unreasoning multitude. Mr. Roberts remarks that the people of the East are exceedingly addicted to apologues, and use them to convey instruction or reproof, which with them could scarcely be done so well in any other way. Has a man been told a secret, he says, in repeating it, for instance, "A tree told me this morning, that Kandan offered a large bribe to the Modeliar, to get Muttoo turned out of his situation." Does a man of low caste wish to unite his son in marriage to the daughter of one who is high, the latter will say, "Have you heard that the pumpkin wants to be married to the plantain-tree?" Is a wife sterile, "The cocoa-nut tree in Viraver's garden does not bear any fruit." Has a woman had children by improper intercourse, it is said of her husband's garden, "Ah! the palmirah-trees are now giving cocoa-nuts." Has a man given his daughter in marriage to another, who uses her unkindly, he says, "I have planted the sugar-cane by the side of the *margossa* (bitter) tree." A short fable, together with its moral, is more easily remembered than a laboured argument, or the same truth expressed in abstract terms; and hence it is that we find this vehicle of instruction so frequently employed in the Scriptures. Fables are there exemplified in all their various uses, whether to reprove kings, to admonish multitudes, or to instruct disciples. Our Lord himself did not disdain to employ them. They are all perfect of their kind; nearly all of them are very short; and in most instances, as in that now before us, the application is made by the speaker. The general moral of Jotham's parable is, (1.) That weak and worthless men are ever forward to thrust themselves into power, while the wise

and good are more prone to decline it. (2.) That they who unduly affect honour, and they who unjustly confer it, will prove sources of misery to each other. Both these points are most strikingly illustrated in the present fable, as compared with the actual results. *To anoint a king.*—From which it appears that the ceremony of anointing was in use among the neighbouring nations long before there was any king in Israel; for the scope of the parable makes it necessary to suppose that this was done in imitation of foreign tribes. As the Lord was their king, there was no more occasion for the Israelites setting a king over them, than there was for the trees to appoint a protecting head over them.

VER. 9. But the olive-tree said unto them, Should I leave my fatness, "wherewith by me they honour God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?

m Ps. civ 15.

*The olive-tree said, &c.*—As the bramble was the meanest and most worthless of all the trees of the field or forest, so the olive was the most useful. This tree, naturalists observe, seems to have been originally a native of Asia, whence it was transplanted into Egypt and Barbary, and the south of Europe. The wood is hard-grained and heavy, and not liable to be injured by insects. Its colour is yellowish, veined, and of an agreeable odour, while its texture renders it susceptible of a fine polish. The appearance of the olive-tree is not unlike that of our willows, as the leaves are lance-shaped, or narrow, and hoary. The fruit when ripe is like a damson to the eye, with a soft oleaginous pulp, and a hard nut in the centre. In some parts of France the inhabitants eat the berries of the olive with their bread, and find them an agreeable and wholesome condiment. The olive, in general, requires a little preparation in brine or hot water to dissipate the bitter principle which it contains, though a variety, which is very uncommon in France, is so sweet that it may be eaten at once. It is probable that the olives of Judea, when in its prosperity, were of this character, and formed to the inhabitants a pleasant accompaniment to the more substantial articles of their daily food. The oil of the olive is pre-eminent among vegetable oils, and has not only always had an extensive use in culinary purposes, but formed the menstruum or vehicle of the most celebrated perfumes. *Should I leave my fatness.*—The form of the original is peculiar, being apparently so compounded as to convey at once both an active and passive sense;—"Shall be persuaded to make to cease (*i. e.* to forego) my fatness?"—covertly implying that the assumption of rank and authority involves a relinquishment of one's private ease, advantage, and comfort. *Wherewith by me they honour God and man.*—There was a large use of olive-oil in the service of God. The priests were anointed with it, the lamps in the tabernacle lighted with it, and almost all the offerings of fine flour cakes prepared in the pan, &c., had oil mingled with them; for which reason Jotham might say that "with it they honour God."

Moreover as priests, prophets, and kings were anointed with it, and their office was the most honourable, he might with propriety say, "together with they honour man." *Go to be promoted over the trees.*—Marg. "to go up and down for other trees." Horsley, "to wave or nod over the trees." Our rendering "promoted" comes far short of giving the exact force of the Hebrew. The original word properly signifies to be moved to and fro, to wander, to stagger, to be shaken and tossed. This interpretation gives a more lively image of the perils, cares, and vicissitudes of government, especially among a turbulent and refractory people.

VER. 10. And the trees said to the fig-tree, Come thou, and reign over us.

VER. 11. But the fig-tree said unto them, Should I forsake my sweetness, and my good fruit, and go to be promoted over the trees?

*Should I forsake my sweetness.*—The fruit of the fig-tree is the sweetest or most luscious of all fruits. A full ripe fig, in its own climate, has an indescribable sweetness; so much so, that it is almost impossible to eat them till a considerable time after they are gathered from the trees, and have gone through an artificial preparation.

VER. 12. Then said the trees unto the vine, Come thou, and reign over us.

VER. 13. And the vine said unto them, Should I leave my wine, which cheereth God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?

*Psal. civ. 15.*

*Which cheereth God and man.*—Not that God and man are cheered by the use of wine in the same way; but as it was employed in the sacrifices and offerings made to God, it might in that sense be said that he was "cheered" by it, because when thus offered he was graciously pleased to accept of it.

VER. 14. Then said all the trees unto the bramble, Come thou, and reign over us.

*Then said all the trees unto the bramble, Come thou, and reign over us.*—The meanest and most worthless of trees, and fit only to be burned, though capable of annoyance from being armed with prickly spikes. The original *תֵּן אֲתָד*, translated "thorns" in Psal. lviii. 9, and rendered *rhannus* in the Vulgate, is supposed to have been a species of buckthorn, a native of Syria and Palestine, whence it migrated into Europe in the reign of Augustus Cæsar. Many of the buckthorn family are remarkable for the length and abundance of their spines, and for the very combustible nature of their wood, which probably suggested the idea of the "fire" that was to come forth and consume the disaffected. It is a proper emblem of a base-born, impious, cruel, and oppressive king.

VER. 15. And the bramble said unto the trees, In truth ye anoint me king over you, then

come and put your trust in my shadow: and if not, let fire come out of the bramble and devour the cedars of Lebanon.

*Isa. xxx. 2. Dan. iv. 12. Hos. xiv. 7. Jer. 20. Numb. xxi. 28. Ezek. xix. 14. 2 Kings xiv. 9. Ps. civ. 16. Isa. ii. 13; xxxvii. 24. Ezek. xxxi. 3.*

*If in truth ye anoint me, &c.*—That the bramble here represents Abimelech, chosen and anointed king by the Shechemites, is the general opinion of commentators, both Christian and Jewish; and thus far undoubtedly the opinion is correct. But when it is supposed, that the words spoken by the bramble represent similar words actually spoken by Abimelech, it may be questioned whether they have hit the true scope of the passage. The real import of the bramble's reply seems to be, not to represent what Abimelech actually said, but what he justly might have said in a spirit of prophecy, to the men of Shechem, intent upon his elevation to the throne. The bramble in answer to the proposal, does not decline, but accepts, the offered honour, but yet in the very terms of the acceptance, moved by a prophetic impulse, utters a prediction respecting the event, implying that so far as this measure was not adopted in truth, *i. e.* rightly, properly, acceptably, it would be attended with disastrous consequences, and the bramble, as an unjust usurper over the rest of the trees, would be consumed by a fire that should spread and involve in its ravages the lofty cedars of Lebanon. This was precisely what Abimelech should have said to the men of Shechem, although in point of fact, he seems to have been so confident of success and a favourable result, that nothing was farther from his thoughts. The whole drift of the passage turns upon the true meaning of the phrase "in truth," which is not here opposed to falsehood, duplicity, fraud, and mockery, but to conduct, which is wrong, improper, not founded in views of duty and obedience. Consequently the words that follow, "let fire come out," &c., ought rather to be rendered, "fire shall come out," &c., as they are merely a prediction of the result that would ensue, provided their motives had not been right in what they had done. Jotham's application in the ensuing verses clearly confirms this interpretation. *Let fire come out of the bramble, &c.*—Understood as a prophecy, the meaning is, that the man represented by the bramble will be a source of plagues and judgments to the "cedars of Lebanon," *i. e.* to the most eminent persons of the land, particularly of Shechem; a prediction which the sequel shows to have been remarkably fulfilled.

VER. 16. Now therefore, if ye have done truly and sincerely, in that ye have made Abimelech king, and if ye have dwelt well with Jerubbaal and his house, and have done unto him according to the deserving of his hands:

*Chap. viii. 35.*

*If ye have done truly and sincerely.*—Properly rendered by the Vulgate, "If ye have acted well and without sin in appointing," &c. The phrase

is exegetical of "in truth," in the preceding verse. The same expression occurs Josh. xxiv. 14.

VER. 17. For my father fought for you, and adventured his life far, and delivered you out of the hand of Midian :

*Adventured his life far.*—Heb. "cast his life from over against you." A metaphorical expression, highly significant, and requiring us to conceive that Gideon, while occupying a place of safety, with his life unjeoparded, heroically resolves to throw it, as one would cast a spear, directly towards the enemy, into the very midst of peril. This he did when he fell with only three hundred men, upon the multitudinous hosts of the Midianites. Comp. chap. v. 18, and xii. 3.

VER. 18. And ye are risen up against my father's house this day, and have slain his sons, threescore and ten persons, upon one stone, and have made Abimelech, the son of his maid-servant, king over the men of Shechem, because he is your brother :

§ Ver. 5, 6.

*Have slain his sons.*—The murderous deed perpetrated by Abimelech is here charged upon the men of Shechem, on the ground of their having consented to it, approved of it, and probably assisted in it. Participants in crime justly share the guilt of the principals. *Son of his maid-servant.*—His concubine; so called here by way of disparagement and reproach. Maid-servants, however, were often adopted as concubines. (Ex. xxi. 7—10.) *Because he is your brother.*—Not because he is the son of Gideon, or for any intrinsic worth in himself, but simply from his bearing a relation to you, which you hope to turn to your advantage.

VER. 19. If ye then have dealt truly and sincerely with Jerubbaal, and with his house this day, then rejoice ye in Abimelech, and let him also rejoice in you :

‡ Isa. viii. 6. Phil. iii. 3.

*If ye have dealt truly and sincerely*—then rejoice ye, &c.—He therefore leaves it to the event, that is, to the providence of God, to determine whether they had done well or ill in their choice; *g. d.* "if your conduct to the house of Gideon can be justified at any bar of justice, honour, or conscience, then much good may you have of your king; but if you have dealt basely and wickedly in this matter, then never expect to prosper."

VER. 20. But if not, "let fire come out from Abimelech, and devour the men of Shechem, and the house of Millo; and let fire come out from the men of Shechem, and from the house of Millo, and devour Abimelech.

u Ver. 15, 56, 57.

*Let fire come out.*—Or, Heb. "fire shall come out." Not barely a prediction, but also an im-

precation or curse, as it is expressly called ver. 57. As the thorn or bramble may be the means of kindling other wood, because it may be easily ignited, so shall Abimelech be the means of kindling a fire of civil discord among you, that shall consume the rulers and great men of your country. The denunciations of prophets and good men, uttered under divine prompting, were often clothed with an efficiency, which laid a foundation for the character given of them in what is said of the two witnesses, (Rev. xi. 5, 6,) "And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies. These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power—to smite the earth with plagues as often as they will."

VER. 21. And Jotham ran away, and fled, and went to Beer, and dwelt there, for fear of Abimelech his brother.

x 2 Sam. xx. 14.

*Ran away and fled and went.*—This accumulation of equivalent expressions denotes the great haste with which Jotham made his escape; confirming the view given above, ver. 7, of the time when this address was delivered. *To Beer.*—Beer signifies a well, and is prefixed to the names of many places in scripture, from water being found in their vicinity. The place here designated seems to have been a city of the Gibeonites, (Josh. ix. 17,) within the boundary of the tribe of Benjamin. It was situated about ten miles north of Jerusalem, and not far from Gibeon. Eusebius takes notice of this place as being a considerable village in his time; and Maundrell informs us that the modern village stands in a pleasant situation on an edge of the hill, with a gentle declivity to the south. At the foot of the hill there is an excellent spring of water, which may have given it its name, and above it are the remains of an old church built by the empress Helena.

VER. 22. When Abimelech had reigned three years over Israel,

*When Abimelech had reigned three years over Israel.*—Here again the original for "reigned" (שרר) is a word properly signifying "to exercise despotic sway," a species of rule entirely different from the mild and gentle ascendancy indicated by the term שפט "to judge." The legitimate rulers of Israel at this time could never be termed שרים "princes," unless in consequence of the usurpation of a power which the primitive structure of their government did not allow. It is probable that Abimelech's authority did not at first extend beyond the city of Shechem, which had appointed him king. But by gradual encroachments he seems to have extended his sway over some of the adjacent towns and territories, compelling them to acknowledge his power, as we find him, ver. 50, going against Thebez, in the tribe of Ephraim, as a rebellious city that seems to have refused submission to him. By the phrase "reigned over Israel," we are doubtless to

understand a part of Israel, *i. e.* such tribes as submitted to him.

VER. 23. Then  $\nu$  God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem; and the men of Shechem  $\nu$  dealt treacherously with Abimelech:

$y$  1 Sam. xvi. 14; xviii. 9, 10. See 1 Kings xii. 15; xxii. 22. 2 Chron. x. 15; xviii. 19, &c. Isa. xix. 2, 14.  $z$  Isa. xxxiii. 1.

*God sent an evil spirit.*—That is, permitted the evil spirit of discord and treachery to break out. Under the direction of Providence, but not in consequence of any positive agency, jealousies were suffered to arise, which produced factions, and these factions in their turn produced insurrections, civil contentions, and bloodshed. Comp. 1 Kings xxii. 23. Ps. lxxviii. 49. The throne of violence never stands secure. The blood upon which it has been established seldom fails to undermine it at last. *Dealt treacherously.*—The original properly implies “faithlessness,” or the being wanting to one’s engagements, and is especially applied, Jer. iii. 20, to conjugal infidelity. The Shechemites brake their covenant with Abimelech and shook off his yoke, but how far they were chargeable in this with a moral delinquency in the sight of God, we pretend not to say. The word perhaps in this connexion does not carry any such implication with it.

VER. 24.  $\nu$  That the cruelty done to the three-score and ten sons of Jerubbaal might come, and their blood be laid upon Abimelech their brother which slew them, and upon the men of Shechem which aided him in the killing of his brethren.

$a$  1 Kings ii. 32. Esth. ix. 25. Ps. vii. 16. Matt. xxiii. 35, 36.

*That the cruelty, &c.*—That is, the just revenge of that cruelty; indicating the end, the scope of the sovereign permission mentioned in the preceding verse. Sooner or later the justice of God will make inquisition for blood, especially the blood of the innocent. *Which aided him.*—Heb. “which strengthened his hands.”

VER. 25. And the men of Shechem set liers in wait for him in the top of the mountains, and they robbed all that came along that way by them; and it was told Abimelech.

*Set liers in wait.*—The writer now goes on to state in what manner the evil spirit of dissension before spoken of began to produce its legitimate effects. The dissatisfaction which had been some time growing in secret at length taking advantage of Abimelech’s temporary absence from Shechem, assumed the character of open revolt, and a conspiracy was formed to make a prisoner of him whom they had lately hailed as prince. God is often pleased to punish bad men by the very persons who have contributed to their ele-

vation, thus chastising them with the rods which they themselves have gathered. *Robbed all that came along that way.*—Disappointed and impatient probably by reason of Abimelech’s delay in returning, those who were posted in ambush were prompted to enact upon others the violence intended for him, and more especially, we may suppose upon such of his known adherents as chanced to pass that way.

VER. 26. And Gaal the son of Ebed came with his brethren, and went over to Shechem: and the men of Shechem put their confidence in him.

*And Gaal the son of Ebed came, &c.*—The mention of this person is somewhat abruptly introduced, and we know no more of him than is here stated. It has been conjectured that he was a native Canaanite from his courting the Shechemites into subjection to the men of Hamor, who was anciently, in the days of Jacob, lord of this city. However this may be, there is little doubt that he was a man of rank and influence, who had once been a citizen of Shechem, but for reasons unknown had ceased for a time to be a resident there. Being however of a bold, aspiring, ambitious character, and finding the troubled state of the city propitious to his designs, he returns accompanied with a strong party of relatives, and begins plotting at once to put himself at the head of affairs. *Went over to Shechem.*—Or, Heb. “passed by into Shechem.” That is, probably, passed by the liers in wait. Knowing them to be a party hostile to Abimelech and favourable to their own views, they suffered them to pass without molestation. It is not unlikely that Gaal had been previously in correspondence with the disaffected part of the Shechemites, and was fully advised of the state of things in the city. *Put their confidence in him.*—So as to make him head of the faction which had been organizing against Abimelech, but which hitherto had lacked a suitable leader. Vulg. “at whose coming the inhabitants of Shechem took courage.”

VER. 27. And they went out into the fields, and gathered their vineyards, and trod the grapes, and made merry, and went into the  $\nu$  house of their god, and did eat and drink, and cursed Abimelech.

$l$  Ver. 4.

*And they went out, &c.*—Or, Heb. “and when they had gone out, &c.—then they made merry.” The original for “making merry” is properly “making songs, or making praises,” and refers to the custom of celebrating the harvest of vintage with songs of rejoicing and other festivities; of which see Lev. xix. 24. Isa. xiv. 9, 10. Jer. xxv. 30. *Went into the house of their god, &c.*—In imitation of the worshippers of the true God, who resorted to the sanctuary on such occasions. *Cursed Abimelech.*—Loading his name with the foulest reproaches and revilings, and perhaps calling upon their god to ratify their imprecations.

The excitement occasioned by wine in scenes of mirth and banqueting naturally prepares men for murders, treason, and every evil work.

VER. 28. And Gaal the son of Ebed said, "Who is Abimelech, and who is Shechem, that we should serve him? is not he the son of Jerubbaal? and Zebul his officer? serve the men of Hamor the father of Shechem: for why should we serve him?"

c 1 Sam. xxv. 10. 1 Kings xli. 16. d Gen. xxxiv. 2, 6.

*Who is Abimelech, and who is Shechem?*—That is, the Shechemites. Compare them together, put this base-born, worthless usurper by the side of us native Shechemites, and what reason can be assigned for our subjection to him? *Is he not the son of Jerubbaal?*—Spoken by way of disparagement and contempt, as if despising his memory and prompted by an indignant recollection of the act on which his name was founded, viz. his throwing down the altar of Baal. Thus do men of turbulent and ambitious spirits "despise dominions, and speak evil of dignities," and thus are the most valuable services of the best men requited by the vile and worthless. *And Zebul his officer?*—Heb. "his overseer;" probably made governor of Shechem by Abimelech in his absence. Are you so mean spirited and cowardly that you not only submit to the tyrant himself, but suffer his very servants to lord it over you, and particularly this contemptible Zebul? *Serve the men of Hamor.*—The descendants of Hamor. If ye will be in subjection, call some one to authority who is descended from the ancient and legitimate stock of Shechem, instead of this ignoble alien despot. This was perhaps a virtual challenge to them to fix their choice upon himself, as deriving his origin from this source. This is confirmed by what follows. *The father of Shechem.*—The father or founder of the city and the race of the Shechemites; the name of an individual standing for the whole people.

VER. 29. And "would to God this people were under my hand! then would I remove Abimelech. And he said unto Abimelech, Increase thine army, and come out.

e 2 Sam. xv. 4.

*Would to God this people were under my hand!* &c.—An exclamation disclosing the hidden source which usually prompts the complaints of artful demagogues against the existing order of things, and their large professions of concern for the public welfare; though seldom so frankly declared as in the present instance. His words clearly evince that his real object was not so much to recover the liberties of his countrymen, as to persuade them to a change of rulers. It is not easy to set bounds to the mischief that may be effected by an artful leader working upon the minds of an inflamed populace. *Then would I remove Abimelech.*—Would speedily remove, dispatch, or make way; with an emphatic expression, implying more in Hebrew than in English. *He said to Abimelech, Increase thine army, &c.*—

As we have no evidence that Abimelech was within hearing of these words, the probability is, that being heated with wine and puffed up with arrogance, Gaal addresses and defies him, in this bravado style, as though actually present. Yet it may be, that he sent word by some of Abimelech's friends to their master, that he was willing to dispute the point with him, allowing him at the same time every advantage on the score of numbers which he could desire. Let him gather all his allies, and do his worst, still he would find the son of Ebed more than a match for him.

VER. 30. And when Zebul, the ruler of the city, heard the words of Gaal the son of Ebed, his anger was kindled.

*His anger was kindled.*—However he might have felt for his master's honour, it was scarcely to be expected that he should pass by the insult cast upon himself. It would seem, (ver. 36,) that from motives of policy he had hitherto temporized with the disaffected party at Shechem, but he now becomes decided, though he is still restrained from open measures against the insurgents.

VER. 31. And he sent messengers unto Abimelech privily, saying, Behold, Gaal the son of Ebed, and his brethren, be come to Shechem; and, behold, they fortify the city against thee.

*Sent messengers—privily.*—Heb. "craftily, in fraud." That is, the pretended object of his sending them did not correspond with his real object. His "givings out" were far removed from his "true-meant designs." If he had discovered himself to be wholly for Abimelech, the men of the city might at once have risen against him and put him to death. He therefore goes warily to work to acquaint Abimelech with the enemies' designs, and to put him in a way to revenge the insults cast upon them both. *They fortify the city against thee.*—Heb. צָרַם צָרַם "are besieging," from the root צָרַם "to besiege, to press with siege," usually spoken of hostile operations, carried on by invaders from without, and not without great violence applied to defensive measures adopted by those within a city. For this reason the expression, we suppose, is to be taken metaphorically for the influence exerted by Gaal and his party upon the minds of the citizens, in stirring up, exciting, augmenting the sedition that was spreading through the city. They were engaged in pressing, urging, instigating the citizens against Abimelech, and therefore it was important for him to make haste in advancing upon Shechem.

VER. 32. Now, therefore, up by night, thou, and the people that is with thee, and lie in wait in the field:

VER. 33. And it shall be, that in the morning, as soon as the sun is up, thou shalt rise early, and set upon the city: and behold, when he and the people that is with him come out against thee,

then mayest thou do to them as thou shalt find occasion.

*Set upon the city.*—We doubt if this rendering gives the true force of the original, or the real policy of Abimelech. He does not seem to have designed, at least at present, to attack the city while Gaal was in it. He even abstained from this after he had overcome him in the open field, and nothing that we can see prevented his pushing his conquest into the heart of Shechem, (ver. 40.) But the true import of the word is to spread one's self, to expand, and the phrase may be rendered, "spread thyself (thy forces) against or towards the city," *i. e.* with a view to lure out Gaal to an engagement in the open field. *As thou shalt find occasion.*—Heb. "as thine hand shall find;" an Hebraism, properly rendered in our translation. Comp. 1 Sam. x. 7, where the same phrase occurs.

VER. 34. And Abimelech rose up, and all the people that were with him, by night, and they laid wait against Shechem in four companies.

*Abimelech rose up.*—Addressed himself to the matter before him, entered upon the business in hand. See on Josh. i. 2. *Laid wait.*—Probably in some of the mountains in the immediate vicinity, as is to be inferred from ver. 36. *In four companies.*—Heb. "in four heads;" a term applied to the general divisions of any thing.

VER. 35. And Gaal the son of Ebed went out, and stood in the entering of the gate of the city; and Abimelech rose up, and the people that were with him, from lying in wait.

*Gaal went out—and stood at the entering of the gate.*—Probably not alone, but at the head of his forces, either to lead them forth upon some short excursion about the city, or to be prepared for whatever assault might be meditated against him. "Had he been as valiant as he was vigilant, it might have gone better with him and his partisans."—*Trapp.*

VER. 36. And when Gaal saw the people, he said to Zebul, Behold, there come people down from the top of the mountains. And Zebul said unto him, Thou seest the shadow of the mountains as if they were men.

*He said to Zebul, Behold, &c.*—The familiarity existing between these two individuals, under their present circumstances, shows very clearly that Zebul had hitherto dissembled his real sentiments and purposes. It is not possible otherwise to account for such an interview at this time between parties so related.

VER. 37. And Gaal spake again, and said, See, there come people down by the middle of the land, and another company come along by the plain of Meonenim.

*By the middle of the land.*—Heb. "from the navel of the land." That is, as Gesenius and

other lexicographers explain it, from the height, the most elevated summit, of the land. *By the plain of Meonenim.*—Or, Heb. "by the oak of the augurers, or regarders of times;" probably a tree or cluster of trees where superstitious auguries were performed, or where certain soothsayers dwelt.

VER. 38. Then said Zebul unto him, Where is now thy mouth, wherewith thou saidst, Who is Abimelech, that we should serve him? is not this the people that thou hast despised? go out, I pray now, and fight with them.

*f Ver. 23, 29.*

*Where is now thy mouth?*—Where is now thy boasting, thy vain bravado, of which thou wert lately so profuse? Does thy courage begin to quail upon the bare sight of the enemy? In proportion as Abimelech approached, Zebul begins to speak with more effrontery, and throw off his disguise, though his words still had the air of merely exciting Gaal to go forth like a man and redeem the pledge he had before given. Gaal thus had proof that those who are rebels themselves must not expect fidelity in their associates.

VER. 39. And Gaal went out before the men of Shechem, and fought with Abimelech.

*And Gaal went out, &c.*—The only becoming answer to such cutting taunts and sarcasms was to sally boldly forth against the enemy. But the special hand of God was in the event for his punishment. "Where iniquity breakfasts, calamity will be sure to dine."—*Trapp.*

VER. 40. And Abimelech chased him, and he fled before him, and many were overthrown and wounded, even unto the entering of the gate.

VER. 41. And Abimelech dwelt at Arumah; and Zebul thrust out Gaal and his brethren, that they should not dwell in Shechem.

*Abimelech dwelt in Arumah.*—Heb. "sat down in Arumah." He retired hither for the present with his army, still cherishing the design of gaining farther advantages. *Zebul thrust out Gaal and his brethren.*—These words, it would seem, are not to be taken as indicating a violent expulsion. For if Zebul and his party had obtained a complete ascendancy in the city, why did they not at once deliver up Gaal and his faction to Abimelech, and receive him within the walls? The fact undoubtedly was, that notwithstanding the recent defeat, the crafty Zebul saw that Abimelech's interest in the city was not strong enough to justify him in completely throwing off the mask, and he accordingly went to work, like a skilful master of intrigue, to undermine Gaal in the affections of the people by hypocritically grieving over the recent disaster, and persuading them that it was owing to the cowardice and bad management of their leader. This is the account Josephus gives of the matter, and we think the correct one. The consequence was, that Gaal

made an ignominious exit from the city, and we hear no more of him.

VER. 42. And it came to pass on the morrow, that the people went out into the field; and they told Abimelech.

*The people went out into the field.*—To follow their usual employments. As Abimelech had withdrawn his forces, they issued forth not dreaming but they were entirely secure. But the wrath of a king does not so easily subside. *They told Abimelech.*—A Hebrew idiom for “it was told to Abimelech.”

VER. 43. And he took the people, and divided them into three companies, and laid wait in the field, and looked, and behold, the people were come forth out of the city; and he rose up against them, and smote them.

*And he took the people, &c.*—We prefer to render this in the pluperfect, “for he had taken,” &c., as it seems far less likely that he should set an ambush, while the people were already in the field, and could easily discover all his movements. Moreover, the last clause of the verse as read in the original, “behold, the people coming forth,” plainly shows that their egress from the city took place after the ambush was laid.

VER. 44. And Abimelech, and the company that was with him, rushed forward, and stood in the entering of the gate of the city: and the two other companies ran upon all the people that were in the fields, and slew them.

*And Abimelech and the company that was with him, &c.*—This verse details in a more particular manner the circumstance of the “smiting” mentioned above, and at the same time anticipates the question, why the people attacked did not at once betake themselves to the city. Because, says the narrative, Abimelech with a strong detachment interposed himself and cut off the communication between them and the city, that they might neither make their retreat within the walls, nor receive any succours from thence. “When we go out about our business, we are not sure that we shall come home again; there are deaths both in the city and in the field.”—Henry.

VER. 45. And Abimelech fought against the city all that day; and he took the city, and slew the people that was therein, and beat down the city, and sowed it with salt.

<sup>g</sup> Ver. 20.  
h Deut. xxix. 23. 1 Kings xii. 25. 2 Kings iii. 25.

*Took the city, &c.*—Though the city of his nativity, yet he fell upon it with merciless barbarity, laid it in ruins, by beating down its walls and buildings, and slew all the inhabitants! His sowing it with salt was in token that he designed it to become a perpetual desolation. The salt was not intended to render it barren, for a town

or city is not designed for culture, but for building; but as salt is an emblem of incorruption and perpetuity, it was employed to perpetuate the memory of this transaction. By comparing Deut. xxix. 33, it would appear that there was an allusion in the act to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Yet all his efforts did not avail to make its desolation permanent, for it was afterwards rebuilt, and became so considerable a place that all Israel resorted thither to make Rehoboam king. (1 Kings xii. 1.)

VER. 46. And when all the men of the tower of Shechem heard that, they entered into a hold of the house of the god Berith.

i Chap. viii. 33.

*The men of the tower of Shechem.*—Heb. “the lords or masters of the tower.” How these persons are distinguished from the other inhabitants of Shechem, or how this tower stood related to this city, it is extremely difficult to determine. It is not unlikely that it was a castle belonging to the city and situated in its vicinity, to which a considerable portion of the population had previously betaken themselves to escape the fury of their invader. Whatever it were, it was now deemed too insecure an asylum to trust to, and its occupants withdrew to a stronghold in the precincts of the temple, where they promised themselves safety if not from its strength, at least from its sacredness. But in putting themselves under the protection of their idol, that which they hoped would have been for their welfare, proved to them a snare and a trap. It is highly probable that this was no other than the place called, (ver. 6,) “the house of Millo,” which was to be involved in the catastrophe predicted in Jotham’s curse, (ver. 20,) an event most strikingly accomplished when the place was set on fire by Abimelech.

VER. 47. And it was told Abimelech, that all the men of the tower of Shechem were gathered together.

VER. 48. And Abimelech gat him up to mount <sup>h</sup> Zalmon, he and all the people that were with him; and Abimelech took an axe in his hand, and cut down a bough from the trees, and took it, and laid it on his shoulder, and said unto the people that were with him, What ye have seen me do, make haste, and do as I have done.

k Psa. lxxviii. 14.

*Mount Zalmon.*—A mountain in the vicinity of Shechem, so called from the abundant shade caused by the forests with which it was covered. See Psa. lxxviii. 15.

VER. 49. And all the people likewise cut down every man his bough, and followed Abimelech, and put them to the hold, and set the hold on fire upon them: so that all the men of the tower of Shechem died also, about a thousand men and women.

VER. 50. Then went Abimelech to Thebez, and encamped against Thebez, and took it.

*Encamped against Thebez.*—A city of Ephraim in the neighbourhood of Shechem, and about thirteen miles west from Bethshan (Scythopolis). According to Eusebius and Jerome it continued till their time, or to about four hundred years after Christ, but at the present day it has wholly disappeared.

VER. 51. But there was a strong tower within the city, and thither fled all the men and women, and all they of the city, and shut it to them, and gat them up to the top of the tower.

*A strong tower within the city.*—Doubtless a sort of citadel such as exists in most considerable towns in western Asia, and which serves the people as a last retreat when the town is taken by an enemy, and where the people shut themselves up on occasions of popular tumult. In some parts of the East, such towers are to be seen in the open country, where the neighbouring peasantry may deposit their more valuable property, or themselves take refuge, when the approach of an enemy or of a plundering tribe is expected.

VER. 52. And Abimelech came unto the tower, and fought against it, and went hard unto the door of the tower to burn it with fire.

VER. 53. And a certain woman cast a piece of a millstone upon Abimelech's head, and all to break his skull.

1 2 Sam. xi. 21.

*A piece of a millstone.*—Literally, "a piece of a chariot-wheel," but elsewhere applied to upper-millstones. *And all to break his skull.*—In nearly all the copies of the English Bible printed in England, the verb appears in the past tense "brake," whereas in all or nearly all the American editions the word is "break," as in the text above. The former reading is certainly the correct one. The error in our editions has arisen from a misapprehension of the true meaning of the phrase "all to." According to the present use of language, this would seem rather to express intention than the result of action, but it really expresses the latter. "All to," in many of the old English writers, means "altogether," "entirely," or as Johnson says, is used "as a particle of mere enforcement;" and so doubtless it is used here; *q. d.* "she entirely or utterly brake his skull." Not understanding this, many copies of the common version have changed it to indicate intention, by substituting "break" for "brake."

VER. 54. Then he called hastily unto the young man his armour-bearer, and said unto him, Draw thy sword, and slay me, that men say not of me, A woman slew him. And his young man thrust him through, and he died.

m 1 Sam. xxxi. 4.

*And he died.*—Abimelech's devices to avoid the disgrace of perishing by the hands of a woman, availed him little, for nearly three centuries afterwards we find his death ascribed to the woman who threw the piece of millstone from the wall. (2 Sam. xi. 21.) "There now lies the greatness of Abimelech; on one stone he had slain his seventy brethren, and now a stone slays him; his head had stolen the crown of Israel, and now his head is smitten. O the just succession of the revenges of God! Gideon's ephod is punished with the blood of his sons; the blood of his sons is shed by the procurement of the Shechemites; the blood of the Shechemites is shed by Abimelech; the blood of Abimelech is spilt by a woman. The retaliations of God are sure and just, and make a more due pedigree than descent of nature."—*Bp. Hall.*

VER. 55. And when the men of Israel saw that Abimelech was dead, they departed every man unto his place.

VER. 56. "Thus God rendered the wickedness of Abimelech, which he did unto his father, in slaying his seventy brethren;

n Ver. 24. Job xxxi. 3. Psa. xciv. 23. Prov. v. 22.

*Rendered the wickedness.*—Required, recompensed the wickedness. Both the fratricide Abimelech and the unprincipled men of Shechem had the iniquity visited upon them of which they had been guilty. Man's judgment may be avoided, but there is no escaping from the judgment of God. The recorded end of Abimelech suggests the remark, (1.) That they who thirst for blood, God will at last give them their own blood to drink. (2.) The weak in God's hand can confound the mighty, and those who walk in pride he is able to abase. (3.) They who in life consulted only their pride and ambition, will usually die as they live, more solicitous that their honour should be preserved on earth, than that their souls be saved from hell. (4.) The methods proud men take to secure a great name, often only serve to perpetuate their infamy.

VER. 57. And all the evil of the men of Shechem did God render upon their heads: and upon them came the curse of Jotham the son of Jerubbaal.

o Ver. 20.

## CHAPTER X.

VER. 1. AND after Abimelech there arose to defend Israel, Tola the son of Puah, the son of Dodo, a man of Issachar; and he dwelt in Shamir in mount Ephraim.

a Chap. ii. 16.

*Arose to defend.*—Heb. "arose to save or deliver." To sustain the office and act the part of a saviour or deliverer, in case it should be necessary. They were now freed from the tyranny of Abimelech, and as far as appears enjoyed prevail-

ing peace, yet they were still liable to annoyance and incursions from the neighbouring powers, and it was fitting that they should have a head to preside over their concerns, repressing internal discords, maintaining union, guarding against idolatry, and preparing at all times to take the field in their defence. *Dwelt in Shamir, in mount Ephraim.*—Though of the tribe of Issachar, yet when raised to the government, he came and dwelt in mount Ephraim, as being a more central station, one to which the people might more conveniently resort for judgment.

VER. 2. And he judged Israel twenty and three years, and died, and was buried in Shamir.

VER. 3. And after him arose Jair, a Gileadite, and judged Israel twenty and two years.

VER. 4. And he had thirty sons that <sup>b</sup>rode on thirty ass colts, and they had thirty cities, <sup>c</sup>which are called Havoth-jair unto this day, which *are* in the land of Gilead.

<sup>b</sup> Chap. v. 10; xii. 14.    <sup>c</sup> Deut. iii. 14.

*Thirty sons that rode on thirty ass colts, &c.*—A very remarkable indication of eastern manners, and of the state of the times. It seems that the people so generally went about on foot, that to ride on an ass, that is, to ride at all, was considered a mark of wealth and distinction. So we afterwards read of Abdon, another judge, (chap. xii. 14,) that “he had forty sons and thirty nephews that rode on threescore and ten ass colts.” No doubt this conveyed to the ancient Hebrews the idea of as much consideration as it does among us to say, that a person keeps a carriage. Josephus, perhaps from thinking the indication undignified, changes the asses to horses. *Thirty cities called Havoth-jair unto this day.*—Heb. “villages of Jair.” We read in Numb. xxxii. 41, that “Jair the son of Manasseh went and took the small towns thereof, and called them Havoth-jair,” from which some have supposed that the Jair there mentioned is the same person with the judge spoken of in the passage before us. But the former was doubtless the ancestor of the latter, though the names of the villages in question were retained unaltered from the original possessor. Their number, as we learn from 1 Chron. ii. 22, was at first only twenty-three, but the remaining seven were added in process of time. The circumstance affords evidence of the rank and opulence of the family.

VER. 5. And Jair died, and was buried in Camon.

VER. 6. And <sup>a</sup>the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD, and <sup>b</sup>served Baalim, and Ashtaroth, and <sup>c</sup>the gods of Syria, and the gods of <sup>d</sup>Zidon, and the gods of Moab, and the gods of the children of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines, and forsook the LORD, and served not him.

<sup>a</sup> Chap. ii. 11; iii. 7; iv. 1; vi. 1; xiii. 1.

<sup>b</sup> Chap. ii. 13.    <sup>c</sup> Chap. ii. 12.

<sup>d</sup> 1 Kings xi. 33.    Psa. cvii. 36.

*Did evil again.*—Heb. “added to do evil.” The defection here mentioned was undoubtedly very gross, and of aggravated enormity. They became in a sense universal idolaters, adopting all the gods of the surrounding nations. They scarcely seem to have admitted the God of Israel as one of the many deities they worshipped, but to have cast him off altogether. “Those that think to serve both God and mammon will soon come entirely to forsake God, and to serve mammon only. If God have not all the heart, he will soon have none of it.”—Henry.

VER. 7. And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he <sup>a</sup>sold them into the hands of the Philistines, and into the hands of the children of Ammon.

<sup>a</sup> Chap. ii. 14.    1 Sam. xii. 9.

*And he sold them.*—See on chap. ii. 14. *Into the hands of the Philistines and—of Ammon.* The one on the west, the other on the east; so that they were grievously annoyed on both sides.

VER. 8. And that year they vexed and oppressed the children of Israel eighteen years, all the children of Israel that *were* on the other side Jordan in the land of the Amorites, which is in Gilead.

*That year they vexed and oppressed the children of Israel eighteen years.*—We know not what sense to make of this clause as it now stands, which seems to bring an oppression of eighteen years' continuance within the space of one year. Probably the solution is to render the verbs in the pluperfect, “and that year they *had* vexed and oppressed them eighteen years;” *i. e.* that year completed the period of eighteen years during which they had proved a scourge to them. The oppression commenced during the administration of Jair, perhaps nearly at the same time with the apostasy which caused it, and at the time of his death had continued eighteen years. This last event, though occurring after the apostasy commenced, is mentioned before it by prolepsis or anticipation, than which nothing is more frequent in the sacred writers. The terms employed in the original to indicate the severity of the oppression are very expressive. They import “crushing and breaking to pieces,” a metaphor apparently drawn from the action of two mill-stones upon the substance placed between them; to which Henry strikingly compares the condition of the Israelites at this time, under the grinding oppression of the two hostile powers on either side of them, the Ammonites and the Philistines. Another remark of the same commentator respecting this apostasy of Israel is well worthy of insertion here. “God had appointed that if any of the cities of Israel should revolt to idolatry, the rest should make war upon them and cut them off. (Deut. xiii. 12, *et infr.*) They had been jealous enough in this matter, almost to an extreme, in the case of the altar set up by the two tribes and a half; (Josh. xxii. ;) but now they are grown so very bad, that when one city was infected with idolatry, the next took the

infection, and, instead of punishing, imitated and outdid it; and, therefore, since they that should have been revengers to execute wrath upon them that did this evil were themselves guilty, or bare the sword in vain, God brought the neighbouring nations upon them to chastise them for their apostasy."

VER. 9. Moreover, the children of Ammon passed over Jordan, to fight also against Judah, and against Benjamin, and against the house of Ephraim: so that Israel was sore distressed.

*The children of Ammon passed over Jordan.*—The Philistines probably harassed the children of Israel in the south of Canaan, west of the Jordan; and the Ammonites the two tribes and a half to the east of that river. The spirit of conquest or of aggression, however, soon led the latter to cross the Jordan. It seems probable that they rather vexed and distressed the trans-Jordanic tribes, than kept them in entire subjection; and afterwards extended their incursions to the west of the Jordan. They were justly punished by the Amorites; for they had so utterly degenerated and conformed to their heathen neighbours, that Ezekiel, in addressing the Israelitish nation, (chap. xvi. 3,) says by a bold figure, "Thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother a Hittite."

VER. 10. 'And the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, saying, We have sinned against thee, both because we have forsaken our God, and also served Baalim.

*1* Sam. xii. 10.

*Both because we have forsaken, &c.*—They specify distinctly the two forms of their transgression; first, in departing wickedly from God, secondly, in serving idols. Under the deep impression of their guilt in this conduct, they made good the words of the prophet, (Isa. xxvi. 16,) "Lord, in trouble have they visited thee; they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them." The first step of a sinner's return to God is the discovery of his own great guilt, and a sense of his deserved ruin; and this, in order to be available, must be accompanied with the most sincere and penitent acknowledgment of his aggravated offences.

VER. 11. And the LORD said unto the children of Israel, *Did not I deliver you* <sup>b</sup> *from the Egyptians, and* <sup>c</sup> *from the Amorites,* <sup>d</sup> *from the children of Ammon,* <sup>e</sup> *and from the Philistines?*

<sup>a</sup> Ex. xiv. 30. <sup>f</sup> Numb. xxi. 21, 24, 25.  
<sup>m</sup> Chap. iii. 12, 13. <sup>n</sup> Chap. iii. 31.

*And the Lord said, &c.*—In what manner these reproofs were conveyed to the Israelites we are not informed. It was probably through the medium of some inspired prophet, or of the high-priest, whose duty it was to learn the will of Heaven in all trying emergencies.

VER. 12. <sup>o</sup> *The Zidonians also,* <sup>p</sup> *and the Amalekites, and the Maonites* <sup>q</sup> *did oppress you; and ye cried to me, and I delivered you out of their hand.*

<sup>o</sup> Chap. v. 19. <sup>p</sup> Chap. vi. 3. <sup>q</sup> Ps. cvl. 42, 43.

VER. 13. <sup>r</sup> *Yet ye have forsaken me, and served other gods: wherefore I will deliver you no more.*

<sup>r</sup> Deut. xxxii. 15. Jer. ii. 13.

VER. 14. Go and <sup>s</sup> *cry unto the gods which ye have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation.*

<sup>s</sup> Deut. xxxiii. 37, 38. 2 Kings iii. 13. Jer. ii. 28.

*Go and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen.*—Which ye have not served upon compulsion, but which ye have freely and voluntarily chosen. The Most High does not turn away his ear from their prayers, nor sink them in utter despair, yet he sends a sharp and upbraiding answer, of which the immediate effect would be to awaken their consciences, and confound them under a sense of their baseness and ingratitude. Many a time they had been delivered, and those very oppressors subdued under them; yet they had vilely sinned against their own mercies. He therefore refers them for help to the gods whom they had served, to rebuke their folly and convince them of the weakness of these lying vanities. Yet the emphatic declaration, "I will deliver you no more," is to be understood conditionally, in case their idols were kept among them; for the divine threatenings always imply a reserve of mercy to the truly penitent. (1.) If God appears to frown upon the returning sinner, let him not despair; it is no more than his desert, indeed, if he be utterly rejected; but with the Lord there is mercy and forgiveness, and a heart of overwhelming kindness is sometimes temporarily concealed by an aspect of wrath. (2.) When we are brought to a real sense of our sins, we shall see the vanity and insufficiency of those things to make us either safe or happy, in which we formerly trusted.

VER. 15. And the children of Israel said unto the LORD, We have sinned: *'do thou unto us whatsoever seemeth good unto thee; deliver us only, we pray thee, this day.*

<sup>t</sup> 1 Sam. iii. 18. 2 Sam. xv. 26.

*Do unto us whatsoever seemeth good unto thee.*—Heb. "do unto us according to all (that is) good in thine eyes."

VER. 16. <sup>u</sup> *And they put away the strange gods from among them, and served the LORD: and* <sup>v</sup> *his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel.*

<sup>u</sup> 2 Chron. vii. 14; xv. 8. Jer. xviii. 7, 8.  
<sup>x</sup> Psa. cvl. 44, 45. Isa. lxiii. 9.

*They put away the strange gods.*—Heb. "the gods of the stranger." In coming before God, not only is every excuse for sin to be renounced, and the plea of "guilty, guilty," sincerely to be

made, but if we would approve our repentance real, the sins we confess are instantly to be discarded. When this is the case, and our transgressions are truly our bitterness and burden, though we may stand trembling under the black review, yet there is hope. *His soul was grieved.*—Not that there is really any grief in God, for being infinitely happy in himself, he is inaccessible to any such emotion; but it is spoken after the manner of men, to represent to us more forcibly the abounding compassions of his heart. He acted towards his people like one who felt for their sufferings,—like a kind father, who cannot but be grieved over the afflictions of his children. He had pity upon them, restraining his severities, and giving new and merciful complexion to his dispensations towards them. The Hebrew is, “shortened, contracted, straitened;” a term expressive of a state of mind the opposite of equanimity, long-suffering, forbearance; implying at once a sympathy with suffering, and a kind of impatience in redressing it. How consoling the thought, that no prodigal returns to God but his paternal heart yearns over him, touched with a feeling of his wretchedness, and ready to embrace the most miserable of sinners.

VER. 17. Then the children of Ammon were gathered together, and encamped in Gilead. And the children of Israel assembled themselves together, and encamped in Mizpeh.

y Chap. xi. 11, 29. Gen. xxxi. 49.

*The children of Ammon were gathered together.*—Heb. “were cried together;” i. e. were convened by means of criers sent over the country in every direction, to stir up all the enemies of Israel. *Encamped in Mizpeh.*—There were several places of this name, but as the war here described was waged on the east of the Jordan, the Mizpeh here alluded to in the text was undoubtedly that in the trans-Jordanic half-tribe of Manasseh, and of which an account is given Josh. xi. 3.

VER. 18. And the people and princes of Gilead said one to another, What man is he that will begin to fight against the children of Ammon? he shall be head over all the inhabitants of Gilead.

z Chap. xi. 8, 11.

*The people and the princes said.*—Heb. “the people the princes said;” indicating by a remarkable phraseology how closely related, not to say identified, were the people and the rulers among these eastern tribes. Though the nominal distinction existed, yet the interests of each were so completely the same, that their respective denominations are as it were merged in each other. How different the spectacle presented by the governments of nearly every European nation for the last two thousand years, and continued to the present day! *Shall be head, &c.*—Shall not only take the conduct of the present war, but when the war is over shall, as a reward for his services, be continued as the governing head of

this people. This verse comes in here as an introduction to the following narrative.

## CHAPTER XI.

VER. 1. Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty man of valour, and he was the son of a harlot: and Gilead begat Jephthah.

a Heb. xi. 32. b Chap. vi. 12. 2 Kings v. 1.

*Now Jephthah—was a mighty man of valour.*—More properly perhaps, “had become.” The original מָהַר is not merely a verb of existence, but denotes the transition of its subject, from one state to another. When its meaning is simply “is,” or “was,” it is almost invariably omitted in the original. Here, however, it is inserted, and probably hints at the process by which Jephthah had gradually become distinguished. *The son of a harlot.*—Heb. “a woman, a harlot.” Not begotten in lawful wedlock. The Jewish commentators for the most part give a softening exposition of the term here employed, as if it imported merely a concubine, or a gentile, i. e. a foreign strange woman, not one of the Israelitish race as she is termed in ver. 2. But without doing violence to its ordinary and most legitimate sense, we know not how to depart from the rendering of the text. At the same time it is to be observed, that our limited knowledge of the actual state of manners and society in those ancient periods, prevents us from affirming that the word conveys precisely the idea of public addictedness to degrading vice, which its modern acceptation imports. It may have indicated a character somewhat less vile and iniquitous, but the ambiguity of the term is not sufficient to cover all disgrace in Jephthah's origin. His extraction, however, whatever it was, was the fault and disgrace of his parents rather than of himself, and a man should not be reproached with the unhappiness of his birth, when his own conduct bespeaks him deserving a more honourable relation. *Gilead begat Jephthah.*—One of the descendants of the Gilead mentioned Num. xxxii. 1; Josh. xvii. 1, 3, and bearing his name. To what tribe he belonged is not certain, but probably that of Manasseh beyond the Jordan. (1 Chron. vii. 14.)

VER. 2. And Gilead's wife bare him sons; and his wife's sons grew up, and they thrust out Jephthah, and said unto him, Thou shalt not inherit in our father's house; for thou art the son of a strange woman.

*Gilead's wife.*—His lawful wife, in contradistinction from Jephthah's mother. *Thou shalt not inherit, &c.*—That he was not entitled to share in the inheritance was a matter of course, for even the children of the lawful secondary wife or concubine were not admitted to this privilege, (Gen. xxi. 10; xxv. 6,) much less the issue of such an illicit connexion as that in question. But Jephthah's brethren were probably actuated by some secret motive of jealousy or envy, which they would fain conceal by the plea of illegiti-

macy and outlawry here advanced; for it does not appear that his expulsion from his father's house was necessary simply on this account. At any rate, he evidently regarded it as a gross outrage upon his rights, (ver. 7,) and one which the elders and magistrates of the city connived at and abetted. The pretence of legal right is often a mere cover to the foulest wrongs and injuries. *Of a strange woman.*—Heb. "of another woman." That is other than his lawful wife, and probably a foreigner. See on Exod. i. 8. Deut. xxix. 26. Jer. xxii. 26.

VER. 3. Then Jephthah fled from his brethren, and dwelt in the land of Tob; and there were gathered *vain men* to Jephthah, and went out with him.

c Chap. ix. 4. 1 Sam. xxii. 2.

*Fled from his brethren.*—Heb. "from the face of his brethren." *In the land of Tob.*—A region so called perhaps from the name of the individual who was its first or most distinguished inhabitant. Its precise locality is not known, but from the facility of communication it was doubtless in the near vicinity of Gilead. Comp. 2 Sam. x. 6, 8. *Were gathered vain men to Jephthah, and went out with him.*—Heb. "empty men;" that is, idle, worthless, profligate men, a lawless rabble. The original ריקים is a term of great reproach, being the same with Raca, in the New Testament. The meaning evidently is, that Jephthah, being without any inheritance or family connexions to afford him a subsistence, and being expelled from his native place, became an adventurer, and his character having brought around him a number of brave but idle men, perhaps similarly circumstanced, he made predatory incursions into the neighbouring countries. This is what is meant by "going out with him;" a phrase frequently applied to warlike and plundering inroads upon an enemy's territory. Probably they went out particularly into the land of the Ammonites, to retaliate the incursions which the latter made into Israel; and Jephthah's success or skill in these freebooting expeditions acquired him so much reputation, that the people would naturally be led to look to him when they wanted a military leader. The mode of life here indicated is precisely that which was followed by David, when his reputation brought around him men of similar character to these followers of Jephthah. This kind of military robbery is far from being considered dishonourable in the East. On the contrary, the fame thus acquired is thought as fair as any that can be obtained through any class of military operations. An Arab or Tartar desires no higher or brighter distinction than that of a successful military robber; and to make that fame unsullied, it is only necessary that his expedition should not be against his own nation or tribe.

VER. 4. And it came to pass in process of time, that the children of Ammon made war against Israel.

*The children of Ammon made war against Israel.*—Or, perhaps more properly, "had made

war," and were now encamped in Gilead. We are here carried back in point of time to the period mentioned chap. x. 17, the historian having returned from his digression concerning the parentage and early life of Jephthah. The words "in process of time," Heb. "after days," probably refer to the period immediately antecedent to the expulsion of Jephthah. Many days after he had been thrust out in disgrace, he was brought back again with honour.

VER. 5. And it was so, that when the children of Ammon made war against Israel, the elders of Gilead went to fetch Jephthah out of the land of Tob:

*Went to fetch Jephthah.*—Heb. "to take;" that is, to persuade to go. See note on Josh. xxiv. 3, and on Gen. ii. 15. This was undoubtedly with the approbation, if not with the express direction of Jehovah.

VER. 6. And they said unto Jephthah, Come, and be our captain, that we may fight with the children of Ammon.

*Come, and be our captain.*—The manner in which God overrules the ill-meant actions of men to the furtherance of his designs is here very observable. If Jephthah had not been, as he was, the object of his brethren's unkindness, he had lost the opportunity to exercise and improve his martial genius, and so failed to signalise himself in the eyes of his countrymen. So it often happens that the providences which are, to appearance, our greatest misfortune, are necessary to fit us for the work for which God designs us.

VER. 7. And Jephthah said unto the elders of Gilead, *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?

d Gen. xxvi. 27.

*Did not ye hate me, and expel me, &c.*—Though the act of his expulsion was primarily that of Jephthah's brethren, yet these elders had either actively aided in it, or by forbearing to prevent or punish the injury, had virtually made themselves partakers in the guilt of it; and with this he plainly charges them. "Magistrates that have power to protect those that are injured, if they do not do them right, really do them wrong."—*Henry.* *Why are ye come unto me now when ye are in distress?*—Not that Jephthah was unwilling to save his country, but he thought fit to give them a hint of their former unkindness, that they might repent of it, and in future be more sensible of their obligations. Thus Joseph humbled his brethren before he made himself known to them. The same language too may be applied by Christ, to impenitent sinners, who after doing what in them lies to expel the Saviour from his inheritance in their own hearts, in the church, and in the world, still fly to him and supplicate him for succour in the day of their distress.

VER. 8. "And the elders of Gilead said unto Jephthah, Therefore we turn again to thee now, that thou mayest go with us, and fight against the children of Ammon, and be our head over all the inhabitants of Gilead.

e Chap. x. 18. f Luke xvii. 4. g Chap. x. 18.

*Therefore we turn again unto thee.*—This cannot be meant of a local turning or returning to Jephthah, for the words were obviously spoken at the first interview, from which they had not yet retired. The phrase doubtless has reference to a change of mind, a turning again in the state of their feelings towards him. It is as if they had said, "We are convinced that we have done thee wrong, and that thou hast just ground of complaint; but we renounce the feelings we have formerly cherished, and we now come to acknowledge our fault and to make thee full reparation. As a proof of our sincerity we proffer thee this honour, which shall counterbalance the dishonour we have put upon thee." The incident may serve to remind us, (1.) That the least we can do when we have injured a fellow-being, is to confess frankly our wrong, and ask his pardon. (2.) That we should beware of despising or trampling upon any man, so as to make him our enemy, for we know not how much need we may have of his friendship and services before we die. (3.) That men of worth who are undervalued, disparaged, and ill-treated should bear it with meekness and cheerfulness, leaving it to God to vindicate their good name in his own way. Their judgment shall finally come forth as the noon-day.

VER. 9. And Jephthah said unto the elders of Gilead, If ye bring me home again to fight against the children of Ammon, and the LORD deliver them before me, shall I be your head?

*If ye bring me home again.*—If ye recall me from the place where I am now fixed, to the place from whence I was expelled. *Shall I be your head?*—Not only your leader in this war, but permanent judge and chief magistrate. Having to deal with persons whom he had reason to distrust, he determines to bind them to their compact by the most unequivocal assurances. "Jephthah's wisdom had not been answerable to his valour, if he had not made his match beforehand. He bargains therefore for his sovereignty ere he win it."—*Bp. Hall.* In all our agreements it is well to be explicit and solemn, that afterwards there may be no room for subterfuge or evasion. As the service before him was one in which he would naturally endanger his life, he deems it right that he should be duly rewarded, especially as he seems to have thought it was only in this way he could effectually secure himself against the treacherous designs of his brethren, whose ill will and injuries he had once experienced. That there might also have been some tincture of ambition insinuating itself into his motives, is, perhaps, not improbable. The spirit of pious dependence, however, on the divine blessing argues strongly in favour of his general spirit. He does not speak with confidence of his success, but

qualifies it with a peradventure—"if the Lord deliver them before me,"—as if intending to remind his countrymen to look up to God, as he himself did, as the giver of victory.

VER. 10. And the elders of Gilead said unto Jephthah, <sup>a</sup>The LORD be witness between us, if we do not so according to thy words.

<sup>b</sup> Jer. xlii. 5.

*The Lord be witness between us.*—Heb. "be the hearer between us." They confirm their promise by the solemnity of an oath, appealing to God's omniscience as the judge of their present sincerity, and to his justice as an avenger, if they should afterwards prove false to their engagements. "Whatever we speak, it concerns us to remember that God is a hearer, and to speak accordingly."—*Henry.*

VER. 11. Then Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead, and the people made him head and captain over them: and Jephthah uttered all his words <sup>a</sup>before the LORD in Mizpeh.

<sup>b</sup> Ver. 8. <sup>c</sup> Ch. x. 17; xx. 1. <sup>d</sup> Sam. x. 17; xi. 15.

*Then Jephthah went with the elders.*—Thus evincing a generous forgetfulness of all their previous wrongs and indignities. No injuries should make us implacable; we must forgive as we hope to be forgiven. *And Jephthah uttered all his words before the Lord in Mizpeh.*—Or, Heb. "for Jephthah uttered all his words," &c. That is, all the words pertaining to the solemn compact which had now been entered into. The words seem to be inserted to explain how it was that the people, as affirmed in the preceding clause, made him head and captain over them. The arrangement had first been concluded upon at Gilead between Jephthah and the elders. But this was not sufficient. He would have it solemnly repeated and ratified, after entering the camp at Mizpeh, between himself and the whole assembled congregation. In order to give it the utmost validity and preclude all future misunderstanding, the people must confirm the act by their own choice, and this is said to have been done "before the Lord," to indicate the religious and solemn manner in which the transaction was conducted, as if under his immediate inspection and sanction. See on Josh. iv. 13.

VER. 12. And Jephthah sent messengers unto the king of the children of Ammon, saying, What hast thou to do with me, that thou art come against me, to fight in my land?

*Jephthah sent messengers, &c.*—A measure in the highest degree honourable to the equity, prudence, and piety of Jephthah, who herein conformed to the rule of conduct prescribed by Moses, Deut. xx. 10—18, which was, not to make war with nations out of Canaan, till messengers had been sent with proposals of peace. Though a mighty man of valour, yet he delighted not in war for its own sake, and was desirous, if possible, to prevent the effusion of blood by a peaceable accommodation. How vastly different this

from the spirit of most military chieftains! *They* are glad to seize upon any, even the slightest pretexts for an appeal to arms. But here, though the newly-elected captain of Israel might perhaps have been justified in repelling force by force, without any preliminary negotiations, yet if he can, by showing them the injustice of their conduct, persuade the invaders to retire, he will not compel them by the sword. If the children of Ammon could convince him that Israel had done them wrong, he was ready to restore the rights of the Ammonites; if not, it was plain by their invasion that they did Israel wrong, and he should by no means submit to it. This, though in an Israelite, was acting under the influence of that religion which teaches us to follow peace with all men, and never to seek redress by forcible means till every fair proposal is rejected. *What hast thou to do with me, that thou comest against me, &c.*—Spoken thus in the first person, in the name both of God and of Israel.

VER. 13. And the king of the children of Ammon answered unto the messengers of Jephthah, 'Because Israel took away my land, when they came up out of Egypt, from Arnon even unto <sup>m</sup>Jabbok, and unto Jordan: now therefore restore those *lands* again peaceably.

<sup>l</sup> Num. xxi. 24—26.

<sup>m</sup> Gen. xxxii. 22.

*Because Israel took away, &c.*—One who seeks a pretext for a quarrel will never be at a loss to find one; yet it speaks much in favour of the general peaceableness and inoffensiveness of Israel towards their neighbours, that their enemies, when intent upon hostilities against them, are obliged to look three hundred years back for a specious occasion. If the Ammonites had been conscious of a valid claim, their demand should have been published before invading Israel. But we have no intimation of this, and the claim now preferred was evidently trumped up to serve the present occasion, as affording a colourable pretence of justice in the invasion; showing that they who are destitute of conscience and honesty, are often very unwilling to appear so. Jephthah, however, in what follows, stripped their conduct of its specious disguise, and showed conclusively how false and arrogant were their pretensions. *My land.*—Speaking in the name both of the children of Ammon and Moab, over whom unitedly he seems, at this time, to have reigned as king.

VER. 14. And Jephthah sent messengers again unto the king of the children of Ammon:

VER. 15. And said unto him, Thus saith Jephthah, <sup>n</sup>Israel took not away the land of Moab, nor the land of the children of Ammon;

<sup>n</sup> Deut. ii. 9, 19.

*Israel took not away, &c.*—In order to evince, beyond dispute, the falsehood and futility of the enemy's claims upon these lands, Jephthah goes into recapitulation of the leading circumstances of Israel's coming into possession of them. He

admits that they had indeed taken the territories in question, but they took them, not from the Ammonites or Moabites, whom they were expressly forbidden to molest on their march, but finding them in possession of Sihon, king of the Amorites, they took them from him in just and honourable warfare, in consequence of an unprovoked attack upon them. It might, indeed, be true that prior to Israel's arrival in the country, the Amorites had taken these lands from the Moabites or Ammonites, (Num. xxi. 26. Josh. xiii. 25.) but this was no concern of theirs, nor were they bound to recognise the previous title of any people whatever. This was his first plea in support of his claims, which extends to ver. 22.

VER. 16. But when Israel came up from Egypt, and <sup>o</sup>walked through the wilderness unto the Red Sea, and <sup>p</sup>came to Kadesh;

<sup>o</sup> Num. xiv. 25. Deut. i. 40. Josh. v. 6.

<sup>p</sup> Num. xiii. 26; xx. 1. Deut. i. 46.

VER. 17. Then <sup>q</sup>Israel sent messengers unto the king of Edom, saying, Let me, I pray thee, pass through thy land: <sup>r</sup>but the king of Edom would not hearken *thereto*. And in like manner they sent unto the king of Moab; but he would not *consent*. And Israel <sup>s</sup>abode in Kadesh.

<sup>q</sup> Num. xx. 14.

<sup>r</sup> Num. xx. 18, 21.

<sup>s</sup> Num. xx. 1.

*Then Israel sent messengers, &c.*—So far were they from offering the least violence to the children of Esau or of Lot, that when refused a passage through their countries, though able, if they had chosen it, to have opened their way by force, they rather underwent the fatigue of a long march to compass their territories, than to set a foot upon them, much less to seize them for their own use. *In like manner they sent unto the king of Moab.*—Of this deputation, however, the history nowhere else gives us any account.

VER. 18. Then they went along through the wilderness, and <sup>t</sup>compassed the land of Edom and the land of Moab, and <sup>u</sup>came by the east side of the land of Moab, <sup>v</sup>and pitched on the other side of Arnon, but came not within the border of Moab: for Arnon was the border of Moab.

<sup>t</sup> Num. xxi. 4. Deut. ii. 1—8.

<sup>u</sup> Num. xxi. 11.

<sup>v</sup> Num. xxi. 13; xxii. 36.

VER. 19. And <sup>y</sup>Israel sent messengers unto Sihon king of the Amorites, the king of Heshbon; and Israel said unto him, <sup>z</sup>Let us pass, we pray thee, through thy land into my place.

<sup>y</sup> Num. xxi. 21. Deut. ii. 26.

<sup>z</sup> Num. xxi. 22. Deut. ii. 27.

VER. 20. <sup>a</sup>But Sihon trusted not Israel to pass through his coast: but Sihon gathered all his people together, and pitched in Jahaz, and fought against Israel.

<sup>a</sup> Num. xxi. 23. Deut. ii. 32.

*Trusted not Israel to pass through his coast.*—That is, through his dominions; as also, ver. 22. The word signifies not only the borders of a country, but the territory included in them. Those who are themselves conscious of a disposition to oppress the weak and take undue advantages of the simple, will generally give others credit for being actuated by the same spirit, and consequently withhold their confidence in circumstances where they are sensible they could not be confided in themselves.

VER. 21. And the LORD God of Israel delivered Sihon and all his people into the hand of Israel, and they <sup>b</sup> smote them: so Israel possessed all the land of the Amorites, the inhabitants of that country.

<sup>b</sup> Num. xxi. 24, 25. Deut. ii. 33, 34.

VER. 22. And they possessed <sup>c</sup> all the coasts of the Amorites, from Arnon even unto Jabbok, and from the wilderness even unto Jordan.

<sup>c</sup> Deut. ii. 36.

VER. 23. So now the LORD God of Israel hath dispossessed the Amorites from before his people Israel, and shouldst thou possess it?

*The Lord God of Israel hath dispossessed the Amorites.*—Another branch of Jephthah's argument in proof of Israel's right to the land. God gave them the country by giving them the victory over him who possessed it. The great proprietor of the earth, the King of nations, bestowed it upon them by an express and particular conveyance, such as vested in them a title that none could gainsay, (Deut. ii. 24,) "I have given into thy hand Sihon and his land." *Shouldst thou possess it?*—Heb. "shouldst thou inherit him;" *i. e.* the Amorite; the nation, according to Heb. idiom, being taken for the country which it occupied. He appeals to them whether they could suppose that God had given them the land in such an extraordinary manner, merely in order that they should restore it again to the Ammonites or Moabites.

VER. 24. Wilt not thou possess that which <sup>d</sup> Chemosh thy god giveth thee to possess? So whomsoever <sup>e</sup> the LORD our God shall drive out from before us, them will we possess.

<sup>d</sup> Num. xxi. 29. 1 Kings xi. 7. Jer. xlviii. 7.  
<sup>e</sup> Deut. ix. 4, 5; xviii. 12. Josh. iii. 10.

*Wilt thou not possess that which Chemosh thy god giveth thee?*—Without really attributing any divinity to the Ammonitish idol, Jephthah here argues with them on their own admitted principles. "It is a maxim with you, as among all nations, that the lands which they conceive to be given by their gods, they have an absolute right to, and should not relinquish to any claimant whatever. You suppose that the land which you possess was given by your god Chemosh, and therefore you will not relinquish what you believe you hold by a divine right. In like manner we are fully assured that Jehovah our God, who is Lord of heaven and earth, has given the

Israelites the land of the Amorites; and therefore we will not give it up." The ground of Jephthah's remonstrance was evidently sound and impregnable. *Them will we possess.*—Heb. "him will we inherit;" *i. e.* his or their land; as above, ver. 23.

VER. 25. And now *art* thou any thing better than <sup>f</sup> Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab? did he ever strive against Israel, or did he ever fight against them,

<sup>f</sup> Num. xxii. 2. See Josh. xxiv. 9.

*Art thou any better than Balak?*—That is, probably, not morally better, but hast thou any better title? Yet Balak, who was then king of Moab, from whom the greatest part of these lands had been taken by the Amorites, who had most interest in the matter, and was best able to enforce his claim, if he had thought fit—Balak did not once object to our settlement then, nor offer to molest us in the enjoyment of our possessions. If he then acquiesced in this disposition of the lands, if the title of Israel had not been disputed upon their first entrance upon them, what grounds had the Ammonites to do it now? They had possessed the country quietly for three hundred years, and even though their title had been less clear at first, yet seeing no claim had been made during that long period of time, they had obtained a right by prescription, which the law of nations would clearly have acknowledged. A title so long unquestioned was to be presumed to be unquestionable. The following therefore is the sum of Jephthah's argument relative to the matter in dispute. (1.) The Ammonites had lost their lands in the contests with the Amorites. (2.) The Israelites conquered these lands from the Amorites, who had waged an unprincipled war against them. (3.) God, the Maker, Proprietor, and Disposer of heaven and earth, had given these lands by special grant to the Israelites. (4.) In consequence of this, they had had possession of them for upwards of three hundred years. (5.) These lands were never reclaimed by the Ammonites, though they had repeated opportunities to do it, whilst the Israelites dwelt in Heshbon, in Aroer, and the coasts of Arnon; but they did not reclaim them, because they knew the Israelites held them legally. Consequently every subsequent claim was effectually barred, and the present pretensions of Ammon were unsupported and unjustifiable.

VER. 26. While Israel dwelt in <sup>g</sup> Heshbon and her towns, and in <sup>h</sup> Aroer and her towns, and in all the cities that *be* along by the coasts of Arnon, three hundred years? why therefore did ye not recover *them* within that time?

<sup>g</sup> Num. xxi. 25. <sup>h</sup> Deut. ii. 36.

VER. 27. Wherefore I have not sinned against thee, but thou doest me wrong to war against me: the LORD <sup>i</sup> the Judge <sup>k</sup> be judge this day between the children of Israel and the children of Ammon.

<sup>i</sup> Gen. xviii. 25.  
<sup>k</sup> Gen. xvi. 5; xxxi. 53. 1 Sam. xxiv. 12, 15.

*The Lord, the Judge, be judge this day.*—Not by pronouncing sentence verbally, like human judges, but by awarding the victory to the side which he sees to be in the right. In this way he leaves the controversy to be decided. When we have justice and truth on our side, we may confidently appeal to the God of truth for a decision in our favour.

VER. 28. Howbeit the king of the children of Ammon hearkened not unto the words of Jephthah which he sent him.

VER. 29. Then 'the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah, and he passed over Gilead and Manasseh, and passed over Mizpeh of Gilead, and from Mizpeh of Gilead he passed over unto the children of Ammon.

1 Chap. iii. 10.

*The Spirit of the Lord came upon him.*—Endowing him in an extraordinary manner for the work before him, and thus giving him convincing testimony that his cause was good. *Passed over Gilead, &c.*—Or, Heb. "passed through;" i. e. for the purpose of collecting recruits and increasing his forces to the utmost.

VER. 30. And Jephthah <sup>m</sup> vowed a vow unto the Lord, and said, If thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into my hands,

<sup>m</sup> Gen. xxviii. 20. 1 Sam. i. 11.

*Jephthah vowed a vow, &c.*—Vows were very common under the Mosaic dispensation. They were even encouraged by God himself, in order that his people might have opportunities of manifesting the love that was in their hearts, by offerings that were not enjoined, and services that were not commanded. In cases of difficulty or distress, where it appeared of more than ordinary importance to secure the divine favour and protection, the patriarchs of old had resorted to vows, and bound themselves, in case he should vouchsafe to them the desired blessing, to render unto him according to the benefits he should confer upon them. Thus Jacob, when he had just left his father and family in order to seek in a foreign land a refuge from his brother's vengeance, vowed that if the Lord would be with him, and restore him to his home in peace, he would take God entirely for his God, and devote to him a tenth of all that he should possess, (Gen. xxviii. 20—22.) In the time of Moses the whole people resorted to the same measure, in order to obtain success against the Canaanites, (Numb. xxi. 2.) This, it must be confessed, has a legal appearance, and looks like offering to make a bargain with God; but vows may certainly be made in perfect consistency with the liberal spirit of the gospel; for it is intimated, that under the gospel, yea, even in the so termed millennial age, such a practice should obtain, (Isa. xix. 21.) and we know that Paul both made a vow himself, (Acts xviii. 18,) and united with others in services to which, by a voluntary engagement, they had bound themselves. It is, however, to be remarked, that a vow, to be acceptable to

God, must have respect to things in themselves lawful. It cannot cancel a former obligation, or superinduce one that is repugnant to it. All our obligations to obedience proceed from God. He has a supreme right to give laws to his creatures; but if men, by entering into vows, could free themselves from the obligation of his laws, they might then, whenever they pleased, by their own act, defeat his authority. Whatever, therefore, is in itself forbidden by God, and for that reason unlawful, cannot, by being made the matter of a vow, become justifiable. So that he who has vowed to do what cannot be done without sin, is so far from being obliged to perform his vow, that he is, notwithstanding his vow, obliged not to perform it; the original wrong of making such a vow being greatly aggravated by keeping it. Now, in applying these remarks to the case of Jephthah, nothing is clearer than that human sacrifices were ever an abomination to the Lord, and that he had again and again interdicted them, with the strongest reprobation. (Deut. xii. 31.) Indeed, it was one of the grand reasons assigned for driving out the Canaanites, that they were in the habit of offering their sons and daughters to Moloch in the fire, i. e. of making burnt-offerings of them, as is reasonably to be inferred. It cannot be doubted, therefore, that if Jephthah really vowed such an offering to the Lord, it was utterly unlawful for him to perform it. His duty would have been to humble himself before God, and deeply repent of having entertained for a moment such a criminal purpose. But the intrinsic character of such a vow, supposing Jephthah made it, is one thing, and its moral quality, as issuing from a mind in such a state as his then was, is another. The vow itself may have been unlawful, and yet in making it he may not have been aware of its real nature. Though his motives may have been devout, and in a measure acceptable to Heaven, yet he may have uttered it in great darkness and ignorance. Let the circumstances of his case be considered. Let it be borne in mind that he was born in a loose and degenerate period of the Israelitish nation, and that he was bred up beyond Jordan, far from the tabernacle, and in the near neighbourhood of heathen tribes, with whose idolatrous practices he would naturally become familiar. Under these circumstances, in a foreign land, and associated with a band of outlaws and freebooters, who lived by rapine and violence, is it to be wondered at that he should, previous to his appointment as leader of Israel, have sunk into a state of semi-paganism, from which he had by no means recovered, even at the time of his signal victory over the Ammonites? And in this benighted state, is it not easily conceivable that he might have thought to propitiate Jehovah by such a kind of offering as was sometimes presented by heathen worshippers, especially if we suppose he was further influenced by some confused recollections of Abraham's intended sacrifice of Isaac by Divine command? Would it be unnatural for a man thus imperfectly instructed, on the eve of an important battle, in an excited state of mind, and under the promptings of a blind zeal, to bind himself, on condition of his success, to evince his gratitude by what he con-

ceived a heroic and almost superhuman act of devotion? To us there is nothing violent or forced in the supposition; nothing inconsistent with the general tenor of the narrative; and in forming a correct estimate of his conduct on the occasion, it is exceedingly important, if possible, to ascertain the real state of mind by which it was prompted; for it is only in this, that we can find an adequate clue to the right interpretation of his vow. Before entering, however, upon the more particular explication of this, it may be well to advert for a moment to the different kinds of vows in use among the Jews, and determine, if possible, to what class of them this of Jephthah properly belonged. Of these the most important was the *cherem* (חרם), which was accompanied by an execration, and answered to the anathema of the Septuagint and the Greek Testament. The person or thing thus vowed unto the Lord, was said to be "devoted" to him, and could not be redeemed. (Levit. xxvii. 28.) When it respected persons, or animals of any kind, it implied that they were devoted to destruction; but when it respected things, it implied that they were either to be utterly consumed by fire, or to be irrevocably dedicated to the Lord for religious purposes. In its application to persons, it seems to have been restricted to heathens, aliens, and enemies of God, as the Amalekites, Canaanites, &c. (Judg. i. 17; Numb. xxi. 1-3; ) nor do we any where read that a father or a master of a family was ever authorised thus to anathematize, execrate, and devote to destruction, one of his own household. The utter destruction of Jericho with all that it contained, excepting Rahab, affords a striking example of the *cherem*. Its grand feature was, that in no case could its objects, whether persons or things, be properly redeemed from the use, condition, or destiny, to which they had been devoted. In this respect it differed from a second and milder kind of vow, usually termed *neder* (נדב), by which one engaged to perform some particular act of piety, as for instance, to bring an offering to God, or otherwise to dedicate any thing to him. The objects of this sort of vow were various, as clean or unclean beasts, lands, the tithes of lands, houses, and the person of the vower himself; of all which we have a detailed account, Levit. xxvii. These various objects, with the single exception of clean beasts, might be redeemed at the rate and on the conditions specified in that chapter. Now it is supposed by many critics, that the vow of Jephthah is to be classed under this head. The sacred writer in speaking of it, says, יָרַד נָדַר "and he vowed a *neder*," not a "*cherem*," and consequently, they say, it was such a vow as he might have redeemed by paying the prescribed ransom of thirty shekels, which was the fixed estimation for a female. (Lev. xxvii. 4.) But to this it is replied by Rosenmüller, that the terms *nadar*, to vow, and *neder*, a vow, are generic, comprehending both the redeemable and irredeemable class of vows. In proof of this, he cites Numb. xxi. 2, where immediately after the words, "And Israel vowed a vow (וַיִּדְרֹךְ נָדַר) unto the Lord," &c., it is added, "these I will utterly destroy (וַיִּדְרֹךְ מוֹת) their cities;" from which it plainly appears, that the *cherem* may be comprised under the *neder*,

though every *neder* was not a *cherem*. As, therefore, the words alone do not enable us to determine satisfactorily the nature of the vow, it must be gathered from the circumstances. For ourselves, after an attentive consideration of all the incidents connected with the transaction, we are brought to the conclusion, that as far as Jephthah, in making the vow, had any statute of the divine law in his mind, it was rather that of the *cherem* than of the simple *neder*; that his predominant idea was that of the irrevocable devotion to death of the object contemplated in his vow. But after all it may well be doubted whether Jephthah had his eye upon any particular precept or provision of the Mosaic code. For the reason before mentioned, we imagine his acquaintance with the law was extremely limited; that the distinction between the different classes of vows was a matter of which he had little or no conception; and that he was prompted at the moment far more by a superstitious impulse, than by a zeal according to knowledge. He knew in the gross that vows were recognised in the religious institutes of his people; that there was such a thing as a person's being devoted without redemption to God; and that such a vow, when taken, was sacredly binding; and this we conceive was about the sum of his knowledge on the subject. Possessing then this very partial degree of light, and actuated by an intense solicitude as to the result of the engagement, he seems to have rushed precipitately into the assumption of a vow, which proved a fearful snare to his soul. That he became, however, subsequently more enlightened as to the import of the vow, and discovered a mode of dispensation from the literal execution of it, we shall endeavour to show in the sequel. But we are treating at present solely of his intention at the time, which, if we mistake not, was just that which the reader would naturally apprehend from the simple letter of the text. This we trust will be still more clearly illustrated in the notes that follow.

VER. 31. 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.

<sup>a</sup> See Lev. xxxvii. 2, &c. 1 Sam. i. 11, 28; ii. 18.  
<sup>b</sup> Psa. lxxvi. 13. See Lev. xxvii. 11, 12.

*Whatsoever cometh forth.*—Or, Heb. "whosoever cometh forth." The rendering given to these words will no doubt be governed in great measure by the translator's views of the real nature of the vow uttered on this occasion; as whether it had reference primarily to a human being or a brute animal. To us the former appears decidedly the most probable. Admitting that the Heb. דְּרִיבָא "which cometh forth," may apply equally to men or animals, yet the phrase "cometh forth to meet," seems to imply an intelligent act, a coming forth with a design, which could scarcely be predicated of any but a human being. Moreover, how unlikely was it that any of the animals allowed for sacrifice should come forth from "the doors of his house;" to say

nothing of the probability that a dog, or some unclean animal, might meet him, which could neither lawfully be consecrated to the Lord, nor offered as a burnt sacrifice. *Shall surely be the Lord's, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering.*—As much depends, in forming a judgment of the real character of Jephthah's vow, upon the correct explication of the terms in which it was made, it will be proper here to advert to the leading opinions of commentators on this point. These may be ascertained from the four following proposed modes of rendering, each of which has had its zealous advocates, whose collective treatises on the subject would amount to several volumes.

(1.) The first is that given above; "*Whosoever cometh out of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return from the children of Ammon, shall be the Lord's, and I will offer him up for a burnt offering.*"

(2.) The second is that adopted in the text of our common English Bibles.—"*Whosoever cometh out of the doors of my house, &c., shall be the Lord's, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering.*"

(3.) The third is that given in the margin of the English Bible:—"*Whosoever cometh out of the doors of my house, &c., shall be the Lord's, or I will offer it up for a burnt offering.*"

(4.) The fourth was proposed about sixty years since by Dr. Randolph, and is this:—"*Whosoever cometh out of the doors of my house, &c., shall be the Lord's, and I will offer (to) Him (viz. the Lord) a burnt offering.*"

Of these, the first is that adopted by the Septuagint and Vulgate versions, and is undoubtedly the sense which the words of the original, if viewed in themselves, apart from any moral considerations, do most naturally present. That this rendering supposes Jephthah to have had a human sacrifice in his thoughts when he made the vow, is undeniably true, and without doing violence to the letter we know not how to avoid this conclusion. We are aware that it is objected to this, that Jephthah was at this time undoubtedly a pious man, for it is said in the immediate connexion that he was under the influence of the Spirit of God, and it cannot be supposed that such a man, under such an influence, could deliberately vow to God that he would commit murder—that he would vow to put to death the first person who should come forth to congratulate him, whether it might be man, woman or child, yea, even if it should be his own, his only daughter. But to say nothing of the impropriety of applying the invidious term murder to Jephthah's intention, we do not think much stress can be laid upon the fact of his being said to be at this time under the influence of the Spirit of God, for it does not appear that this phrase, as used by the Old Testament writers, indicates by any means such a kind of influence as is intended in the New Testament by one's being led, prompted, governed by the Holy Spirit. In the latter case it denotes mainly a moral, spiritual, sanctifying influence; in the former, it simply implies the divine bestowment of remarkable gifts, whether physical or intellectual, for the performance of a particular work, or the discharge of a particular office. The endowments

indicated by it were seated rather in the head and the body, than in the heart; so that taken by itself it affords us no clew to the moral character or actions of the subject of it. A similar train of remark is applicable also to another objection, urged on the ground of Jephthah's being enrolled by Paul, in the eleventh of Hebrews, among the eminent men who had obtained a good report through faith. This is supposed to afford conclusive proof that he was a good man, and therefore that he could not have been guilty of a conduct so contrary to the divine law. But it is extremely doubtful whether the faith celebrated in that chapter, was in every instance a justifying and saving faith, in relation to the individuals mentioned. The apostle's object seems to be merely to illustrate the power of a firm belief in the divine testimony, which may doubtless exist separate from a renewed heart. We learn elsewhere, from the same authority, that a man might have the faith of miracles so as to remove mountains, and yet not be a good man. We do not affirm that Jephthah was not a good man, yet we derive no absolute assurance from the simple fact of his putting a strong faith in the divine promises, that he was an eminent saint, and incapable of making such a vow as we have supposed above. The objections, therefore, drawn from those sources against the interpretation now recited do not seem to carry with them any great weight. Jephthah may still have meant to vow that he would offer up a human sacrifice. But that such a sacrifice was actually made does not, we conceive, necessarily follow from this admission. Of this, however, more in the sequel.

The second rendering, which is that of the translators of the English Bible, is liable perhaps to no serious grammatical objection, though, we think, less punctiliously faithful to the original than the former, for the reasons stated in the previous note. It is, however, the view given by Josephus, who makes Jephthah promise to "offer in sacrifice what living creature soever should first meet him," and he affirms that the vow, in that sense, was executed by him; "he sacrificed his daughter as a burnt offering, offering such an oblation as was neither conformable to the law, nor acceptable to God." The same sense is given by the Targum of Jonathan, and is perhaps the sense which has on its side the balance of authorities, both Jewish and Christian. But the question whether Jephthah actually sacrificed his daughter, is still to be decided on grounds independent of the balance of authority as to the literal purport of the vow.

The celebrated rabbi, David Kimchi, who flourished in the twelfth century, seems to have been the first who proposed the third translation, or that given in the margin of the English Bible. According to this interpretation, the Hebrew copulative *and*, is to be translated *or*, and the sense of the vow will then be; "*Whosoever cometh out of the door of my house, I will, if it be a thing fit for a burnt offering, make it one; or, if not, will consecrate it to his service.*" This would suppose him, in making the vow, to have had a mental reserve, which would allow him to act as the exigency of the case might require. It gives him an alternative which by the other

mode of rendering is effectually precluded. This construction, however, is certainly liable to a very important grammatical objection. Though it is unquestionable that the particle ו is sometimes used as a disjunctive, and properly rendered "or," as (Ex. xii. 5,) "hand *or* foot;" (xxi. 15,) "father *or* mother;" (2 Sam. ii. 19,) "right hand *or* left," yet it may be doubted whether it is ever used to disjoin things so completely as this translation supposes. Gussetius (Comm. Ling. Ebr.) contends that to give ו a disjunctive force, it is essential that the terms between which it stands should not be related as genus and species, or the one member comprehending the other, as otherwise it would be as absurd as to say, "Thou shalt not injure a man or his head," the one term evidently including the other. So in the present instance, the clause "It shall be the Lord's," is obviously, he affirms, the general, while "It shall be offered up for a burnt offering," is merely the included particular, indicating the special manner in which it shall be the Lord's. This we cannot but regard as the interpretation required on strict philological principles, and if the passage were rendered, "It shall be the Lord's, *even* I will offer it up for a burnt offering," it would come, we believe, still nearer to the genuine force of the original. We assent, therefore, to the remark of Noble, (Plen. Inspir.) that "this rendering is extremely forced and harsh, and one which critics have acquiesced in only to get rid of what they esteemed a greater difficulty. It also makes the second clause of the vow entirely unnecessary; for if Jephthah meant to say, that whatsoever came out of his house should be consecrated to the Lord, in such a manner as was suitable to its nature, this is fully conveyed in the first clause; and the addition of the second, separated by *or*, instead of helping to determine his meaning, is of no use but to perplex it." For these reasons we are compelled to reject the third hypothesis, as wholly unsustainable by a just philological support.

The fourth, and last, is Dr. Randolph's rendering, "Whosoever cometh out, &c., shall be the Lord's, and I will offer (to) Him a burnt-offering." According to this translation, Jephthah's vow will consist of two parts. The first, that whatsoever person or object should come forth of his doors to meet him should surely be the Lord's; *i. e.* should be dedicated, consecrated for ever to his service. The second, that he would, beside this, offer to Jehovah a burnt-offering. According to the rendering in our common version the very same object or person who should "surely be the Lord's," was to be offered up for a burnt-offering. According to that now proposed, they were to be different objects. This explanation appeared to Bishop Lowth so signally happy and conclusive, that he speaks of it as having "perfectly cleared up a difficulty which, for two thousand years, had puzzled all the translators and expositors, had given occasion to dissertations without number, and caused endless disputes among the learned." Such a commendation, from such a source, undoubtedly entitles the proposed explanation to great respect, but it has still failed to satisfy the mass of commentators, and, as we think, for very good reasons. The sense hereby given to the original is not warranted by com-

mon usage. The Hebrew, it will be observed, is עָלָה וְעָלָה where the prefixed pronoun וְ is joined to the verb to express the thing offered, and not another example can be found in which verbs of offering or sacrificing are accompanied with a suffix pronoun denoting the Being to whom the offering is made. On the contrary, instances of a precisely parallel usage to the present are of no uncommon occurrence. Thus 1 Sam. vii. 9, "Then Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered it (for) a burnt-offering (יעָלָהוּ עִלָּה) wholly to the Lord." See also 2 Kings iii. 27, where we meet with a case exceedingly similar to this of Jephthah. What Jephthah, according to the most direct import of his words, is supposed to have promised to do, the king of Moab, when sore pressed by the kings of Israel, Judah, and Edom, is affirmed actually to have done; and in precisely the same words, joined in the same construction: "Then took he his eldest son that should have reigned in his stead, and offered him (for) a burnt-offering (יעָלָהוּ עִלָּה) upon the wall." These words differ from Jephthah's only in the mood, tense, and person of the verb, and in the common variety in spelling of the noun, the same suffix וְ is and apparently in the same relation, being used in each.

On the whole we are constrained to dissent from this as well as the preceding interpretation, and to acknowledge that after all the labours of the learned nothing satisfactory has yet been produced to fix a sense upon the passage which should exclude the idea that a human sacrifice was either intended by the vow or might be its unintended result. It is still undeniable that the old common translation, sanctioned by the venerable Septuagint version, is that which naturally flows from the words if taken in their legitimate construction. Certain too it is, that if Jephthah had spoken English, and had said, "Whosoever cometh out of the doors of my house, &c. shall be the Lord's, and I will offer him up for a burnt-offering," and these words had been translated from English into Hebrew, they could not otherwise have been exactly rendered than by the very words which now stand in the Hebrew Bible. At the same time, as we shall presently endeavour to show, though we do not doubt that this language expresses fairly what was in Jephthah's mind at the time of making the vow, yet, whether he actually executed the vow, in this sense of it, admits of very serious question. See farther on ver. 39.

VER. 32. So Jephthah passed over unto the children of Ammon to fight against them; and the Lord delivered them into his hands.

*Jephthah passed over unto.*—That is, passed through or over the intermediate regions lying between him and the enemy.

VER. 33. And he smote them from Aroer even till thou come to Minnith, *even* twenty cities, and unto the plain of the vineyards, with a very great slaughter. Thus the children of Ammon were subdued before the children of Israel.

*Thus the children of Ammon were subdued, &c.*—Heb. יִכְנָסוּ "were greatly humbled," or, if we may be allowed to fabricate a term for the purpose, "were Canaanized," i. e. made to share the fate of the Canaanites, which, to a Hebrew ear, would be precisely the import of the original. How far his success on this occasion is to be construed as an answer to his prayers and a token of the divine acceptance of his vow it is not possible to determine. By some it is considered a strong argument in favour of the milder view which is taken of the vow. "Would God," it is asked, "have sanctioned in this manner a gross act of deliberate murder? Would not this have been the very way to deceive his people, and to make them think he was pleased with such offerings as the heathen presented unto Moloch? And when, in future ages, he punished his people for offering human sacrifices, might they not justly have pleaded that he, in this instance, had both approved and rewarded them?" To this we answer, that the public interest of the whole Jewish people was more regarded in the bestowment of the victory than the private hopes or wishes of Jephthah. Unworthy or faulty instruments were often employed by the Most High in effecting his kind purposes for Israel, and we see no reason to doubt that the result would have been the same with the same means, even had no vow whatever been uttered. Moreover, it is a high presumption in weak mortals to read, in the events of Providence, a proof that God makes himself a party to compacts of their own voluntary proposing, let them be ever so well intended. His counsels are a great deep, and it is at our peril that we put such unauthorised constructions upon his dispensations. "No man knoweth either love or hatred by all that is before them."

VER. 34. And Jephthah came to Mizpeh unto his house, and, behold, his daughter came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances: and she was his only child; beside her he had neither son nor daughter.

g Chap. x. 17. Ver. 11.

f Exod. xv. 20. 1 Sam. xviii. 6. Psa. lxxviii. 25. Jer. xxxi. 4.

*With timbrels and with dances.*—From this, and from 1 Sam. xviii. 6, where David's triumphal return from the defeat of Goliath and the Philistines is mentioned, it appears to have been an ancient custom for women to go forth to meet returning conquerors with musical instruments, songs, and dances. Jephthah's daughter, on this occasion, undoubtedly came forth, not alone, but at the head of a band or choir of maidens, who joined with her in these joyful congratulations. *She was his only child.*—This circumstance is mentioned to point out an additional cause of the poignancy of his distress. It is well known how intensely anxious the Hebrews were for posterity, and as Jephthah could only hope for descendants through his daughter, the sorrow he expressed is quite natural, even under the milder interpretation of his vow. *Besides her he had neither son nor daughter.*—Or, Heb. "there was not to himself either son or daughter;" implying, as some of the Jewish commentators think, that, though

he had no other children of his own, yet his wife, the widow of a former husband, had. Others take the original כִּמְנוּ לַיהוָה as used for כִּמְנוּ "besides her," a view of the phrase which Rosenmüller seems to approve.

VER. 35. And it came to pass, when he saw her, that he rent his clothes, and said, Alas, my daughter! thou hast brought me very low, and thou art one of them that trouble me: for I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back.

s Gen. xxxvii. 29, 34.

i Eccles. v. 2.

u Num. xxx. 2. Psa. xv. 4. Eccles. v. 4, 5.

*Alas, my daughter, thou hast brought me very low.*—Heb. "bowing thou hast made me to bow;" generally spoken of bowing down upon the knees for purposes of religious reverence, or from feebleness and exhaustion, especially when overcome in battle. Here the idea seems to be, that from being highly elated by the recent victory, he had now, in meeting his daughter under the present circumstances, been suddenly and wofully depressed and struck down, as it were, to the earth. His exultation was changed to humiliation and grief. His daughter had done to him what the Ammonites could not. The evident bitterness of emotion which he betrayed, on meeting his daughter, clearly shows that he then looked upon himself as bound by the tenor of his vow to make her life a sacrifice. Although the idea of consigning her to a state of perpetual celibacy and seclusion, of being bereft of her society, and seeing the extinction of his name in Israel certain, could not but greatly affect the heart of a father, yet the anguish which he now expressed appears too intense and excruciating to be caused by any thing but the conviction that she must die—a martyred victim to his precipitate vow. *Thou art one of them that trouble me.*—Heb. "thou hast become among my troublers." This language might, in reality, have been more properly addressed by the daughter to her father, but his meaning obviously is, that she had innocently and involuntarily become a source of unspeakable distress to him. "He answers the measures of her feet with the knockings of his breast. Her joy alone hath changed the day, and lost the comfort of that victory which she enjoyed to see won. It falls out often, that those times and occasions which promise most contentment, prove most doleful in the issue; the heart of this virgin was never lifted up so high as now, neither did any day of her life seem happy but this; and this only proves the day of her solemn and perpetual mourning. It is good, in a fair morning, to think of the storm that may arise ere night, and to enjoy both good and evil fearfully."—*Bp. Hall. I have opened my mouth unto the Lord.*—I have solemnly vowed to him; implying that the vow was not only conceived in the mind, but uttered with the lips. Vows, unless they were verbally enounced, seem not to have been regarded as binding. (Numb. xxx. 3, 7, 9, 13. Deut. xxiii. 23, 24.) Although the narrative does not represent him as informing her specifically of the burden of the vow, yet from what follows it is plain

that she soon became aware of it, either from the extreme distress which he now manifested, or from his subsequent explicit disclosures. The sacred writers frequently omit the mention of minor circumstances, contenting themselves with the statement of leading facts, and leaving it to the judgment of the reader to supply the omitted links of the chain. *I cannot go back*.—I cannot recall the vow myself, now that it is solemnly uttered, nor can any power on earth release me from its obligation.

VER. 36. And she said unto him, My father, if thou hast opened thy mouth unto the LORD, do to me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth; forasmuch as the LORD hath taken vengeance for thee of thine enemies, even of the children of Ammon.

x Numb. xxx. 2.

y 2 Sam. xviii. 19, 31.

*My father, if thou hast opened thy mouth, &c.*—A striking pattern of filial piety and obedience, and of heroic zeal for what she conceived the honour of God and of Israel. So rejoiced was she at the victory, as redounding to the good of her country, that she is willing to be herself offered up as a thank-offering for it, and thinks her life well bestowed when laid down for such a purpose. True indeed it is, that if her father's conduct was wrong in making the vow, hers, when viewed intrinsically in itself, could not be right in concurring in it; the same moral character would attach to both; but it were vain to expect that her knowledge in such a matter would go beyond that of her father. How can it be supposed that a youthful maiden should have had clear views of the import of the divine law on such a subject, when her father's mind was enveloped in darkness? Her generous self-devotion therefore is still entitled to our highest commendation. Her involuntary ignorance excuses her infirmity, and if she believed when she uttered these words, that she was to be put to death, neither Greece nor Rome, with all their heroes and heroines, can furnish an instance of sublimer self-sacrifice than this of the humble maid of Israel. Had it occurred among these boasting people, instead of the plain unvarnished tale of the sacred historian, we should have had it pressed on our admiration with all the pomp of eloquence. Indeed it cannot be doubted, had but Jephthah and his daughter been heathens, that the very persons, who now find in the transaction nothing but a pretence for vilifying the Scriptures, would then have extolled the whole as exhibiting the finest example of the most noble constancy, the most disinterested virtue.

VER. 37. And she said unto her father, Let this thing be done for me: Let me alone two months, that I may go up and down upon the mountains, and bewail my virginity, I and my fellows.

*Let me alone for two months.*—The word in the original is that used for slacking, relaxing, loos-

ening one's hold upon any thing; see note on Josh. i. 5. The whole narrative affords nothing more obscure and remarkable than this request. On what custom was it founded? Is there an intimation of any thing similar in any other part of the Scriptures, or in any thing relative to oriental manners and usages? We know of nothing, and must sit down resigned in our ignorance. Yet we think the inference fair, that children, both sons and daughters, were occasionally dedicated by Jewish parents to the perpetual service of God at the tabernacle or temple, as we know was the case with Samuel, though he, in after life, seems to have obtained a dispensation from the vow of his mother. Where this was the case with youthful females, it is probable the custom obtained of their retiring for a season in groups from domestic scenes to sequestered places, in token of regret at being thereby excluded the privilege of a place among the ancestors of the future generations of Israel, and perhaps of the Messiah. Not that we can suppose that companies of unprotected maidens would forsake for days and weeks the habitations of men, and spend their time in roving about over hill and dale in the open air, for they would surely stand in need of food and shelter, and how on this supposition were they to procure them? but they probably withdrew to some retired places of abode, remote from populous villages, where under the care of pious matrons, they passed the allotted time in the observance of such rites and ceremonies, as were appointed for the purpose; occasionally, perhaps, walking abroad in solemn and mournful processions. It is at least difficult to conceive, in a civilized and religious state of society, and especially in eastern countries, of any other mode in which a company of youthful damsels could, without a very ill appearance, spend a season of retirement from their usual place of residence. Let the question be put to any reflecting mind, in what other light can a transaction of this nature be viewed. Did the Jewish maidens, under these circumstances, sojourn unattended for weeks and months, wandering up and down on the mountains? Is it conceivable that they should have adopted a measure so utterly abhorrent to female decorum, and so completely at war with the very first rudiments of oriental prejudice? If, then, upon abandoning their own homes, they must have resorted to some kind of habitations, what were they? what, but a species of abode designed for the purpose? For ourselves, the narrated facts of the Scripture allow us to come to no other conclusion. If, then, such a custom existed at the time to which our narrative refers, it is very supposable that Jephthah's daughter, on an occasion like the present, with her impending fate full before her, should have been desirous to avail herself of a usage, originally, indeed, designed for another purpose, but not inappropriate to this, and so have requested a respite of a few weeks from the doom that awaited her. What more fitting employment, during that dread interval, than to mingle her regrets with those whose lot her own in one respect so much resembled, though they were exempted from the destiny to which she had meekly submitted?

VER. 38. And he said, Go. And he sent her away for two months: and she went with her companions, and bewailed her virginity upon the mountains.

VER. 39. And it came to pass at the end of two months, that she returned unto her father, who did with her according to his vow which he had vowed: and she knew no man. And it was a custom in Israel,

z Ver. 31. 1 Sam. i. 22, 24; ii. 18.

*Did with her according to his vow.*—Heb. "did to her his vow." The original, if we mistake not, affords some more latitude of construction, in respect to the mode of executing the vow, than is allowed by our present rendering. According to the latter, we are required to believe that he adhered to the very letter of the vow, and actually offered her as a burnt-offering, which we have endeavoured to show is the unforced legitimate sense of the vow itself. According to the former, which is more general and indefinite, we are not, we conceive, absolutely shut up to the adoption of this sense. The phrase, "he did to her his vow," strikes us as not specifying the precise manner in which the vow was performed, but as leaving us at liberty, provided the exigency of the case requires it, to understand the writer as saying that he did to her what was equivalent to his original vow, what was accepted in lieu of it, instead of the identical thing which the vow contemplated. The verisimilitude of this rendering will be just in proportion to the probability, derived from other sources, that he did *not* actually put his daughter to death; that in the interval of the two months' respite which she besought, he had come to a different view of the demands of duty in the case, the amount of which was, a clear conviction that the literal fulfilment of the vow was not obligatory upon him. In support of this hypothesis, which we think to be the true one, we offer the following considerations.

(1.) It is not expressly stated that she was offered up for a burnt-offering. Instead of saying, as would naturally, on that supposition, have been expected in a transaction of such moment, "He did with her according to his vow, and offered her up for a burnt-offering to the Lord," the writer simply affirms, "He did to her his vow, and she knew no man;" as if this were intended to be explanatory of the manner in which the doing of the vow was accomplished, viz., by devoting her to a life of celibacy. Why else is this latter circumstance mentioned, but to show wherein the accomplishment of the vow consisted? If she were really put to death, is it not strange that the fact of her death is not once spoken of? But if she were only doomed to a state of perpetual virginity, the reason of the expression is at once obvious. It may indeed be objected that no other instance of devoting a person to virginity occurs, nor have we evidence that parents possessed any such right. This we admit; but neither, on the other hand, does the Scripture afford evidence that parents possessed the right of devoting their children to death, nor

exhibit, among the chosen people, an example of the fact of such a devotion. The intrinsic probability, therefore, is as strong on the one side as the other. Nor is the objection more valid, that supposing her only devoted to God, there was no reason why she should remain unmarried; since Samson and Samuel, both of whom were devoted to God from the womb, were both married. But the case is extremely different between a man and a woman. The former was at liberty to serve God, in any way that he judged agreeable to his will; but the latter, if she had married, would have been under the control of her husband, who might in a variety of ways have interfered with the discharge of the duties which the vow implied. It was therefore necessary that she should remain unmarried, and that she should also be secluded in great measure from society itself; that being the way in which the object of entire consecration could be most effectually attained. Moreover, such a sentence would come the nearest of any other to the letter of his vow. She would henceforth become dead to the world; and in her perpetual celibacy the line of his posterity become extinct for ever. It would therefore almost amount to a positive immolation of her.

(2.) It does not appear by whose hands such a sacrifice could have been offered. Not by the high-priest, or any regular member of the priesthood; for with all the deplorable laxness, ignorance, and degeneracy that prevailed, it is incredible that any officiating priest should have tolerated for a moment, in the face of such explicit prohibitions as Moses had given, the oblation of a human sacrifice. And not by Jephthah himself, for this would have been a transgression of the Levitical law, which enjoined that every offering should be made by the hand of the priest, and at the place where the tabernacle and altar stood. This is rendered still more certain by an important circumstance mentioned in the beginning of the next chapter. It will be remembered that the tabernacle was at this time at Shiloh, in the tribe of Ephraim. Now immediately after the conclusion of the war with the Ammonites, we find Jephthah engaged in a bitter war with the Ephraimites. This makes it in the highest degree improbable that he should, in the very heat of the quarrel, have gone into the heart of that tribe to offer such a sacrifice, even had it been lawful. If, then, there is the utmost reason to believe that such an offering was not made by the high-priest or any inferior priest—that it was not made by Jephthah himself—and that it was not made at Shiloh, the appointed place of sacrifice, what reason is there to suppose it was made at all?

(3.) From all these circumstances, the probability, we think, is very strong that Jephthah availed himself of the provisions of the law, in respect to devoted persons and things; in other words, that during the two months' interval, he had become better instructed in regard to the subject of vows in general under the Mosaic statutes, and ascertained that a dispensation, in his case, was practicable. We have already remarked that vows were encouraged under the law, and that besides the cherem or anathema, persons

or things might be devoted to God. But where this was the case, the law permitted that a valuation should be made of the devoted person or thing, and that the money should be regarded as a ransom for it, or an offering be presented in its stead. If a human being were devoted, the estimation was to vary according to the sex or age of the person, (Lev. xxvii. 2—13.) but for an adult female, it was thirty shekels of silver. Now supposing that Jephthah, at the time of making the vow, had no distinct recollection or knowledge of this law; supposing even that the vow, as it emanated from his lips, partook more of the character of the *cherem* than the *neder*; yet is it conceivable that when the execution of it was postponed for two months, and the affair had become notorious throughout the nation, and was the subject of general discussion and great lamentation, that there was no person in all Israel who once thought of this law? Would not the agonized father, besides devoting to it his own intensest study, consult the priests on the subject? And would not the priests acquaint him with the provisions of the law in reference to a case of casuistry like the present? And what would naturally be the result? Could he fail to come to the conclusion, that such a sacrifice as he first intended was not only unlawful, but, in the face of the numerous pointed prohibitions against it, would amount to nothing short of downright murder? Would he not learn, that as an offering (*עולה*), the term he had employed in his vow) was in its own nature incompatible with a *cherem* (*חרם*), and that the law had made no provision for the latter being substituted for the former, he was even, according to the very terms of his vow, rightly understood, not only released, but prohibited from performing it? Under these circumstances, would he, could he persevere in his original intention? Is it not more probable, that after deep deliberation in concert with the authorized expounders of the law, he yielded to the conviction, that although his solemn pledge did not originally contemplate any such alternative, yet it might be embraced in the provisions now alluded to—that it might come under the class of redeemable vows? He would be more encouraged to avail himself of this dispensation, on the ground of the darkness of his mind at the time of coming under the engagement. It was not an act of wilful disregard of the divine statutes relative to this point, but one rather of misapprehension and infirmity, though from its rash and reckless character by no means innocent. He was still, we may suppose, ready to humble himself before God in view of his precipitancy, and while he paid the ransom price that delivered his daughter from death, piously resolved by way of punishing himself for his rashness, to fulfil his vow in her civil excision from among the living. He accordingly, we conceive, consigned her henceforth to a state of perpetual seclusion and celibacy—of living consecration to God—and in this manner “did unto her his vow,” though in a mode of execution, which did not, in the first instance, enter into his thoughts.—Thus, on the whole, after weighing all the circumstances and all the arguments bearing upon the case, we are led to decide

upon the much disputed point, whether Jephthah really sacrificed his daughter. To our mind the evidence for the negative clearly preponderates. At the same time, we do not, as will be seen, deduce it from the terms of the vow, or any fancied contingency of purpose in Jephthah's mind at the time of making it. We believe that it was made under the prevailing impression that a human sacrifice would be the result; but that, although his conduct was contrary to the scriptural precept forbidding men “after vows to make inquiry,” he became subsequently more enlightened, and by a careful study of the law, aided by its proper ministers, he ascertained the possibility of being released from the dilemma, in which he had so thoughtlessly ensnared himself. Perhaps the most valid objection to the view given above, is that which would assume the form of the question, Why, if such were the fact, is the narrative so constructed as to give rise almost inevitably to the impression, that the literal immolation of Jephthah's daughter actually took place? Without allowing that an inability to answer this question satisfactorily ought to be considered as essentially weakening the force of the arguments adduced above, we may suggest in reply, that the Spirit of inspiration may have framed the record as it now stands, marked by a somewhat ambiguous aspect, in order to guard against a light estimate of the obligation of vows. We do not affirm this to have been the design, but it is certainly conceivable that if it had been expressly stated that the vow in its literal sense had not been performed, it might have gone to relax somewhat of the apprehended sacredness of all such votive engagements, and led men to think that God himself might easily dispense with them. Whereas, as it is now worded, and would be perhaps most naturally understood, it would inspire far other sentiments, and lead men at once to be very cautious in making, and very punctilious in performing their vows.

VER. 40. *That the daughters of Israel went yearly to lament the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite four days in a year.*

*And it was a custom in Israel.*—Heb. וררו חוק שנתא. The phraseology of the original is peculiar, the verb being of the fem., the noun of the masc. gender. The literal rendering we take to be, “and she became an ordinance in Israel,” *i. e.* her case became a precedent; it gave rise to an established custom in Israel. But what particular custom is alluded to, whether that of dedicating maidens to God, as Gusset supposes, or that of going at stated times to commemorate the fate of Jephthah's daughter, as others contend, is not clear. The latter appears on the whole most probable. *Went yearly to lament the daughter of Jephthah.*—Heb. “from days to days;” but a day in scriptural idiom is often used for a year; for which reason the marginal reading is properly “from year to year.” The original for “to lament,” (*לרונה*) is a term of very questionable import. It is rendered differently according to the different opinions of expositors, as to the nature of the vow, and the mode of its fulfilment. Those who think that she was sacrificed, are

satisfied with the present version; those who dissent from this, contend earnestly for the marginal rendering, "to talk with,"—meaning that the daughters of Israel went yearly to condole with and to comfort her. It must be admitted that the evidence for this latter sense of the word is by no means slight, if we refer to the only other instance in which it occurs, (Judg. v. 11,) where though translated "to rehearse"—"there shall they rehearse the righteous acts of the Lord"—yet the idea of colloquy, of mutual address, is clearly involved. This is confirmed by Kimchi, the Jewish commentator, who thus paraphrases the words before us, "That indeed, with their friendly discourse they might comfort her concerning her virginity and her solitary state of life." The ancient versions, however, with one accord give the sense of lamenting, bewailing, a circumstance undoubtedly to us of no small weight, though not absolutely decisive in estimating the true import of the term. The probability is, that the word means in its most general sense, "to praise, to celebrate, to commemorate," and would therefore denote that the daughters of Israel kept a few days' anniversary to commemorate this transaction, whatever were its result. For aught that appears from the language itself, she might have been living at the time. Indeed take the passage as it reads; "The daughters of Israel went to lament the daughter of Jephthah;" and the question is, what in her, or respecting her, did they lament? It is not said they lamented her death; and to affirm that they did, is to beg the question. They might have lamented only what they and Jephthah's daughter had lamented before, viz. her virginity. On the whole, though some difficulties attend every interpretation hitherto advanced of Jephthah's vow and its consequences, yet the foregoing has perhaps the fewest and the least, and receives most countenance both from philological and moral considerations.

We may close our observations on this remarkable portion of holy writ by suggesting, (1.) That we be cautious in making vows. "Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God; for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth; therefore let thy words be few." It may sometimes be useful to bind ourselves by solemn vows, to evince our gratitude and confirm our regard for the divine glory. But such vows should be deliberately and discreetly made, and should extend to those things only that are clearly lawful in themselves, and serviceable to the interests of religion. Strict inquiry should be made into the nature and extent of the proposed engagements, before we enter into them. Thus Solomon declares, "It is a snare to a man to devour that which is holy, and after vows to make inquiry." If we have rashly pledged ourselves to do what the law of God prohibits, we must recede from our vow, and humble ourselves before our Maker, for our precipitance. The forty conspirators, who swore that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul, and Herod, who swore that he would give his daughter whatsoever she should ask of him, had no right to bind themselves to such an extent, and would have sinned less in

violating than in keeping their engagements. Let their case be a warning to us. (2.) That we be conscientious in performing them. Where our vows are lawful and practicable they should be religiously kept. Better is it not to vow, than to vow and not perform. So Solomon exhorts; "When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it, for he hath no pleasure in fools. Pay that which thou hast vowed." Even though the rigid observance of our vows should subject us to great sacrifices, expense, and trouble, yet the obligation should be considered sacred, and the attempt to set them aside by the plea of inadvantage or of difficulty in the performance will only serve to bring upon us the heavy displeasure of God. If Jephthah, after having precipitately bound himself by a solemn engagement, felt constrained to adhere to its spirit, though released from the letter, and would not go back, notwithstanding the sacrifice was so great, so neither should we decline the performance of the most difficult of our vows. Let us remind ourselves of the sacredness uniformly attached in the Scriptures to obligations of this sort, and say with David, "I will go into thy house with burnt offerings; I will pay thee my vows which my lips have uttered, and my mouth hath spoken, when I was in trouble." And who is there that has not the responsibility of vows of some kind resting upon him? Who has not in a time of sickness, or danger, or trouble, or alarm, determined with himself, that if he should be delivered, he would devote himself to the Lord and to the pursuit of heavenly things? Let all such look back and call to mind the vows that are upon them, and be admonished that Jephthah will rise up in judgment against the violation of them. Especially let us remember that in making a profession of religion, we have vowed to be the Lord's in a perpetual covenant of love, trust, and obedience. We have opened our mouths to him, and now we cannot go back without the shipwreck of truth, honour, conscience, and probably of salvation. Again therefore we say, let us be faithful to covenant engagements. (3.) Others' sorrow should be our own, and by partaking we should seek to alleviate them. So was it with the companions of Jephthah's daughter, and so should it be with the sons and daughters of the true Israel in all ages and climes.

## CHAPTER XII.

VER. 1. AND "the men of Ephraim gathered themselves together, and went northward, and said unto Jephthah, Wherefore passedst thou over to fight against the children of Ammon, and didst not call us to go with thee? we will burn thy house upon thee with fire.

*a* See chap. viii. 1.

*The men of Ephraim gathered themselves together.*—Heb. "were cried together;" i. e. summoned together by the voice of heralds passing to and fro through the tribe. The passive voice in Heb. often has a reciprocal import, and here probably is intended to convey the idea of a mutual

stirring each other up, independent of the will of a superior, and a consequent flocking together in somewhat of a loose and tumultuary manner. With this as the leading idea of the passage before his mind, Jerome, in the Vulgate, has rendered it "And there rose a sedition in Ephraim;" on which Rosenmüller remarks, that he took the Heb. verb to imply that by mutual clamour and vociferation they excited themselves to sedition and tumult. *Went northward.*—Heb. "passed over northward." Crossing the Jordan, they advanced in a northerly direction towards Mizpeh, where Jephthah now was. This region lay to the north-east, rather than directly north of the territory of Ephraim. See map. *Wherefore passedst thou over, &c.*—Not over Jordan, for he was on the farther side of that river already; but simply over the intermediate regions between him and the scene of conflict. We have here a second proof of the haughty and turbulent disposition of the Ephraimites. They had no just ground whatever for their present bitter crimination of Jephthah. Their jealous and envious spirit towards Manasseh was the only cause of the injurious charge and violent threat which they now uttered. Although from being both the sons of Joseph they were nearer akin than any other of the tribes, yet between none other of the tribes was there such a burning spirit of rivalry and disaffection, as between them. The conduct of the Ephraimites on this occasion, compared with their complaints to Joshua and their hostile attitude towards Gideon, clearly evinces a disposition to lord it over the other tribes, with an authority and pre-eminence to which they were certainly not yet entitled. We are reminded by the incidents of the narrative: (1.) That quarrels between brethren are usually most bitter and violent. "A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city; and their contentions are as the bars of a castle." (2.) They who have done the greatest service to the cause of God, are not secure from the greatest insults, even sometimes from the pretended friends of that cause. The most spotless characters are often the chosen marks for the fangs of envy to fasten upon.

VER. 2. And Jephthah said unto them, I and my people were at great strife with the children of Ammon; and when I called you, ye delivered me not out of their hands.

*And Jephthah said unto them, &c.*—Jephthah's answer, at once firm but temperate, shows that their charge was as false as malicious; that he had called them, and they refused to come. The greatest boasters and loudest pretenders are usually the greatest cowards; and they who are themselves most in fault, are often prone to shield themselves by accusing the innocent. *I and my people were at great strife, &c.*—Heb. "I was a man of strife, and my people, and the children of Ammon greatly." As if he had said, "Although the quarrel was chiefly between us Gileadites and the Ammonites, and not between you and them, yet out of respect to you as brethren and confederates, I gave you an invitation to join our forces, yet you declined." In reality,

therefore, he had more cause to condemn them for their indifference to the fate of their brethren, than they him for taking the field without them. Reason is very apt to forsake those who renounce right. *Ye delivered me not out of their hands.*—That is, ye strove not, ye attempted not, ye did not what in you lay, to deliver me. See note on Gen. xxxvii. 21. It is not to be supposed that his deliverance and success were suspended entirely upon their efforts in his behalf.

VER. 3. And when I saw that ye delivered me not, I put my life in my hands, and passed over against the children of Ammon, and the Lord delivered them into my hand: wherefore then are ye come up unto me this day, to fight against me?

b 1 Sam. xix. 5; xxviii. 21. Job xiii. 14. Ps. cxix. 109.

*I put my life in my hands.*—Heb. "in my palm." A strong orientalism, implying, "I risked my life in a seemingly desperate undertaking." "The Hindoos use the same figure; and the idea seems to be taken from a man carrying something very precious in his hands, and that under circumstances of great danger. When a son who has been long absent returns home, his father says, 'My son has returned from the far country with his life in his hand;' which means, he has passed through many dangers. "Last night as I went home through the place of evil spirits, I put my life in my hands." "The other day, in passing through the forest, I put my life in my hands, for the beasts were near to me in every direction." "Danger! truly so; I put my life in my bosom." "O that divine doctor! my son was at the point of death, but he brought his life in his hand."—*Roberts.* The same phrase occurs 1 Sam. xix. 5; xxviii. 21. Job xiii. 14. Ps. cxix. 109. *Wherefore then are ye come up unto me this day, to fight against me?*—If God was pleased to give me the victory without you, and so far to make use of me for his glory, why should you be offended? Should not your resentment rather become gratitude, that you were spared both labour and danger? Have you any reason to fight against me? Is it not, in effect, to sin against God, in whose hand I have been only an unworthy instrument?

VER. 4. Then Jephthah gathered together all the men of Gilead, and fought with Ephraim: and the men of Gilead smote Ephraim, because they said, Ye Gileadites are fugitives of Ephraim among the Ephraimites, and among the Manassites.

c See 1 Sam. xxv. 10. Ps. lxxviii. 9.

*Then Jephthah gathered together, &c.*—Finding all his remonstrances vain, and the Ephraimites intent upon a quarrel, he was prompted, perhaps under the influence of undue excitement, to undertake to chastise their insolence. It is, at any rate, extremely difficult to justify such a signal revenge, though it be admitted that the provocation was very great. Even good men often lack the self-command, which would enable them to

bear with becoming calmness the ingratitude and calumny of others, and in a just cause are apt to be hurried on by their passions to unwarrantable lengths. *Ye Gileadites are fugitives of Ephraim, &c.*—From the ambiguity of the original, it is not easy to ascertain precisely where the point of this reproach lies. According to the present translation, it is an insulting intimation that the Gileadites were the very scum and refuse of the two tribes here mentioned; but the following may be proposed as a more correct rendering of the Hebrew: “And the men of Gilead smote Ephraim, because they (the Gileadites) said, Ye are fugitives of Ephraim;” *i. e.* a mere party, a remnant of the whole tribe, who have come hither without being sent, to molest and insult us, whereas the majority of the tribe would be more just and generous than to treat us in this manner. The ensuing words, גלעד ברזק אפרים ברזק מנשה, *Gilead was intermediate between Ephraim and Manasse*, are probably to be enclosed in a parenthesis, intimating that Jephthah’s army had taken a position between their own territory and that of Ephraim, probably at the fords of the Jordan, in order to cut off their retreat. Accordingly it is said in the next verse, as we would translate the words, “For the Gileadites had taken the passages of the Jordan,” &c. As the successive companies of the Ephraimites approached the banks of the stream, to pass over into their own country, we suppose they were addressed in the manner above mentioned by the Gileadites. Still the clause is one of very dubious import.

VER. 5. And the Gileadites took the “passages of Jordan before the Ephraimites: and it was so, that when those Ephraimites which were escaped, said, Let me go over; that the men of Gilead said unto him, *Art thou an Ephraimite?* If he said, Nay;

‡ Josh. xxii. 11. Chap. iii. 28; vii. 24.

*Those Ephraimites which were escaped.*—Heb. “the fugitives of Ephraim;” precisely the same phrase with that occurring in the verse above, and confirming the interpretation there given. We consider the drift of the writer in ver. 5, 6, to be, to state in fuller detail, and with some additional particulars, the circumstances of the slaughter mentioned ver. 4.

VER. 6. Then said they unto him, say now Shibboleth: and he said Sibboleth: for he could not frame to pronounce it right. Then they took him, and slew him at the passages of Jordan. And there fell at that time of the Ephraimites forty and two thousand.

*Say now Shibboleth; and he said Sibboleth.*—The original differs only in the first letter, *b sa-mech*, instead of *w sheen*. It is well known that several nations cannot pronounce certain letters. The sound of *th*, so familiar to English organs, cannot be pronounced by the people of some European countries, nor by the Persians, though a common sound among the Arabians. To this day, many of the German Jews cannot articulate

this sound in reading their own Hebrew Scriptures, but substitute *ss*, as “*baiss* for *baith*, a house; *bereshiss* for *bereshith*, the beginning.” It has been remarked also, that *sh*, which is entirely wanting in many languages, is of peculiarly difficult pronunciation to persons whose organs have not in childhood been inured to it. The word chosen by the Gileadites, as the test-word, signifies an ear of corn, and also a stream, and was, perhaps, suggested by being the name of the object immediately before them, the river on the banks of which they stood. “Sibboleth,” on the other hand, denotes a burden, and how these different objects were distinguished in the pronunciation of the Ephraimites, it is difficult to say. Differences of pronunciation, however, even among those speaking the same language, or the same dialect, are nothing extraordinary. In later times, Peter was easily distinguished as a Galilean in Pilate’s hall, by his pronunciation, Mark xiv. 70, and travellers in the East inform us, that the Arabic of Cairo, of Aleppo, and of Bagdad, is so different, that one who has made himself master of this language in one of these cities, cannot, without great difficulty, understand or be understood in the others. England itself offers considerable variety both of dialect and modes of pronunciation, and so, probably, does every other country. *He could not frame to pronounce it right.*—Heb. “he did not direct to speak it so:” *i. e.* so as he was required. The original does not say that he *could* not, but that he *did* not; because, perhaps, not suspecting the design, he may have uttered it rapidly in his usual manner. Still the present translation is by no means a bad one. *And slew him.*—The predominant usage of the original is in reference to that kind of slaughter which was common in the case of animal victims offered upon the altar, *i. e.* by cutting the throat, jugulation; as if they made the inability of the organs of speech in the throat to utter certain sounds, a pretence for putting them to death in this manner. *There fell forty and two thousand.*—Heb. ארבעים ושנים אלף. As the Hebrew mode of enumeration is peculiar, the copulative *vav*, here may perhaps imply simply addition, so that the sum will be 2040, instead of 42,000. At the last census, Num. xxvi. 37, the whole tribe of Ephraim only amounted to 32,500, compared with which the last number appears far too great; especially as it is reasonable to believe that only a part of the tribe crossed the Jordan on this expedition.

VER. 7. And Jephthah judged Israel six years; then died Jephthah the Gileadite, and was buried in one of the cities of Gilead.

*Was buried in one of the cities of Gilead.*—Heb. “in one of the cities of Gilead.” A curious specimen of Rabbinical conceit and of the not unfrequent style of their exposition, is afforded in Raschi’s remarks upon these words. From him we learn that the ancient Jewish doctors maintained that Jephthah, as a punishment for putting his daughter to death, was visited by a disease that loosened the joints of the different limbs and members of his body, and caused them to fall off one after another, from time to time as

he was passing to and fro over the country, and that they were buried separately, wherever they happened to drop, so that when he died, it could be said from this general distribution of his members, that he was "buried in the cities of Gilead!" But how a man could be in a travelling condition, while his body was thus falling to pieces, is a part of the story which is wisely passed over in silence. The phraseology is doubtless idiomatic, the plural being put for the singular, as (Gen. xix. 29) where Lot is said to have dwelt "in the cities," *i. e.* in one of the cities. So Jonah i. 5, "the sides of the ship" appears to denote one of the sides.

VER. 8. And after him Ibzan of Beth-lehem judged Israel.

*Ibzan of Beth-lehem.*—The Beth-lehem here mentioned, if we may believe Josephus, was that in the tribe of Judah, and not that in Zebulun, of which see Josh. xix. 5. The Jewish critics, for the most part, consider this Ibzan to have been the same person with Boaz, spoken of in the book of Ruth; but the opinion rests upon conjecture alone. Nothing memorable is related of him, except the circumstance mentioned in the next verse.

VER. 9. And he had thirty sons and thirty daughters whom he sent abroad, and took in thirty daughters from abroad for his sons: and he judged Israel seven years.

*Had thirty sons and thirty daughters.*—Where polygamy was practised, such a numerous progeny is not surprising. Parallel instances in modern times are recited in abundance by eastern travellers. Whom he sent abroad.—Or, Heb. "out of doors." That is, disposed of in marriage to other families. Hence the Vulg. paraphrastically, but not incorrectly, "Whom he sending abroad gave to husbands;" and so in the ensuing clause, "Took wives for his sons of the same number, bringing them into his house." Ibzan's lot, in this respect, contrasted strikingly with that of his predecessor Jephthah.

VER. 10. Then died Ibzan, and was buried at Beth-lehem.

VER. 11. And after him Elon, a Zebulonite, judged Israel, and he judged Israel ten years.

VER. 12. And Elon, the Zebulonite, died, and was buried in Ajalon in the country of Zebulun.

VER. 13. And after him Abdon the son of Hillel, a Pirathonite, judged Israel.

VER. 14. And he had forty sons and thirty nephews, that rode on threescore and ten ass colts: and he judged Israel eight years.

*e* Chap. v. 10; x. 4.

*Thirty nephews.*—That is, grandsons; Heb. "sons' sons." On the opulence and dignity implied in riding upon white asses, see chap. v. 10; x. 4.

VER. 15. And Abdon the son of Hillel the Pirathonite died, and was buried in Pirathon in the land of Ephraim, in the mount of the Amalekites.

*f* Chap. iiii. 13, 27; v. 14.

*In the mount of the Amalekites.*—For a probable account of the reason why this place was so called, see on chap. v. 14. It does not appear certain that any thing remarkable took place in the civil state of the Israelites, during the time of these latter judges, though Lightfoot supposes, with some plausibility, that the forty years' oppression of the Philistines commenced in the days of Elon the Zebulonite, and was gradually waxing more and more severe through the subsequent administrations. Previous, however, to the birth of Samson, it had not gained sufficient head to make it worthy of particular record in the inspired narrative. But it has been well remarked, that the happiest life of individuals, and the happiest state of society, is that which affords the fewest remarkable events. The people in the main, enjoyed peace without, and freedom from discord and sedition, though still the leaven of their idolatrous propensities was secretly working and preparing them for new troubles in the end. As to the several judges, the principal fact mentioned in regard to each is, that he lived, acted as judge, and died. Death, the lot of man, at last claims his due of the great and the good, and whatever else we may hear of any man, we are sure to hear one thing—that he died: unless indeed our own departure hence anticipates his.

### CHAPTER XIII.

VER. 1. AND the children of Israel "did evil again in the sight of the LORD; and the LORD delivered them into the hand of the Philistines forty years.

*a* Chap. ii. 11; iii. 7; iv. 1; vi. 1; x. 6.  
*b* 1 Sam. xii. 9.

*Did evil again.*—Heb. "added to commit;" *i. e.* by apostatizing from God's pure worship, and falling into idolatry. See on chap. iii. 7; vi. 11; x. 6. *Delivered them into the hand of the Philistines forty years.*—This period is not to be understood as constituting an interregnum between Abdon and Samson, for this would not consist with the chronology given, (1 Kings vi. 1,) or with the intimation (ver. 5) below, that the Israelites were already suffering under the rod of the Philistines when Samson was raised up for a deliverer. The probability is, as Samson is said to have "judged Israel twenty years in the days of the Philistines," *i. e.* during the period of their ascendancy, that the other twenty is to be taken out of the times of the previous judges, which will carry us up at least to the time of Elon, as suggested by Lightfoot, (chap. xii. 15.) for the commencement of their oppression. In order to gain a still fuller view of the chain of events here recorded, we must revert back to chap. x. 6, 7, where it is said that the

Lord was angry with his people, "and sold them into the hands of the Philistines, and into the hands of the children of Ammon." Of these two servitudes, the last, with the deliverance from it by Jephthah, is treated first. This occupies the two preceding chapters. Having dispatched that, the historian now returns back and takes up the history of the other oppression, and brings it down to the death of Samson.

VER. 2. And there was a certain man of <sup>c</sup>Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah; and his wife was barren, and bare not.

<sup>c</sup> Josh. xix. 41.

*A certain man of Zorah.*—Of the city of Zorah; a town in the tribe of Judah, but afterwards given to Dan, being situated near the confines of each tribe. (Josh. xv. 33.) *Of the family of the Danites.*—That is, of the tribe of Dan. The word is properly a collective singular for the plural. *Was barren, and bare not.*—An emphatic repetition in varied phrase, of frequent occurrence in the sacred writers. Thus Gen. xi. 30, "But Sarai was barren; she had no child." John i. 3, "All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made." Ver. 20, "And he confessed, and denied not." "If Manoah's wife had not been barren, the angel had not been sent to her. Afflictions have this advantage, that they occasion God to show that mercy to us, whereof the prosperous are incapable."—*Bp. Hall.*

VER. 3. And the <sup>d</sup>angel of the LORD appeared unto the woman, and said unto her, Behold, now thou art barren, and bearest not: but thou shalt conceive, and bear a son.

<sup>d</sup> Chap. vi. 12. Luke i. 11, 13, 28, 31.

*The angel of the Lord.*—The uncreated angel, the Angel-Jehovah, so often spoken of in the preceding narrative, and who appeared to Moses, to Joshua, to Gideon, and others. Evidence of this will disclose itself as we proceed.

VER. 4. Now therefore beware, I pray thee, and drink not wine nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean thing:

<sup>e</sup> Ver. 14. Numb. vi. 2, 3. Luke i. 15.

*Beware—drink not wine, &c.*—As the child, whose birth was now announced, was to be a Nazarite from the womb, the mother herself was to be subjected to the law of the Nazarites, that the sanctification of her son might commence from herself. She must, during the period of gestation and nursing, abstain from wine and every inebriating liquor, and all kinds of forbidden food. Things that would be lawful at another time were to be refrained from now. The nourishment of her child would partake of the qualities of her own, and this future deliverer of Israel must be in the strictest manner and through every period an example of separation and consecration to God. As it was designed also that he should be a person of superhuman strength, there was perhaps a fitness in the mo-

ther's temperance as a natural means to produce this result, though a miraculous agency was requisite over and above all other means whatever. "The mother must conceive the only giant of Israel, and yet must drink but water; neither must the child touch any other cup. Never wine made so strong a champion as water did here. He that gave that power to the grape can give it to the stream. O God, how justly do we raise our eyes from our tables unto thee, which canst make water nourish and wine enfeeble us!"—*Bp. Hall.* *Eat not any unclean thing.*—Unclean meats were forbidden to all Israelites at all times; but especially and pre-eminently so to the Nazirite. (Lev. xi. 1—47.) It was perhaps solely for this reason that the precept was repeated at this time and on this occasion; though Scott supposes, not unreasonably, that the distinction of meats was not strictly observed at this time, as otherwise she would scarcely have needed such a caution.

VER. 5. For lo, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and no razor shall come on his head: for the child shall be <sup>a</sup>a Nazarite unto God from the womb: and he shall <sup>b</sup>begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.

<sup>f</sup> Numb. vi. 5. <sup>1</sup> Sam. i. 11. <sup>g</sup> Numb. vi. 2.  
<sup>h</sup> See 1 Sam. vii. 13. <sup>2</sup> Sam. viii. 1. <sup>1</sup> Chron. xviii. 1.

*No razor shall come on his head.*—Heb. "shall go up on his head." The hair of his head shall neither be shorn nor shaven. Of this part of the Nazirite's vow, see on Numb. vi. *For the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb.*—For a full account of this peculiar feature of the Mosaic institute, see on Numb. vi. Oriental usage at the present day affords a striking parallel to what is here recorded. "All who are married in the East," says Mr. Roberts, "have an intense desire for children. It is considered disgraceful, and a mark of the displeasure of the gods, to have a childless house. Under these circumstances, husbands and wives perform expensive ceremonies, and vow that, should the gods favour them with a son, 'no razor shall come upon his head,' (i. e. except upon the 'corners,') until he shall be ten or twelve years of age. In all schools, boys may be seen with elf-locks of ten or twelve years' standing, giving a testimony to the solitude, superstition, and affection of the parents, and a memorial of the favour of the gods." *He shall begin to deliver Israel.*—This intimated that Israel's oppression should endure long; for deliverance from it was not so much as to begin, not even the first step to be taken, till this child, now unborn, should grow up to years of maturity, and become capable of undertaking it. And even then he was not to complete the deliverance; he was only to begin it; for the yoke of the Philistines was not fully shaken off the neck of Israel till the time of David. Thus "God carries on his work gradually, and by several hands. One lays the foundation of a good work, another builds, and perhaps a third brings forth the top-stone."—*Henry.* Christ, on the other hand, the great counterpart of Samson, both begins and perfects

his people's salvation; he is at once the Author and Finisher of faith.

VER. 6. Then the woman came and told her husband, saying, 'A man of God came unto me, and his <sup>h</sup>countenance *was* like the countenance of an angel of God, very terrible: but I <sup>h</sup>asked him not whence he *was*, neither told he me his name:

† Deut. xxxiii. 1. 1 Sam. ii. 27; ix. 6. 1 Kings xvii. 24.  
‡ Matt. xxviii. 3. Luke ix. 29. Acts vi. 15.  
§ Ver. 17, 18.

*A man of God.*—So called because he appeared in human form, leading her to suppose him merely a prophet sent from God. So afterwards ver. 8, 10, 11. She seems, however, to have had a strong suspicion that he was something more than human. *Very terrible.*—Rather, perhaps, venerable, awful, full of majesty; such as at once to inspire the deepest respect and reverence; so that according to every idea she could form on the subject his countenance very much resembled that of an angel.

VER. 7. But he said unto me, Behold, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and now drink no wine nor strong drink, neither eat any unclean thing: for the child shall be a Nazarite to God from the womb to the day of his death.

VER. 8. Then Manoah entreated the LORD, and said, O my Lord, let the man of God which thou didst send come again unto us, and teach us what we shall do unto the child that shall be born.

*Let the man of God—come again unto us, and teach us, &c.*—Josephus represents the second appearance of the angel as essential to Manoah's peace of mind, as his excessive attachment to his wife, made him jealous of her conversation with a stranger. But the narrative contains nothing to warrant such an insinuation. On the other hand, his request appears to have been prompted by a strong faith and a high esteem of the promised blessing, and a sincere desire to receive farther intimations of duty. He may have thought it possible too that his wife's joy for the promise should have made her forget some part of the charge which the angel connected with it. On this point he would be fully informed; he dreads the possibility of a mistake. "When I see the strength of Manoah's faith, I marvel not that he had a Samson to his son; he saw not the messenger, he heard not the errand, he examined not the circumstances; yet now he takes thought, not whether he should have a son, but how he shall order the son which he must have. Zecharias had the same message, and craving a sign lost the voice wherewith he craved it: Manoah seeks no sign for the promise, but counsel for himself. Happy are they that have not seen, yet believed: true faith takes all for granted, yea, for performed, that is promised.—*Bp. Hall.* The petition of Manoah reminds us also that the care of children is a great concern, and that those

who have the parental relation in prospect can make no more suitable prayer at the throne of grace than that of the pious Danite on this occasion. Who upon the eve of becoming parents has not need to say, "Teach us what we shall do to the child that shall be born?"

VER. 9. And God hearkened to the voice of Manoah; and the angel of God came again unto the woman as she sat in the field: but Manoah her husband *was* not with her.

*And God hearkened—and the angel of the Lord came again.*—The phraseology here is worthy of notice. The sacred writer does not say, "And God hearkened to the voice of Manoah, and sent his angel," but "God hearkened to the voice of Manoah, and the angel of God came again," implying that it was the God who hearkened to the voice of his servant that came in the person of his Son. He perhaps appeared to Manoah's wife a second time rather than to Manoah himself, because she was more especially interested both in the blessing and the charge than he was. He may also have had other reasons unknown to us. The divine condescension in granting a repetition of the visit is too striking to be overlooked. How clearly does it prove that nothing is more acceptable to God than a sincere desire to know our duty, and that sooner than our prayers to that effect shall go unanswered, a heavenly messenger shall be sent for our instruction. But thanks be to God, with the Bible and the Holy Spirit for our guides we have no need of angelic instructions to direct us what to do.

VER. 10. And the woman made haste, and ran, and showed her husband, and said unto him, Behold, the man hath appeared unto me, that came unto me the other day.

*And the woman made haste, and ran, &c.*—Doubtless after humbly entreating the messenger to stay, and obtaining his consent. Those who have met with a refreshing visit from God cannot but instinctively exclaim, "Return, O God of hosts, return;" and when the favour is granted, how ardently do they long that those who are near and dear to them may also share in the comfort and sweetness of their divine communion. What is the fellowship of husbands and wives if it extend not to a mutual communication of each other's religious experiences, of their hopes and fears, joys and sorrows?

VER. 11. And Manoah arose, and went after his wife, and came to the man, and said unto him, *Art* thou the man that spakest unto the woman? And I said, I am.

VER. 12. And Manoah said, Now let thy words come to pass. How shall we order the child, and how shall we do unto him?

*Let thy words come to pass.*—This clause as it reads in our translation is simply the expression of an earnest wish, that the promise graciously

made to his wife may be fulfilled. It is a kind of pious amen to the angel's previous announcement; and this was probably his real feeling; but the Heb. may properly be rendered, "and now thy words shall come to pass," intimating his most implicit confidence in the promise. "Lord, I lay hold upon what thou hast said, and depend upon it with the most unwavering assurance." *How shall we order the child, and how shall we do unto him?*—Heb. "what shall be the rule, prescription, institution (משפט) in regard to the child, and what our doing (מעשהו) towards him?" That is, what shall be his training? how shall we educate him? The former term, which is usually translated judgment or ordinance, seems to imply the divine disposition or purpose in regard to the child, and the latter the proper mode of executing or accomplishing it on their part. Though the literal rendering of מעשהו is, "his work or doing," yet the import is obviously what is done to or towards him, just as in Gen. I 4, the phrase "days of his mourning" means the days of mourning for him. So also Job xli. 9. "The hope of him (the leviathan) is vain," i. e. the hope of taking him.

VER. 13. And the angel of the LORD said unto Manoah, Of all that I said unto the woman, let her beware.

*And the angel of the Lord said, &c.*—It might seem at first view that the angel's answer was not pertinent to the question. Manoah inquired what conduct they should observe in regard to the child; the angel in his reply merely reiterates the charge he had before given in respect to the mother. In explanation we may remark, that the child to be born was to be a Nazarite set apart and consecrated to God. Until the period of his birth, therefore, and while at the breast, she was, for his sake, to abstain from all the things inhibited above. But if it was solely for the child's sake that these commands were laid upon her, the inference would be very fair, that he also was to be taught to govern himself by the same rules, and it was the duty of his parents to see that this was the case. In fact it was this that constituted the very essence of his Nazarite state. The directions, therefore, relative to the child were really involved in those that had respect to the mother, and it would require no far-fetched construction so to understand them. The divine injunctions are not always given in the most direct form, but to a heart rightly disposed they are always intelligible.

VER. 14. She may not eat of any thing that cometh of the vine, neither let her drink wine or strong drink, nor eat any unclean thing: all that I commanded her let her observe.

*m* Ver. 4.

VER. 15. And Manoah said unto the angel of the LORD, I pray thee, let us detain thee, until we shall have made ready a kid for thee.

*n* Gen. xviii. 5. Chap. vi. 18.

*Until we shall have made ready a kid for thee.*

—Heb. "before thee." Not yet aware of the true character of his visitor, Manoah proposed this as an act of hospitality.

VER. 16. And the angel of the LORD said unto Manoah, Though thou detain me, I will not eat of thy bread: and if thou wilt offer a burnt-offering, thou must offer it unto the LORD. For Manoah knew not that he was an angel of the LORD.

*I will not eat of thy bread.*—As the proffer of Manoah was to serve up for the angel a dish of kid's flesh, the term, "bread" here must be taken with some latitude to signify food in general; a sense which it evidently bears 2 Kings vi. 22, 23. Matt. vi. 11. *And if thou wilt offer a burnt-offering.*—Rather, "but if thou wilt offer," &c. To us this part of the angel's answer seems to be made, not so much to what Manoah actually said, as to what he was inwardly revolving in his own mind. If we mistake not, he had by this time begun to entertain suspicions that the personage with whom he was conversing was truly divine; and if so, he could not but be aware that a sacrificial offering was a more suitable expression of the sentiments with which he ought to regard him, than a common meal; and as the tradition of Gideon's offering under similar circumstances at a former period, and the manner of its reception, had doubtless come down to him, he appears to have been at this time wavering in his own mind like his renowned predecessor as to what should be the real character of the offering that he now proposed to make. The angel perceiving this answers him accordingly. He does not forbid him to present a burnt-offering, but he would have him do it intelligently; he would have him assured as to the true character of the object of his worship. In saying, "If thou wilt offer a burnt-offering, thou must offer it unto the LORD," he does not deny that he was himself Jehovah, or intimate that he would decline the honour which Manoah intended, any more than our Saviour would intimate that he was not good, when, being addressed by the title "good master," he replied, "there is none good but God." In both cases his answer has reference to the state of mind of the speaker, or to the light in which they regarded him. Here he merely intended to say, that though he might offer him a common meal as a man, yet it would not do to offer him a sacrifice as such, or while he was not in possession of full evidence that the being he thus proposed to honour was indeed divine. This evidence he had not yet gained, and therefore it is immediately added, "For Manoah knew not (had not a clear conviction) that it was an angel (rather the angel) of the LORD;" i. e. the Angel Jehovah; but he was soon to be assured that he was. The whole address of the angel appears to be framed with reference to the manifestation which he was just about to make.

VER. 17. And Manoah said unto the angel of the LORD, What is thy name, that when thy sayings come to pass, we may do thee honour?

*What is thy name?*—Heb. “who is thy name?” Name in reference to the Supreme Being is in Scripture style very much the same as nature; and we suppose this to be the real drift of Manoah’s question, to learn the nature, the essential character, of the mysterious being whom he addressed; for that he regarded him as a superhuman personage cannot, we think, be doubted from an attentive examination of the passage. At any rate, the answer of the angel, as we shall see, was adapted to such a scope in Manoah’s interrogation. That he was prompted by somewhat of an unhallowed curiosity in making the inquiry is indeed supposed by many commentators, but we see nothing in the text to warrant it. On the other hand, we know no reason to doubt that he was really actuated by the motive assigned, a disposition to render him due honour and thanks when the promise should be fulfilled.

VER. 18. And the angel of the LORD said unto him, ° Why askest thou thus after my name, seeing it is secret?

o Gen. xxxii. 29.

*Why askest thou thus after my name, seeing it is secret?*—This has at first blush the air of a rebuke for putting such a question; but comparing it with what follows we imagine it is such in appearance only. A rebuke supposes something criminal or censurable in him who is the subject of it. But what offence could attach to a respectful and reverential question of this kind? Why was the mere secrecy of the name a reason for its not being asked? Was it not in fact for this very reason that he did ask it? We admit, indeed, that if Manoah had been previously informed that the name was ineffable—that it was designed to be kept a profound secret—he would have been guilty of high presumption in demanding it. But we see no evidence of this in any part of the sacred text, and conclude therefore that the angel made use of this interrogative form of speech merely in order to introduce in the most suitable and impressive manner the declaration that follows constituting the real point of his reply. “It is secret;”—or rather as in the margin, “It is wonderful;” for so the original (אֱלֹהִים) properly implies, and so is it expressly rendered, Isa. ix. 6, “His name shall be called ‘Wonderful’ (אֱלֹהִים);” i. e. his nature, his character shall be wonderful; properly implying that kind of wonder which is the natural effect of miracles, of marvellous and superhuman works. In apparently declining therefore to reveal his name he does in fact make known one of his most august and glorious titles, one which went far towards conveying an idea of the divine attributes of his nature, and one which was therefore eminently appropriate to the drift of Manoah’s question. The implication probably is, “You have scarcely any real occasion to inquire as to my name (nature); it is obvious from the words, promises, and actions already witnessed and yet further to be displayed, that I am, and am therefore to be called Peli, the Admirable One, the great Worker of wonders, the Master of miracles.” The original אֱלֹהִים has the form of a proper name,

but the force of an appellative. Whether he fully understood its entire import is perhaps to be doubted; but whether he did or not, the declaration is to us, considered in one point of view, immensely important; for, by assuming a title which unquestionably belongs to the promised Messiah, he identifies himself with that divine personage, and consequently puts it beyond a doubt who it is that is meant by the term “Angel” or “Angel of the Lord,” so frequently occurring in the Old-Testament Scriptures in connexion with miraculous appearances and revelations. It is plain that it is no other than the Angel-Jehovah, so emphatically alluded to, Exod. xxiii. 20, 21, “Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of him, and obey his voice; provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions; for my name is in him;” i. e. my nature is in him; he possesses true and essential divinity. The exalted character, therefore, which he claimed by the assumption of this title he proceeded to display still more fully in the incident that followed.

VER. 19. So Manoah took a kid, with a meat-offering, and offered it upon a rock unto the LORD; and the angel did wondrously, and Manoah and his wife looked on.

p Chap. vi. 19, 20.

*Manoah took a kid—and offered, &c.*—He had, by this time, become so far satisfied as to the real character of his guest, that he no longer doubted in what manner to express his grateful and reverential feelings towards him. He determines to do this by offering the kid as a holocaust, accompanied with the usual meal or flour-offering (erroneously rendered “meat offering”) which the law prescribed. For this purpose he selects a rock, as did Gideon upon a like occasion, (Chap. vi. 20, 21,) instead of an altar. Large masses of stone, of various forms, some of which are well adapted to such a use, frequently occur in the plains and valleys of Judea, and other hilly countries. Some of these are seen in their natural position, rising out of the ground, while others appear as detached fragments, thrown down from the rocky eminences. To such insulated masses of rock there are repeated references in the Scriptures. And the angel did wondrously.—Heb. אֱלֹהִים *maphlia*; in correspondence with the name which he had before attributed to himself. Being wonderful he performed wonderful things, probably causing fire to arise out of the rock and consume the sacrifice; and we are expressly told that he afterwards ascended in the flame. The word “angel,” it is true, does not occur in the original, but from the tenor of the narrative there can be no doubt who is intended.

VER. 20. For it came to pass, when the flame went up toward heaven from off the altar, that the angel of the LORD ascended in the flame of the altar. And Manoah and his wife looked on it, and fell on their faces to the ground.

q Lev. ix. 24. 1 Chron. xxi. 16. Ezek. i. 28. Matt. xvii. 6.

VER. 21. But the angel of the LORD did no more appear to Manoah and to his wife. 'Then Manoah knew that he was an angel of the LORD.

\* Chap. vi. 22.

*Then Manoah knew that he was an angel of the Lord.*—Rather, "that he was the angel;" the divine uncreated angel; the Angel Jehovah. He was now fully and undoubtingly assured. This put the finishing stroke to the process of conviction which, from the commencement of the interview, had been going on in Manoah's mind.

VER. 22. And Manoah said unto his wife, 'We shall surely die, because we have seen God.

† Gen. xxxii. 30. Exod. xxxiii. 20. Deut. v. 26. Chap. vi. 22.

*We shall surely die, because we have seen God.*—Perceiving that the personage who had now appeared to him was no other than God in human shape, he conceived, according to popular belief, that both he and his wife must die. This idea was not without some foundation; for when Moses had entreated the Lord to show him his glory, he answered, "Thou canst not see my face; for there shall no man see me and live;" and for this very reason God put him into a cleft of the rock, and permitted him to see, as it were, only "his back parts," a very partial display of his glory. So when Jacob had been favoured with a visit from the same divine person in the shape of an angel, he expressed his astonishment that "his life was preserved." (Gen. xxxii. 29, 30.) From these passages we may learn the grounds of the prevailing impressions on the subject. But while we do not wonder at the apprehensions of Manoah, we the more admire the composure of his wife. She argued in a directly different way. She considered the mercies already vouchsafed to them as tokens for good; for why should God confer such singular honour upon them, if he intended to kill them? Why did he accept the burnt-offering at their hands? Why stoop to impart to them such information? Why give them such gracious promises? Was all this done to mock them? Indeed, if he should kill them, how could the promises be fulfilled? or for what purpose were they given? The honour of the divine veracity, therefore, required that they should be preserved. This was a just mode of arguing; for such mercies were both evidences and pledges of his love; and, therefore, were rather to be considered as earnest of future blessings than as harbingers of ill. The woman in this showed herself not only the strongest believer, but the wisest reasoner. The incidents related may teach us, (1.) That in times of dark and discouraging providences or sore temptations we should remember the past experience of God's goodness as a ground of present support. "Account the long-suffering of God to be salvation." He that hath so kindly helped us and dealt with us hitherto means not to destroy us at last. (2.) That the sinner oppressed with a sense of his deserts has no reason to despair. Let him remember what Christ has done for him by his bloody sacrifice, and read in it a sure proof that he does not design his death.

VER. 23. But his wife said unto him, If the LORD were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt-offering and a meat-offering at our hands, neither would he have showed us all these things, nor would as at this time have told us such things as these.

*Nor would as at this time, &c.*—Or, Heb. "at this time." The expression is perhaps designed to be emphatical, implying that God's mercy was greatly enhanced by being afforded to them at this particular time, a time of general calamity, when the word of the Lord was precious, and there was no open vision. (1 Sam. iii. 1.)

VER. 24. And the woman bare a son, and called his name 'Samson. And "the child grew, and the LORD blessed him.

‡ Heb. xi. 32.

§ 1 Sam. iii. 19. Luke i. 60; ii. 52.

*Called his name Samson.*—Heb. שמשון *Shimshon*. The root is undoubtedly שמש *Shemesh*, "the sun," but what relation the name was intended to bear to this object we are no where informed. Schmid conjectures that it was in allusion to the shining countenance of the angel when he first appeared to Manoah's wife. Perhaps, or a still more probable supposition is, that it was in memory of the resplendent brightness in which his whole person may for a moment have been arrayed just as he departed from their sight. *And the Lord blessed him.*—Gave evident proofs that the child was under his peculiar protection; blessed him by qualifying him both in body and mind for something great and extraordinary.

VER. 25. "And the Spirit of the LORD began to move him at times in the camp of Dan, "between Zorah and Eshtaol.

\* Chap. iii. 10. 1 Sam. xi. 6. Matt. iv. 1.  
y Josh. xv. 33. Chap. xviii. 11.

*The Spirit of the Lord began to move him at times.*—To stir him up to bold exploits; inspiring him, in view of the degrading bondage of his countrymen, with an ardent zeal to do something towards their deliverance. Under this supernatural impulse he was led from time to time to put forth astonishing specimens of valour and strength, such perhaps as his slaying the lion, (chap. xiv. 6;) achievements which clearly evinced his designation of Heaven for the work to which he was called and set apart. The import of the original (לפעם) for "moved" is peculiar. As פעם the radical form signifies an anvil, the metaphor is probably drawn from the repeated and somewhat violent strokes of the workman with his hammer. It implies, therefore, a peculiar urgency, an impelling influence on the part of the Spirit, which made its subject invincible.

## CHAPTER XIV.

VER. 1. AND Samson went down "to Timnath,

and <sup>b</sup> saw a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines.

*a* Gen. xxxviii. 13. Josh. xv. 10. *b* Gen. xxxiv. 2.

*Samson went down to Timnath.*—A frontier town of Dan, lying close upon the borders of the Philistines' country. It originally belonged to Judah, but was afterwards assigned to Dan. It was situated about twenty miles west of Jerusalem, and about twelve north-east of Eshtaol. There evidently had been some remissness on the part of Israel in driving out the Philistines from this place, but as the latter had now the upper hand, it is not surprising that they dwelt in the cities of the former, whom they had probably put under tribute, and although the two races were in an attitude of hostility towards each other, yet it seems not at this time to have interrupted all intercourse between them. Indeed the terms on which the Israelites lived and mingled with their devoted neighbours the Canaanites, as is evident from many parts of their history, were such as we should scarcely have expected from people so related. But "the holy seed" in all ages has been too prone to cultivate intimacies and form alliances with the world of the ungodly.

VER. 2. And he came up, and told his father and his mother, and said, I have seen a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines: now therefore <sup>c</sup> get her for me to wife.

*c* Gen. xxi. 21; xxxiv. 4.

*Get her for me to wife.*—That is, take measures for that purpose; endeavour to bring it about. No part of the Scripture has afforded more occasion for the doubts of sceptics or the scoffs of infidels than the history of Samson. His character is indeed dark and almost inexplicable. By none of the judges of Israel did God work so many miracles, and yet by none were so many faults committed. He is enrolled by Paul in the list of ancient worthies in the eleventh of Hebrews, which affords a strong presumption, though not, we conceive, a positive proof, of his being a truly pious man. It must be recollected, however, that his history is very short, and that the peculiarity of the dispensation under which he lived, may account for many things, which, if done at this time and without the special appointment of Heaven, would be highly criminal. Besides, there may have been in him many exercises of true piety, which, if recorded, would have reflected a different light upon his character. In the present instance it must be admitted that his conduct in suffering his affections to be ensnared by a Philistine woman, had an ill appearance. Marriage connexions with the Philistines who were not of the devoted nations, were not indeed prohibited to the Israelites by the letter of the law, though by its spirit they undoubtedly were. The danger of being enticed to idolatry was the reason of the law as it respected alliances with the Canaanites, and this reason we cannot but suppose was equally applicable to connexions with the Philistines. Still the law was merely ceremonial, and if God saw fit to dispense with it in regard to any of his servants, he could do

so unimpeached. That this was the case in the present instance, there are strong grounds, from the actual event, to believe. At least, we do not feel at liberty, from a view of the facts recorded, to pronounce positively a sentence of condemnation on this part of Samson's conduct. But whatever judgment we may form of the measure on the whole, his mode of procedure was in one respect highly deserving of commendation. He took no step towards forming the connexion, not even so much as paying his addresses to her, without first making his parents acquainted with the matter, and obtaining their consent. In his example we read an admonition that addresses itself to all children in similar circumstances. Next to the sanction of Heaven, the concurrence of parents is requisite to render that relation a source of comfort and happiness to the parties concerned. Consulting them is consulting our own welfare, as well as acting up to the spirit of the divine injunction in the fifth commandment.

VER. 3. Then his father and his mother said unto him, *Is there* never a woman among the daughters of <sup>d</sup> thy brethren, or among all my people, that thou goest to take a wife of the "uncircumcised Philistines? And Samson said unto his father, Get her for me; for she pleaseth me well.

*d* Gen. xxiv. 3, 4.

*e* Gen. xxxiv. 14. Ex. xxxiv. 16. Deut. vii. 3.

*Is there never a woman, &c.*—His parents, aware of the divine prohibitions relative to foreign alliances, and also of the high and solemn designation of their son, of course remonstrated with him and endeavoured to dissuade him from what they conceived so imprudent and unbecoming a connexion. They inquire whether among the daughters of his "brethren," i.e. of the tribe of Dan, he could not find a more suitable object of choice. If not, there was the whole nation of Israel—"all my people"—that afforded him a field of selection. Why then should he have occasion to go to the daughters of a heathen race? "I wish," says an old divine, "that Manoah and his wife could speak so loud that all our Israel should hear them." By nothing are the hearts of pious parents more grieved than by the prospect of the unequal yoking of their children with profane or irreligious partners; for they know that nothing is so likely to prove injurious to their spiritual interests, and subject them to heart-rending trials. *For she pleaseth me well.*—Heb. הוּא יָשָׁר בְּעֵינַי "she is right in mine eyes." Taking these words in connexion with what is said in the next verse, we very much doubt whether our present translation does full justice to Samson's motives. According to this, he urges no stronger reason for the step proposed than that the woman pleased his fancy, and for aught that appears from the rendering, it was on this ground alone that his parents acceded to his request. But if they conceived the measure to be directly contrary to the precepts of the law, how could they, as true believers and obedient servants of God, yield their consent and co-operation, merely to gratify the

headstrong passion of their son, unless they had some intimation that God himself had authorized in this instance a departure from his established ordinance? Should we look for such a concession to human infirmity from the pious pair who had so devoutly entertained a messenger from Heaven, and listened to his commands? The fact is, if we mistake not, Samson does not intend mainly to say in these words, "she is well-pleasing in my sight," for the original word is not an adjective, having the sense of beautiful, engaging, attractive, but a verb conveying indeed the idea of right, but of right relative to an end, purpose, or object; in other words, of fitness or adaptation. See Gussetius on the root *עָרַר*, and compare the use of it 2 Sam. xvii. 4; 1 Kings ix. 12; 2 Chron. xxx.; Numb. xxiii. 27. This then we conceive affords the true clue to Samson's meaning; "She is *right* in my eyes;" *i. e.* adapted to the end which I have in view; she may be used, she is available for a purpose entirely ulterior to the immediate connexion which I propose. That Samson, however, entertained a genuine affection for the woman, and was not influenced solely by views of policy in the transaction, we see no reason to doubt. But that he intended at the same time to make this alliance subservient to the great purpose of delivering his country from oppression, there are very strong grounds for believing.

VER. 4. But his father and his mother knew not that it was *of* the LORD, that he sought an occasion against the Philistines: for at that time *the* Philistines had dominion over Israel.

*f* Josh. xi. 20. 1 Kings xii. 15. 2 Kings vi. 33. 2 Chr. x. 15; xxii. 7; xxv. 20.  
*g* Chap. xiii. 1. Deut. xxviii. 48.

*But his father and his mother knew not, &c.*—These words appear to be inserted parenthetically for the purpose of intimating the reason to which it was owing, that Samson's parents declined giving their consent to the proposed marriage. They did not know God's purposes in respect to it. Had they known them, the implication is that their decision would have been different; and as we learn from the next verse that their objections were overruled, and that they went with their son to Timnath in reference to the object of his suit, the inference is fair, that in some way they did become acquainted with the divine counsels. Their going is to be considered, we think, rather in the light of an acquiescence in the will of Heaven, than of a yielding to the mere importunities of their son. In what particular manner they became enlightened in respect to the ultimate bearings of the measure, we are not informed, and must of course be left to mere conjecture. To us it appears most probable that Samson frankly laid open to them all his mind, and that in these disclosures they saw satisfactory evidence that he was moved by the Spirit of God in this transaction in a way that they did not dare to resist. *That he sought an occasion against the Philistines.*—That is, an occasion of avenging the wrongs inflicted by the

Philistines on the Israelites. It is worthy of note that the Hebrew, instead of "against the Philistines," has "of or from the Philistines;" clearly implying that the occasion sought should be one that originated on the side of the Philistines. The sense exhibited by our common rendering is not indeed essentially different from this, but we prefer to express the exact shade of the original wherever it can be done. As far as the grammatical construction is concerned, there is nothing to prevent this being understood of the Lord himself as the proper subject of the verb. But it seems on the whole more natural and plausible to understand it of Samson—that he sought occasion against the Philistines—though at the same time with the connivance and under the prompting of the Most High, who saw fit in this indirect way to bring about the accomplishment of his designs of retribution towards his enemies. If it be asked why infinite wisdom chose to adopt this peculiar method of compassing the object, although our inability to answer the question would not at all affect the claims of the sacred narrative, yet it may be suggested, that the reason is perhaps to be drawn from the special design of God in raising up Samson as a deliverer. His leading purpose in this seems to have been to baffle the power of the whole Philistine nation by the prowess of a single individual. The champion of Israel therefore was not appointed so much to be the leader of an army like the other judges, as to be an army in himself. In order then that the contest might be carried on in this way, it was necessary that the entire opposition of the Philistines should be concentrated, as far as possible, against the person of Samson. This would array the contending parties precisely in such an attitude as to illustrate most signally the power of God in the overthrow of his enemies. But how could this result be brought about except by means of some private quarrel between Samson and the enemy with which he was to contend? and who can say that the scheme now projected was not the very best that could have been devised for accomplishing the end which God had in view? To what extent Samson foresaw all the events that were to grow out of this transaction, or how far he had a plan distinctly laid corresponding with the results that actually ensued, it is difficult to determine. The probability, we think, is, that he had rather a general strong impression, wrought by the Spirit of God, than a definite conception, of the train of events that were to transpire. It was however a conviction as to the issue sufficiently powerful to warrant both him and his parents in going forward with the measure. They were in some way assured that they were engaged in a proceeding which God would overrule to the furtherance of his designs of mercy to his people and of judgment to their oppressors. God foresaw, though they did not, how basely and perfidiously his wife's friends and relations would act towards Samson, and what just grounds of war would on this account arise. In all this, however, they would act freely and without compulsion, so that there would be no injustice in their punishment; and what should prevent the righteous Lord God from

availing himself of his omniscience in working out to his enemies the due recompense of their deeds? *For at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel.*—Added in order to intimate the general moving cause which prompted Samson to exert himself in behalf of his people. They were suffering under the despotic and tyrannical sway of their oppressors. It was in this fact that a justification was to be sought for the commencement of hostilities. Schmid, however, expresses the belief that a still deeper sense is couched under these words, viz. that they are intended to assign a reason why Samson should have felt it necessary to seek any occasion at all for entering upon warlike operations. His curious conceit on the subject is as follows:—The Philistines, although they were now cruelly oppressing the Israelites, yet by the acknowledged rights of war, they had justly acquired this dominion over them, and such is God's abhorrence of all rebellions and insurrections against existing powers, that they were not at liberty, on the simple plea or pretence of tyranny, to endeavour to shake off the yoke. Consequently some just occasion was to be sought as a warrant for the attempt, and unless such a plausible pretext should arise our commentator would have us understand that the bare fact of the Philistines having the ascendancy over Israel was a sufficient reason for their abstaining from all efforts to regain their liberties. This he supposes to be the genuine drift of the illative "for" in the clause before us. Samson sought an occasion against the Philistines, "for (because) at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel," and therefore it would be unlawful to rise against them without such an occasion! In connexion with this exposition, he quotes with applause the remarks of Brent, commending the singular prudence and moderation of Samson, that although he had ample grounds in the divine commission implied in the very fact of his being raised up and set apart as a national deliverer, yet to avoid offence, he will not undertake the work till a just and legitimate cause of war occurs. All this reasoning, savouring as it does so strongly of the doctrine of passive obedience, we leave it to the reader to estimate according to its worth; but we believe a much more correct view of the reason of Samson's "seeking an occasion against the Philistines" is given in a preceding note. If a general movement had been made by the Israelites for the assertion of their liberties, an equally general attempt to crush it would of course have been made on the other side. But God designed that Samson personally should be the butt of the enemies' wrath and machinations, that he might display his own glory in conquering them by the might of a single arm.

VER. 5. Then went Samson down, and his father and his mother, to Timnath, and came to the vineyards of Timnath: and, behold, a young lion roared against him.

*Then went Samson down, and his father and his mother.*—Having changed their minds; having yielded to the evidence that he was under a di-

vine prompting in the measure proposed. *Behold a young lion roared against him.*—Heb. "behold a young lion of the lionesses roaring in his meeting." From ver. 6 it is obvious that his parents were not with him when this remarkable incident occurred. "He was all alone in the vineyards, whither he had rambled from his father and mother (who had kept the high road) probably to eat grapes. Children consider not that they expose themselves to the roaring lion that seeks to devour, when, out of a foolish fondness for liberty, they wander from under the eye of their prudent, pious parents. Nor do young people consider what lions lurk in the vineyards, the vineyards of red wine, as dangerous as snakes under the green grass."—*Henry.* It is to be observed, that "young lion" does not here mean a whelp, for which the Hebrew has quite a different word, but a young lion arrived at its full strength and size, when it is far more fierce than at a later period. It is evident from this and other passages of Scripture, that lions formerly existed in Judea. We do not know that they are now to be met with in that country; but this is not surprising, as numerous instances might be cited of the disappearance of wild animals, in the course of time, from countries where they were once well known.

VER. 6. And the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him, and he rent him as he would have rent a kid, and he had nothing in his hand: but he told not his father or his mother what he had done.

h Chap. iii. 10; xlii. 25. 1 Sam. xi. 6.

*The Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him.* Well rendered from the original, which is in numerous instances employed to signify a supernatural influence raising the bodily or mental powers to an unwonted pitch of energy, clothing one with courage, fortitude, skill, wisdom, and strength, and enabling him to perform achievements to which his unassisted powers would be entirely unequal. The expression seems to denote an occasional illapse of this kind of influence, and it may be doubted whether even Samson was able ordinarily to display these prodigies of valour and prowess which he from time to time put forth, though perhaps habitually a stronger man than others. *Told not his father or his mother.*—An instance of singular discretion, modesty, and self-control, view it in whatever light we may. How few people are there in the world, who, if they had performed such an exploit as this, would have suffered it to remain hid from their dearest friends? But the presumption is, that before this Samson himself was not fully aware of the extent to which "the power of the Highest rested on him," and without a distinct foresight of the events that followed, he may still have concluded that to divulge the possession of such astonishing strength would be likely to defeat the ends to which it might be applied. He would not therefore betray so important a secret—not even to his own parents, lest a premature disclosure, by putting his enemies on their

guard, should render the endowment comparatively useless.

VER. 7. And he went down, and talked with the woman; and she pleased Samson well.

*And talked with the woman.*—Rather, according to the Heb. לִישָׁר לְאִשָּׁה “talked concerning the woman.” Marriages in the East from the earliest periods have always been arranged by parents in behalf of their children. It was doubtless so in the present case. Indeed for what other purpose did his parents go down? According to the letter, indeed, the talking is referred to Samson, and he undoubtedly had a voice in it, but not, we imagine, to the exclusion of his father and mother. The whole three negotiated the matter with the parents of the young woman.

VER. 8. And after a time he returned to take her, and he turned aside to see the carcass of the lion: and, behold, there was a swarm of bees and honey in the carcass of the lion.

*And after a time he returned to take her.*—An interval of some time, usually ten or twelve months, elapsed between the ceremony of espousals and the marriage. During this time the betrothed bride remained with her parents, that she might provide herself with nuptial ornaments suitable to her station; after which the bridegroom came to fetch her home and take her fully as his wife. The Jews still keep up this custom; the parties being betrothed at least six or twelve months before marriage. During this interval, oriental usage appears to have allowed to the parties but slight communication with each other. Yet what little intercourse they had at all previous to marriage seems to have been restricted to this term. For “in point of fact we apprehend,” says the editor of the Pictorial Bible, “that the betrothal was considered necessary to enable a young man to pay to a woman even that limited degree of particular attention which eastern manners allowed.” This suggestion still further confirms the idea advanced above respecting the “talking” there alluded to. It is quite improbable that it should have taken place between Samson and the young woman herself. The kind of intimacy expressed by the word “courtship,” and so familiar to European manners, appears to have been from remote antiquity entirely unknown in the East. *Turned aside to see the carcass of the lion.*—Heb. “the ruins, the fallen heap.” “Whilst Samson concealed the event from others, he pondered it in himself; and when he returned to Timnath, went out of the way to see his dead adversary, and could not but recall to himself his danger and deliverance; ‘Here the beast met me; thus he fought; thus I slew him!’ The very dead lion taught Samson thankfulness. The mercies of God are ill bestowed upon us, if we cannot step aside to view the monuments of his deliverances. As Samson had not found his honeycomb, if he had not turned aside to see his lion, so we shall lose the comfort of God’s benefits, if we do not renew our perils by meditation.”—*Bp. Hall.* *A swarm of bees and honey in the carcass.*—In one respect the preceding note is strikingly

confirmed by the present text. It is evident that several months must have elapsed between the first and second visit to Timnath, in order to allow time for the carcass of the lion to become reduced to a dry, naked skeleton. The cleanly habits of bees, and their repugnance to impure smells would not otherwise have permitted them to select it as a habitation. The beautiful episode in the fourth *Georgic* of Virgil proves that the ancients believed that bees might be engendered in the dead body of an ox.

VER. 9. And he took thereof in his hands, and went on eating, and came to his father and mother, and he gave them, and they did eat: but he told not them that he had taken the honey out of the carcass of the lion.

*And he took thereof in his hands.*—Heb. יָרַדוּ לְרַד “to subdue,” a very peculiar term to be applied to the act of “taking” a quantity of honey from its place of deposit, be that what it might. The most common Hebrew word for “take” is לָקַח, and if nothing more is meant in the present case than the simple act so denominated, why is not the usual term employed? We adopt the suggestion of Schmid in reply, that a word was purposely chosen which should imply some resistance and difficulty in getting possession of the prize; that it was not without an encounter, and a species of subjugation, that he succeeded in wresting the honey from the bees; such, at any rate, is the import of the word, whatever be the reason of its use.

VER. 10. So his father went down unto the woman: and Samson made there a feast; for so used the young men to do.

*His father went down unto the woman.*—Rendered by the Chal. “went down relative to the affair of the woman;” a sense of the words decidedly approved by the Jewish critic David Kimchi. From the connexion it appears, moreover, quite evident that Samson’s father here is not to be understood exclusive of Samson himself. The probability is, that both his father and mother, and a company of friends, attended him on the occasion, but the father alone, as the natural head of the party, is mentioned. Compare with this the note on ver. 27. *And Samson made there a feast.*—A wedding feast, such as is customary all over the East, as well as in most other countries, during which every species of merriment prevails. This nuptial festivity used to continue seven days, as we see from ver. 12, compared with Gen. xxix. 27. After this the bride was brought home by, or to her husband. We must understand, probably, in conformity with existing usages in the East, that Samson made his feast at the house of some acquaintance, or in one hired for the occasion, as his own house was distant; while at the same time the woman entertained her female friends and relatives at her father’s house. The different sexes never feasted together on these or any other occasions, and the bride and bridegroom did not even give their respective entertainments in the same house, unless under very peculiar circum-

stances. In reading this narrative we must not forget that Samson was a mere sojourner at Timnath. *So used the young men to do.*—"I do not hear Samson plead his Nazaritim for a colour of singularity; it is both lawful and fit, in things not prohibited, to conform ourselves to the manners and rites of those with whom we live. God never misliked moderate solemnities (festivities) in the severest life."—*Bp. Hall.*

VER. 11. And it came to pass, when they saw him, that they brought thirty companions to be with him.

*It came to pass when they saw him.*—That is, when they (the citizens) observed or considered him; when they noted his stature, form, countenance, and bearing. *They brought thirty companions to be with him.*—A class of persons called elsewhere in the Scriptures "friends of the bridegroom," or "children of the bridechamber," (Matt. ix. 15. John iii. 29.) Although these companions were brought to him with a show of paying him respect and honour in conformity to custom, yet it was undoubtedly with the secret purpose of stationing spies about his person. A remarkable something in his external appearance told them that he was a man to be watched; and jealous as they now were of him, they would have been still more so, had they known of his exploit in killing the lion, which he had industriously kept from them. "The favours of Philistines have often some mischief or other designed in them."—*Henry.*

VER. 12. And Samson said unto them, I will now 'put forth a riddle unto you: if ye can certainly declare it me <sup>a</sup> within the seven days of the feast, and find it out, then I will give you thirty sheets and thirty <sup>b</sup> change of garments:

<sup>a</sup> 1 Kings x. 1. Ezek. xvii. 2. Luke xiv. 7.  
<sup>b</sup> Gen. xxix. 27. 1 Gen. xiv. 22. 2 Kings v. 22.

*I will now put forth a riddle unto you.*—It was a very ancient custom among different nations to relieve their entertainments by proposing difficult and obscure questions, to the solution of which a reward was usually annexed, while a proportionate forfeiture was the consequence of a failure. They were particularly common among the Greeks, who were accustomed to call riddles contrived to puzzle and perplex by the name of "banquet-riddies," or "cup-questions." Devices of this sort were especially necessary for amusement and pastime in a festival of seven days' continuance like the present. *Thirty sheets and thirty change of garments.*—The original word *סדינים* *sedinim*, from which comes the Greek *Σιδων, sindon*, "fine linen," probably denotes a kind of body linen, more like our shirts than sheets. "It cannot easily be imagined they were what we call sheets, for Samson might have slain thirty Philistines near Askelon, and not have found one sheet; or if he slew them who were carrying their beds with them on their travels, as they often do in present times, the slaughter of fifteen had been sufficient; for in the East, as

in other countries, every bed is provided with two sheets: but he slew just thirty, in order to obtain thirty *sedinim*, or shirts. If this meaning of the term be admitted, the deed of Samson must have been very provoking to the Philistines; for since only people of more easy circumstances wore shirts, they were not thirty of the common people that he slew, but thirty persons of figure and consequence. The same word is used by the prophet Isaiah, in his description of the splendid and costly dress in which people of rank and fashion then delighted, rendered in our translation *fine linen*; which seems to place it beyond a doubt that they were persons of rank that fell by the hand of Samson on that occasion."—*Parson.* By the "thirty change of garments" is probably to be understood the upper vestments or tunics common in the East, usually called caftans, and answering nearly to our cloaks. The idea of the passage seems to be, that Samson offered thirty dresses, which there is reason to suppose consisted only of a shirt and upper garment.

VER. 13. But if ye cannot declare it me, then shall ye give me thirty sheets and thirty change of garments. And they said unto him, Put forth thy riddle, that we may hear it.

VER. 14. And he said unto them, Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness. And they could not in three days expound the riddle.

*Out of the eater came forth meat, &c.*—Or, Heb. "came forth food." The antithesis in the first clause is sufficiently obvious, viz. that an all-devouring creature, contrary to what might naturally be expected, should afford food to others. But in the second it is less plain; for the opposite of strength is not sweetness, but weakness. If it had been, "Out of the sharp or bitter came forth sweetness," the opposition would have been perfect. Bochart, however, has very plausibly shown that the original for "bitter" is occasionally used for "strong," and "sharp" for both. So in the Arabic, *Mirra*, "strength," and *Marir*, "strong, robust," come from the root *Marra*, which signifies "to be bitter." Thus too in the Latin, *Acer*, "sharp," applied to a man, denotes one who is valiant, who eagerly engages his enemy: and what is worthy of notice, this very term is employed by Ovid as an epithet for lions: "*Genus acre leonum*," the sharp or fierce kind of lions. The true antithesis of the riddle, therefore, may be stated thus:—"Food came from the devourer, and sweetness from that which is sharp," i. e. eager, fierce, violent. The Syr. and Arab. both render the original by "bitter," instead of "strong;" and some copies of the Greek Septuagint, instead of *απο σαρπον* "from the strong," exhibit the reading *απο πικρον* "from the bitter." Josephus gives the enigma in this form: "A great devourer produced sweet food out of itself, though itself was very disagreeable." Probably to a Hebrew ear, when the riddle was found out, the terms would be as expressive and suitable as any

that could have been chosen. This enigma, though soluble, was one well calculated to task their ingenuity to the utmost, notwithstanding Henry's remark, that "if they had but so much sense as to consider what eater is most strong, and what meat is most sweet, they would have found out the riddle: and neither lions nor honey were such strangers to their country, that the thoughts of them needed to be out of their way." But the point was, not to conceive of these objects separately, but in a peculiar relation to each other, and the difficulty of this arose from the fact, that they would naturally conceive of the eater as still alive. It was, however, well adapted to the purpose for which Providence designed it should be overruled.

VER. 15. And it came to pass on the seventh day, that they said unto Samson's wife, "Entice thy husband, that he may declare unto us the riddle, lest we burn thee and thy father's house with fire: have ye called us to take that we have? *is it not so?*"

m Chap. xvi. 5.

n Chap. xv. 6.

*On the seventh day.*—That is, of the week, being the fourth of the feast, as appears from comparing ver. 14 and 17. *Have ye called us to take that we have?*—Have ye invited us to the feast for the purpose of impoverishing us by taking away what we have?

VER. 16. And Samson's wife wept before him, and said, "Thou dost but hate me, and lovest me not: thou hast put forth a riddle unto the children of my people, and hast not told it me. And he said unto her, Behold, I have not told it my father nor my mother, and shall I tell it thee?"

o Chap. xvi. 15.

*Wept before him.*—Heb. "wept upon him." The sequel showed, however, that they were crocodile tears which she shed on this occasion. *I have not told it to my father, nor my mother.*—Though I have had more experience of their fidelity, and more reason to trust their taciturnity than thine. "In all parts of the world, I believe, people are pretty much alike, as to their capability of keeping secrets. The Hindoos, however, improperly reflect upon the female sex, in their proverb, 'To a woman tell not a secret.' That secret must be great indeed which will prevent a son or daughter from telling it to the father or mother. The greatest proof of confidence is to say, 'I have told you what I have not revealed to my father.' In proof of the great affection one has for another, it is said, 'He has told things to him that he would not have related to his parents.' 'My friend, do tell me the secret.'—'Tell you? yes, when I have told my parents.'"—*Roberts.*

VER. 17. And she wept before him the seven days, while their feast lasted; and it came to pass on the seventh day, that he told her, be-

cause she lay sore upon him: and she told the riddle to the children of her people.

*The seven days.*—That is, the rest of the seven days. *Lay sore upon him.*—Rather, Heb. "strongly urged, solicited, or pressed him." *She told the riddle.*—The meaning of the riddle. When we trust a secret out of our own breast, we must not expect it will long continue such. It was not the mark of a wise man in Samson to suppose that another would be more faithful to him than he was to himself.

VER. 18. And the men of the city said unto him on the seventh day, before the sun went down, "What is sweeter than honey? and what is stronger than a lion? And he said unto them, If ye had not ploughed with my heifer, ye had not found out my riddle."

*What is sweeter than honey? what is stronger than a lion?*—This must be understood merely as a compend of the solution of the riddle; for it was not simply the two distinct objects, the lion and the honey, which constituted its point, but the "coming out" of the one from the other, and unless the manner of this was stated, we do not see how the riddle could properly be considered as solved. *If ye had not ploughed with my heifer, &c.*—A proverbial expression, intimating that the Philistines could not have obtained the solution of the riddle without availing themselves of the assistance of his wife. Samson might justly have disputed the point with them, inasmuch as they did not find out the riddle themselves, but gained the knowledge of it by treachery; nevertheless he generously determined to abide by the forfeit.

VER. 19. And the Spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he went down to Askelon, and slew thirty men of them, and took their spoil, and gave change of garments unto them which expounded the riddle. And his anger was kindled, and he went up to his father's house.

p Chap. iii. 10; xlii. 25.

*The Spirit of the Lord came upon him.*—See on ver. 6. *Went down to Askelon, and slew thirty men of them, &c.*—Askelon was a city possessed at this time by the Philistines, and one of their five lordships, though it had previously been taken, and for some time held by Judah, (chap. i. 18.) It was situated fifteen miles north of Gaza, nine north of Ashdod, and about forty west from Jerusalem. The divine predictions respecting it have been so literally fulfilled, that there is not, says Richardson, an inhabitant within its walls: its lofty towers lie scattered on the ground, and the ruins within its walls do not shelter a human being. Samson's going to this distant city and taking the lives of thirty of its inhabitants can only be justified on the general ground of his being raised up to be a judge and deliverer of his people, and to avenge their Philistine oppressors. The inference is reasonable, that the Spirit of the Lord came upon him not only to

enable, but also to authorise him to perform the deed here mentioned. "It is just with God to destine what enemies he pleases to execution. It is not to be inquired why this man is stricken rather than another, when both are Philistines."

—*Bp. Hall. Took their spoil.*—Their apparel; the garments which they had on, and of which he stripped their dead bodies. Express mention, it is true, is not here made of the sheets or shirts, but they are evidently implied from ver. 13. The Jewish critics make it a question how Samson, being a Nazarite, and consequently forbidden to touch a dead body, (Numb. vi. 6.) could, without pollution, have possessed himself of the raiment of these slain Philistines. The question is one of no great moment, as the facts in the case force us to the conclusion, either that this prohibition was binding only upon the temporary and not upon the perpetual Nazarites, or that God through his Spirit acting in and by Samson, granted him a dispensation in this particular; as the same authority which binds has power also to loose, in regard to ceremonial observances. *His anger was kindled.*—Against his perfidious wife and his thirty companions, whose treatment of him had been so treacherous and unprincipled. *He went up to his father's house.*—Abandoning for the present his new-married wife, but not, we think, with the design of a permanent desertion. It was probably with a view, in a mild way, to signify his displeasure at her recent conduct, and to bring her to the expression of a suitable regret. The result, however, was different from what he anticipated.

VER. 20. But Samson's wife <sup>3</sup> was given to his companion, whom he had used as <sup>r</sup> his friend.

g Chap. xv. 2.

r John iii. 29.

*Samson's wife was given to his companion, &c.*—Heb. "became to his companion." The consent and agency of her parents in this disposal of her are not expressed but implied. It is probable that they were by this time, on further acquaintance with Samson, quite willing to have the connexion broken up, and to be rid of one whose intimate relation to them augured no good, and accordingly seized the colourable pretence of his temporary withdrawal to make the separation lasting. "What pretence of friendship soever he make, a true Philistine will soon be weary of an Israelite."—*Bp. Hall. Whom he had used as his friend.*—With whom he had been upon the most intimate terms. This person, technically termed the *paranymp*, was probably what is called in the New Testament the "friend of the bridegroom." He was a trusted friend, and charged with a peculiarly delicate and confidential office. He devoted himself for a time almost entirely to the affairs of the bridegroom; before the day of marriage, he was usually the medium of communication between the bridegroom and the bride; during the marriage festivity, he was in constant attendance, doing his best to promote the hilarity of the entertainments, and rejoicing in the happiness of his friend. Nor did his duties terminate with the completion of the marriage, but he was considered the patron and confidential friend of both parties, and was usually

called in to compose any differences that might arise between them. Samson's friend must, as his paranymp, have had peculiar facilities for forming an acquaintance with the woman, and of gaining her favourable notice; and the treachery of one whom he had so largely trusted, must have been peculiarly distressing to him. Wrongs done by a friend wound the spirit more deeply than any others. "It was thou my friend," says David.

## CHAPTER XV.

VER. 1. BUT it came to pass within a while after, in the time of wheat-harvest, that Samson visited his wife with a kid; and he said, I will go in to my wife into the chamber. But her father would not suffer him to go in.

*In the time of wheat harvest.*—Which in that country was in April and May. The time of the visit is specified in reference to the exploit subsequently mentioned, (ver. 4, 5.) *Visited his wife with a kid.*—Carrying a kid in token of reconciliation. Time had now cooled his resentments, and probably not knowing that she had meanwhile been given to another, he was willing to make the first overtures of returning amity. "The wisest, though offended, will be the first to seek peace, and the readiest to pass by a transgression."—*Haweis. He said, I will go in, &c.*—He said to himself; he proposed; he formed the purpose. *Into the chamber.*—Into the interior apartments appropriated to the women; the harem.

VER. 2. And her father said, I verily thought that thou hadst utterly "hated her; therefore I gave her to thy companion: is not her younger sister fairer than she? take her, I pray thee, instead of her.

a Chap. xiv. 20.

*I verily thought that thou hadst utterly hated her.*—Heb. "saying, I said, that thou," &c. I said in my heart, I certainly concluded. The excuse was very frivolous, for it does not appear that Samson was long absent, and at any rate, he had no right to bestow her again in marriage without first apprising him of his intention. The act of repudiation in the East was always supposed to originate with the husband and not with the wife. *Is not her younger sister fairer than she?*—Heb. "better than she." Words expressive of moral qualities are in Hebrew and other languages, frequently applied to personal endowments. Thus in English we have "good-looking" for handsome. *Take her.*—Heb. "let her be to thee." Thus, in fact, proposing what would have been to Samson an incestuous marriage, (Lev. xviii. 18,) however the Philistines regarded it.

VER. 3. And Samson said concerning them, Now shall I be more blameless than the Philistines, though I do them a displeasure.

*Samson said concerning them.*—Said to himself. It is very improbable that he would have announced verbally to any one the purpose which he had now conceived in his mind. In forming this resolution, he acted rather in a public than a private capacity. Had he aimed to avenge only his personal injuries, it would have been sufficient to have chastised his rival and his father-in-law only; but as the slight which excited his indignation had no doubt been put upon him because he was an Israelite, he determines as an Israelite to seek revenge. He had done what was proper in endeavouring by a present to effect a reconciliation with his wife, but as his overtures had been repulsed, no one could blame him if he now showed his just resentments. When we have done our best to prevent a quarrel, we cannot be charged with the consequences of it.

VER. 4. And Samson went and caught three hundred foxes, and took firebrands, and turned tail to tail, and put a firebrand in the midst between two tails.

*Went and caught three hundred foxes.*—Not that he did this in one day, or that he did it alone. In the Scripture idiom, a person is continually described as doing that which he orders to be done, and no doubt such a person as Samson could easily command whatever assistance he required. Nor is it to be supposed that the scene of devastation was confined to one particular place. From the subsequent narrative it would appear that the destruction of the corn-fields extended widely over the territories of the Philistines. Comp. ver. 6. As to the kind of animal employed on this occasion, there has been no small controversy among expositors. The Heb. word שְׁוֹלִים *Shualim*, is now generally agreed to have included in its meaning not only "foxes," but also "jackals," an animal rightly described as something between the wolf and the fox, and hence sometimes termed by naturalists "the wolf-fox." These animals, which are very numerous in Palestine, associate together in large herds or packs, sometimes to the amount of two or three hundred; differing in this respect from the fox, which is not gregarious, and is far more cunning. Like foxes, however, they live in holes, which they form under ground, and they are particularly prone to resort to ruined towns, not only because they there find numerous secure retreats ready made, but because the same facilities attract to such places other animals, on whose dead bodies they prey. From this circumstance, the prophets in describing the future desolation of a city, say it shall become "the habitation of jackals," a prediction verified by the actual condition of many places to which their prophecies apply. Thus it is said by travellers that the ruins of Ascalon in particular afford habitation to great numbers of these animals. The howlings of these packs of jackals are frightful, and give great alarm to travellers; whence they are also called in Heb. אַיִם *Ayim*, howlers, improperly rendered "wild beasts of the islands." (Isa. xiii. 22. Jer. ii. 39.) But it appears that the common fox is also of frequent occurrence in Palestine, and as both are included under the

common term *Shual*, it must generally be left to the bearing of the context to determine when the jackal and when the fox are respectively denoted. That the jackal is intended in the text now before us, we may infer from the number of animals taken by Samson, which must have been easier with creatures prowling in large droves, than with a solitary and very wily animal like the fox. *Took firebrands.*—Rather, Heb. לְפִתִּים torches. A firebrand, in such a position, if sufficiently ignited to kindle a blaze in the shocks of corn, would soon have burnt itself free from the tails of the foxes, or have been extinguished by being drawn over the ground. A torch or flambeau, on the other hand, made of resinous wood or artificial materials, being more tenacious of flame, would have answered a far better purpose; and such is the legitimate import of the original. *And turned tail to tail.*—This was doubtless intended to prevent them from making too rapid a retreat to their holes, or, indeed, from going to their holes at all. They were probably not so tied that they should pull in different directions, but that they might run deviously and slowly, side by side, and so do the more effectual execution. Had he put a torch to the tail of each, the creature, naturally terrified at fire, would instantly have betaken itself to its hole, or some place of retreat, and thus the design of Samson would have been wholly frustrated. But by tying two of them together by the tail they would frequently thwart each other in running, and thus cause the greater devastation. If it be asked why Samson resorted to such an expedient at all, instead of firing the corn-fields with his own hand, which would have been a much simpler and easier method of compassing his object, we may say perhaps in reply, that by the meanness and weakness of the instruments employed he designed to put a more signal contempt upon the enemies with whom he contended, thus mingling ridicule with revenge.

VER. 5. And when he had set the brands on fire, he let them go into the standing corn of the Philistines, and burnt up both the shocks, and also the standing corn, with the vineyards and olives.

VER. 6. Then the Philistines said, Who hath done this? And they answered, Samson, the son-in-law of the Timnite, because he had taken his wife, and given her to his companion. And the Philistines came up, and burnt her and her father with fire.

• b Chap. xiv. 15.

*And they answered, &c.*—"The mention of the offence draws in (that of) the provocation; and now the wrong to Samson is scanned and revenged; because the fields of the Philistines are burned for the wrong done to Samson by the Timnite in his daughter, therefore the Philistines burn the Timnite and his daughter. The tying of the firebrand, between two foxes was not so witty a policy, as the setting of a fire of dissension betwixt the Philistines."—*Bp. Hall. Burnt*

*her and her father with fire.*—A most inhuman and barbarous act, on the part of it perpetrators, yet wonderfully overruled in the providence of God to chastise the guilty. The Philistines had threatened Samson's wife that if she did not obtain and disclose her husband's secret, they would burn her and her father's house with fire. She, to save herself and oblige her countrymen, betrayed her husband; and now by so doing brought upon herself the very doom which she so studiously sought to avoid! To seek to escape suffering by sin, is the surest way to bring it upon us! "The fear of the wicked, it shall come upon him."

VER. 7. And Samson said unto them, Though ye have done this, yet will I be avenged of you, and after that I will cease.

*Though ye have done this, &c.*—Though you have thought by this act of cruelty to my wife and kindred, to make amends for the injury done to me, yet flatter not yourselves that I am thereby appeased, and that I shall forbear farther hostilities. He doubtless saw that his wife and her family were victims to a hasty indignation occasioned by their own losses, rather than the subjects of a righteous and well-considered retribution, and that accordingly there was no reason for him, as a public judge called and appointed of God to deliver his country from oppression, to cease to prosecute that work.

VER. 8. And he smote them hip and thigh with a great slaughter. And he went down and dwelt in the top of the rock Etam.

*Smote them hip and thigh.*—Heb. "smote them leg upon thigh." Apparently a proverbial expression, implying, according to Gesenius, that he cut them in pieces, so that their limbs, their legs and thighs, were scattered and heaped promiscuously together; equivalent to saying, that he totally destroyed them. Whether this be the genuine interpretation admits of some doubt, but as we have nothing more plausible to propose, it is left to the reader's judgment, as one of the cases where entire satisfaction as to the writer's meaning, is unattainable. That a signal overthrow and a great slaughter is intended, seems to be unquestionable. *Dwelt in the top of the rock Etam.*—Rather, according to the Heb. "in a cleft, in a fissure of the rock." Of the exact position of this place, or of Samson's motive in resorting thither, we are not informed. It was probably a natural fortress, affording peculiar advantages for defence, of which Samson no doubt foresaw, that he would soon be in need of availing himself. Their recent defeat would naturally rouse the wrath of his enemies, and bring them upon him in all their force. It seems altogether likely from his words in the concluding part of ver. 7, that he had accomplished his present purposes of revenge, and designed no farther annoyance to the Philistines unless provoked to it by new aggressions on their part. If they then will arouse the sleeping lion, let them expect to pay dear for their temerity.

VER. 9. Then the Philistines went up, and pitched in Judah, and spread themselves <sup>c</sup> in Lehi.

<sup>c</sup> Ver. 19.

*Pitched in Judea, and spread themselves in Lehi.*—Etam, the stronghold to which Samson had now betaken himself, was in the tribe of Judah, and the Philistines probably intended by suddenly appearing with a large army in their borders to intimidate that tribe, and make them subservient to their design of capturing Samson. "Lehi" is so called here by anticipation, as it received that name from the slaughter with the jawbone, which had not yet taken place.

VER. 10. And the men of Judah said, Why are ye come up against us? And they answered, To bind Samson are we come up, to do to him as he hath done to us.

*To bind Samson are we come up, &c.*—From the sequel it would appear that their answer included also a demand upon the men of Judah for their services and co-operation in making a prisoner of Samson.

VER. 11. Then three thousand men of Judah went to the top of the rock Etam, and said to Samson, Knowest thou not that the Philistines are <sup>d</sup> rulers over us? what is this that thou hast done unto us? And he said unto them, As they did unto me, so have I done unto them.

<sup>d</sup> Chap. xiv. 4.

*Knowest thou not that the Philistines are rulers over us?*—A most degrading confession to come from the lips of an Israelite, and plainly showing that they had become contented slaves, more fearful of offending the Philistines than anxious to assert their independence. But their spirits were broken by the base bondage which their iniquities had brought upon them, and instead of bravely setting Samson at their head to fight for liberty, they meanly resolve to make a sacrifice of him to their enemies! preferring ignominious servitude to a generous struggle for their country. Instead of honouring him for his courage, they blame him for his rashness, and desire him peaceably to submit to their bonds! *Swear unto me, that ye will not fall upon me yourselves.*—Though he had abundant occasion to expostulate with them on account of their ingratitude, and to upbraid them with their cowardice and infatuation, yet he generously forbears reproaches, and merely demands assurance that he should receive no harm at their hands. He does not make this stipulation for fear of them, for he could as easily have freed himself from the hands of his brethren as from those of the Philistines, but he would avoid the necessity of acting towards them as enemies. His motive for consenting thus readily to be bound and delivered up to the Philistines undoubtedly was, that he knew the issue of it would be to afford him a new occasion of inflicting vengeance upon that oppressive race. "Samson abides to be tied by his own countrymen, that he may have the glory of freeing him-

self victoriously. Even so, O Saviour, our better Nazarite, thou, which couldst have called to thy Father, and have had twelve legions of angels for thy rescue, wouldst be bound voluntarily that thou mightest triumph! So the blessed martyrs were racked and would not be loosed, because they expected a better resurrection. If we be not as well ready to suffer ill, as to do good, we are not fit for the consecration of God."—*Bp. Hall.*

VER. 12. And they said unto him, We are come down to bind thee, that we may deliver thee into the hand of the Philistines. And Samson said unto them, Swear unto me, that ye will not fall upon me yourselves.

VER. 13. And they spake unto him, saying, No; but we will bind thee fast, and deliver thee into their hand: but surely we will not kill thee. And they bound him with two new cords, and brought him up from the rock.

*Brought him up from the rock.*—From the cleft or cave of the rock in which he had taken shelter. See on ver. 8. From hence he was brought to Lehi, where the Philistines had pitched their camp.

VER. 14. And when he came unto Lehi, the Philistines shouted against him: and the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and the cords that were upon his arms became as flax that was burnt with fire, and his bands loosed from off his hands.

*e* Chap. iii. 10; xiv. 6.

*Became as flax that was burnt.*—A flaxen or hempen cord that has been burnt in the fire will still retain its form when taken out, but it has no strength; it is henceforth a mere cinder, and falls to pieces at the slightest touch. Such, in point of weakness, were the cords with which Samson was now bound. In the ensuing clause, "his bands loosed (Heb. melted)," the figure is varied, and the hands represented as flowing off his limbs like a liquid substance.

VER. 15. And he found a new jawbone of an ass, and put forth his hand, and took it, and slew a thousand men therewith.

*f* Chap. iii. 31. Lev. xxvi. 8. Josh. xxiii. 10.

*Found a new jawbone of an ass.*—Heb. טרידי גרין or moist, *i. e.* the jawbone of an ass recently dead. The bones of any animal in such a state, would not so easily break as when they had become dry.

VER. 16. And Samson said, With the jawbone of an ass, heaps upon heaps, with the jaw of an ass have I slain a thousand men.

*Heaps upon heaps.*—Heb. "an heap, two heaps." The original contains a peculiar play upon the sound of the words which cannot be transferred into any other language. The same

word in Hebrew חמור *chamor*, signifies both an "ass" and a "heap," thus forming an elegant paronomasia, and representing the Philistines falling as tamely as asses. Some have considered this short pæon of Samson as faulty in not ascribing his victory more directly and unequivocally to God, who had enabled him to accomplish it. The words it is true contain no express mention of the name of Jehovah, but it cannot, we think, be fairly inferred that the recognition of the divine power was not present to his thoughts, or that he intended to ascribe the result to the prowess of his own arm. It is perhaps rather to be understood as an exclamation of grateful and adoring wonder, that he, who was in himself a poor, weak worm, should have been enabled with such a contemptible instrument, to effect so signal an overthrow of his enemies.

VER. 17. And it came to pass when he had made an end of speaking, that he cast away the jawbone out of his hand, and called that place Ramath-lehi.

*Called that place Ramath-lehi.*—And by contraction "Lehi;" as was usual with proper names, as Salem for Jerusalem, Sheba for Beersheba, and many others. The exact import of the original רמתי ליהי *Ramath-lehi*, is not easily determined. It may mean either "the casting away of the jawbone," "the lifting up of the jawbone," or "the hill of the jawbone." The last is most consistent with grammatical structure, and unites in its support the suffrages of the greatest number of modern critics.

VER. 18. And he was sore athirst, and called on the LORD, and said, Thou hast given this great deliverance into the hand of thy servant: and now shall I die for thirst, and fall into the hand of the uncircumcised?

*g* Ps. iii. 7.

VER. 19. But God clave a hollow place that was in the jaw, and there came water thereout; and when he had drunk, his spirit came again, and he revived. Wherefore he called the name thereof En-hakkore, which is in Lehi unto this day.

*h* Gen. xiv. 27. Is. xl. 29.

*God clave a hollow place.*—That is, so clave the ground or the rock as to make a hollow place. Thus Ps. lxxiv. 15, "Thou didst cleave the fountain;" *i. e.* thou didst cleave the rock so as to cause a fountain to spring up in it. Thus Isa. xlvi. 2, "Take the millstones and grind meal;" *i. e.* grind corn into meal. Judg. xvi. 30, "The dead which he slew at his death," &c., *i. e.* those who became dead by his slaying them. The original for "hollow-place" elsewhere signifies a mortar, and here denotes undoubtedly that a cavity was now made in the earth of the form of a mortar, on which account Horsley not unaptly renders it, "clave a mortar-hole in Lehi." *That was in the jaw.*—An unfortunate rendering, as is now almost universally conceded. The writer

undoubtedly meant to say, that God clave a hollow place which was in Lehi, and not in the jawbone. Indeed the propriety of this reasoning is evident from the context; for if we have "jaw" or "jawbone" here, we ought to retain it in the concluding clause of this verse, and instead of saying, "which is in Lehi unto this day," say, "which is in the jawbone unto this day." The fact that the Hebrew word for "jawbone" and for "Lehi" is the same, and a fondness for multiplying miracles, probably led several of the ancient versions to understand Lehi here as denoting the jawbone of the ass, rather than the place so called. *His spirit came again.*—His strength and spirits, exhausted by the excessive fatigue of the recent encounter, were effectually revived. *He called the name thereof En-hakkore.*—That is, "the fountain of him that called or prayed." Geddes, "invocation-well." Instead of "he called," the proper rendering undoubtedly is, "it was called," i. e. this became its popular appellation, as it seems to have become henceforward a perennial spring. According to the distinction of the Hebrew accents the whole clause is to be translated thus: "And the name thereof was called unto this day En-hakkore, which is in Lehi."

VER. 20. And he judged Israel in the days of the Philistines twenty years.

† Ch. xiii. 1.

*Judged Israel in the days of the Philistines twenty years.*—His administration is supposed not to have been strictly universal, or extended over the whole of Israel, but limited rather to the southwestern district of Palestine, where the oppression of the people was most severe. The phrase "in the days of the Philistines," is peculiar, implying the days or the period during which the Philistines had the upper hand of Israel; leaving us to infer that Samson's efforts did not avail entirely to crush, but only to restrain, limit, and weaken the power of the oppressors. The Lord did not grant a full deliverance, because his people were not yet sufficiently chastised for their sins. Indeed it was not till the days of David that the Philistine yoke was completely shaken off. 2 Sam. iii. 18. Of the adjustment of the period of twenty years here mentioned, see ch. xiii. 1.

## CHAPTER XVI.

VER. 1. THEN WENT SAMSON TO GAZA, AND SAW THERE A HARLOT, AND WENT IN UNTO HER.

*Then went Samson to Gaza.*—This place was the capital and the most important of the five Philistine principalities, and was situated about fifteen miles south of Ascalon, sixty miles southwest from Jerusalem, and between two and three miles from the sea. It was a very ancient city, and is always spoken of in the Old Testament as a place of great importance. In more modern times it has undergone a great variety of changes occasioned by the fortunes of war, till at present it has declined to a trading village of some three

or four thousand inhabitants. It stands upon a hill of about two miles circumference at the base, surrounded by valleys, and overlooking a prospect of much beauty. Environed by, and interspersed with gardens and plantations of olive and date trees, the town has a picturesque appearance, to which its numerous elegant minarets not a little contribute. The buildings being mostly of stone, and the streets moderately broad, the interior answers expectation better than most other towns of Syria, and affords accommodations far superior to most places in Egypt. The suburbs, however, are composed of miserable mud huts: but all travellers concur with Sandys in admiring the variety and richness of the vegetable productions, both wild and cultivated, of the environs. The inhabitants have manufactures of cotton and soap, but derive their principal support from the commerce between Egypt and Syria, which must all pass this way. Scarcely any of its ancient remains are now to be found. Those of which travellers gave an account a century or two ago, have nearly all disappeared.—The real motive by which Samson was prompted in this visit to Gaza, it is in vain to attempt to discover. We can scarcely, however, from the sequel resist the impression that his spiritual affections had suffered a serious decline, that he had relaxed the vigilance and circumspection of his walk as a Nazarite, and that he ventured uncalled among the uncircumcised. Considering the relation in which he stood to the Philistines, and the light in which he was regarded by them, it was certainly a step full of personal danger, provided he went thither openly and without disguise. But from the context it would rather appear that he entered the gates without the citizens being at first apprised of the fact. His being there, however, was soon noised abroad, and his enemies were at once on the alert with their machinations to get him in their power, and what security for safety have they who wander unbidden from the path of duty? *And saw there an harlot, &c.*—The seeing this lewd woman was not perhaps the moving cause of his going to Gaza, but being there he accidentally fell in with her, and was unhappily ensnared by the sight of his eyes. How have the strongest in grace occasion to pray, Lead us not into temptation!

VER. 2. *And it was told the Gazites, saying, Samson is come hither. And they compassed him in, and laid wait for him all night in the gate of the city, and were quiet all the night, saying, In the morning when it is day we shall kill him.*

a 1 Sam. xxiii. 26. Ps. cxviii. 10—12. Acts ix. 24.

*And it was told the Gazites, saying, &c.*—The original word גזר corresponding to the italics, are so essential to the completion of the sense here, that there can be little doubt that it has by some accident been omitted. This is confirmed by the fact that the ancient versions for the most part exhibit its equivalent. *They compassed him in.*—Heb. "they went round about." With the utmost activity they traversed the city to and fro, conversing with each other, concerting plans, and

adopting measures to make a captive of their most formidable foe. Their principal precaution, it seems, was to station sentinels at the gates to apprehend him as he should attempt to pass out in the morning. *Were quiet all the night.*—Heb. “kept themselves silent;” as if by special constraint. They would do nothing, make no disturbance, create no alarm, that would endanger the success of their schemes.

VER. 3. And Samson lay till midnight, and arose at midnight, and took the doors of the gate of the city, and the two posts, and went away with them, bar and all, and put *them* upon his shoulders, and carried them up to the top of a hill that *is* before Hebron.

*Took the doors of the gate.*—Heb. “laid hold of, seized.” Not the great gate itself, but the two smaller doors or leaves, constructed within the large gate, and which alone were opened on ordinary occasions. The posts, bar, &c., of these were different from the more solid and massy fixtures of the great gate, which of course he could not think of removing. It was indeed an instance of divine forbearance at which Samson had occasion to wonder that his supernatural strength was yet continued to him, notwithstanding his aggravated offence. We should have thought that his very convictions of conscience would have unnerved his arm, and rendered him all but absolutely powerless. But God may have wise reasons for deferring the punishment of those sins which yet do by no means pass with impunity. Samson is reprieved but not pardoned. *A hill that is before Hebron.*—Rightly understood and rendered by the Sept. “which looketh towards Hebron;” for the town of Hebron was twenty miles distant from Gaza.

VER. 4. And it came to pass afterward, that he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah.

*It came to pass afterward, that he loved a woman, &c.*—It is to be feared that Samson’s impunity, at least for the present, in the former instance, emboldened him to give way a second time to unhallowed desires. “Custom of success makes men confident in their sins, and causes them to mistake an arbitrary tenure for a perpetuity.”—*Bp. Hall.* The same idea is more emphatically expressed by Solomon:—“Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.” It is not indeed expressly affirmed that this woman was a harlot, like the former, but from the tenor of the ensuing narrative, it is scarcely to be questioned that she was. She is no where called his wife; he did not take her home to his house; and the whole train of her negotiations with her countrymen go to prove that she was a mercenary and perfidious courtesan, governed in her conduct towards Samson by interest instead of affection, if indeed it be not profaning the term affection to use it in connexion with such an illicit and degrading intercourse. Of the position of the valley of

Sorek nothing certain is known. As to the name of this vile woman “Delilah,” its import is that of humbling, abasing, bringing down, and like hundreds of other names in the Scriptures, originating in events, may have been derived from the evil influence which she exerted upon Samson.

VER. 5. And the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and said unto her, *Entice* him, and see wherein his great strength *lieth*, and by what *means* we may prevail against him, that we may bind him to afflict him; and we will give thee every one of us eleven hundred *pieces* of silver.

<sup>b</sup> Chap. xiv. 15. See Prov. ii. 16–19; v. 3–11; vi. 24–26; vii. 21–23.

*Entice him, and see, &c.*—“The princes of the Philistines,” as Bp. Hall shrewdly remarks, “knew already where Samson’s weakness lay, though not his strength, and therefore they would entice his harlot with gifts to entice him.” These five satraps made common cause on this occasion, considering Samson a public enemy whom it equally concerned them all to crush if possible. *Wherein his great strength lieth.*—Rather, Heb. “whereby, or for what cause, his strength is (so) great” (בכבודו כח). Perhaps imagining it was the effect of some charm, spell, or amulet, which he carried about with him, and that if they could get possession of this, they would soon have him in their power. *That we may bind him to afflict him.*—Or, Heb. “to humble, to depress, to bring him low.” They do not say expressly “to kill him,” though this was their ultimate intention, but they no doubt saw that the plain avowal of such a bloody purpose would shock too much whatever feelings of woman yet remained in the bosom of Delilah, and would thus defeat their plan; besides, it is clear from the event that they designed by a series of aggravated insults and injuries to torture and break down his spirit, and thus prolong their triumph before putting the finishing stroke to it in his death. *Eleven hundred pieces of silver.*—These pieces of silver were probably shekels, and the total sum according to our computation would amount to upwards of two thousand dollars, a vast bribe for the time and country.

VER. 6. And Delilah said to Samson, Tell me, I pray thee, wherein thy great strength *lieth*, and wherewith thou mightest be bound to afflict thee.

*Delilah said to Samson, Tell me, &c.*—It can scarcely be supposed that this question was so bluntly and nakedly propounded as here stated, as in that case her treacherous design could not well have failed to betray itself. It is the general usage of the sacred writers merely to give the leading incidents, the prominent outlines, of the events which they relate, leaving the details to be supplied by the reflection of the reader. In this case she undoubtedly plied all her arts of blandishment and persuasion, and by taking advantage of his yielding moods, and expressing

her admiration of his wonderful exploits, aimed to throw him off his guard, and thus win his secret from him unawares. But as yet he retained sufficient self-possession to elude her cunning.

VER. 7. And Samson said unto her, If they bind me with seven green withs, that were never dried, then shall I be weak, and be as another man.

*If they bind me with seven green withs, &c.*—How Samson's veracity in this reply is to be vindicated, we know not. Probably the same obtuseness of conscience which made him insensible to the guilt of one species of sin, rendered him reckless of another. How fearful the effects of suffering the moral sense to be deadened by a single case of wilful transgression! As the word translated "withs" (יֶתֶר *yether*) is a general word for rope or cord, we learn by the use of the epithet "green," that the ropes in use among the Hebrews, like those employed in many other countries and formed of osiers, hazles, &c., were made of crude vegetable materials, such as vines, tendrils, pliable twisted rods, or the tough fibres of trees. And Josephus expressly says that the ropes with which Samson was bound were made of the tendrils of the vine. Such ropes are still used in the East, and while they remain green are stronger than any other. In India the legs of wild elephants and buffaloes newly caught are commonly bound with bonds of this sort; those of hemp and flax being rarely found there. Except some that are formed of hair or leather, they are generally made of the fibres of trees, (particularly of the palm tree,) of roots, of grasses, and of reeds and rushes. They are in general tolerably strong, but in no degree comparable to our own hempen ropes. Though light, yet wanting in compactness, they are much thicker than those employed by us, and are generally rough and coarse to the eye. The Septuagint, however, by translating the Hebrew by *νευραὶς ὑγραῖς*, and the Vulgate by *nerveicis funibus*, understands these bonds to be cords made of the sinews of cattle, or perhaps out of raw hides, which make exceedingly strong cords. But the objection to this rendering is, that animal sinews or hides when "green," *i. e.* humid, recent, have less strength than when thoroughly dried. The former is doubtless the true interpretation. *Be as another man.*—Heb. "as one man," *i. e.* as any man.

VER. 8. Then the lords of the Philistines brought up to her seven green withs, which had not been dried, and she bound him with them.

*And she bound him with them.*—Perhaps in dalliance, in a sportive way, as though she were only half in earnest, or at any rate wished only to gratify her own curiosity, and see if what he had told her was true.

VER. 9. (Now there were men lying in wait, abiding with her in the chamber.) And she said unto him, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he brake the withs as a thread of tow is broken when it toucheth the fire. So his strength was not known.

*Now there were men lying in wait, abiding with her in the chamber.*—Heb. "and the lier in wait (collect. sing. for plur.) sat for her in an inner apartment." Our translation very erroneously represents the liers in wait as abiding in the same chamber where she and Samson now were; but if so, how could he but have been aware of their presence? That which we have given is the true rendering. The Heb. לִי is not "with her," but "to or for her," *i. e.* subservient to her designs. *The Philistines be upon thee, Samson.*—Are at hand to surprise and take thee, probably the concerted signal for the men lying in wait to rush into the room, and if the experiment succeeded, and his limbs were effectually manacled, to make him prisoner at once. *When it toucheth the fire.*—Heb. "when it smelleth the fire;" *i. e.* when it perceiveth, feeleth, or hath a sensation of the fire; metaphorically spoken. The use of the term smell in this sense in the Hebrew is somewhat peculiar. Thus Job xxiv. 9, speaking of a tree cut down, "Yet through the scent of water it will bud:" *i. e.* through the perception of water. Psa. lxxix. 9, "Before your pots can feel the thorns." Heb. can smell the thorns. Dan. iii. 27, "Neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them;" *i. e.* the feeling, the perception of fire.

VER. 10. And Delilah said unto Samson, Behold, thou hast mocked me, and told me lies; now tell me, I pray thee, wherewith thou mightest be bound.

*And Delilah said unto Samson, &c.*—After the lapse of some considerable time, when she saw that her blandishments had given her an advantage over him; for to renew the attempt to worm out of him his secret, immediately after her failure, would of course have been bad policy.

VER. 11. And he said unto her, If they bind me fast with new ropes that never were occupied, then shall I be weak, and be as another man.

*If they bind me fast with new ropes.*—Heb. עֲבֹרֵי from עָבַר to wreath, braid, twist together, to make thick by wreathing, and implying ropes or cords of the thickest and strongest description, probably answering nearly to the idea of our modern cables. The materials, however, may have been the same with that of the יֶתֶרִים mentioned above. *That never were occupied.*—Heb. "wherewith work hath not been done."

VER. 12. Delilah therefore took new ropes, and bound him therewith, and said unto him, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. (And there were liers in wait abiding in the chamber.) And he brake them from off his arms like a thread.

VER. 13. And Delilah said unto Samson, Hitherto thou hast mocked me, and told me lies: tell me wherewith thou mightest be bound. And he said unto her, If thou weavest the seven locks of my head with the web.

*The seven locks of my head.*—Heb. “the seven braids or plaits;” into which probably the hair of Samson was braided. As seven, however, is a usual term in the Scriptures for completeness or universality, it may here be equivalent simply to “all my locks.” His strength, he tells her, would be weakened if these were interwoven with the warp which was in a loom hard by, perhaps in the same room; which might be the place where Delilah used to weave. This verse seems to end abruptly, but the supplementary clause, “Then shall I be like another man,” is easily supplied from the context.

VER. 14. And she fastened it with the pin, and said unto him, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awaked out of his sleep, and went away with the pin of the beam, and with the web.

*And she fastened it with the pin.*—Rather, she fastened it with a pin. Heb. חרקק בירו. Both the original words occur in the account of Jael’s driving (חרקק) the pin (ירו) into Sisera’s temples, and the probability is, that the web, with Samson’s locks interwoven, was in some way secured by being fixed to a strong pin which was driven either into the ground or into the wall, as the Septuagint understands it. Or rather, as the looms at that period were very simple, the words may import that the loom itself was more firmly secured by means of the pin driven into the ground. *With the pin of the beam, &c.*—But what was “the pin of the beam?” No intelligible sense is afforded by the phrase, nor from our ignorance of the exact structure of the ancient loom is it perhaps possible to assign one. The literal rendering of the original seems to be, “He went away with the pin, the weaving implements and the web;” in other words, he took away the whole apparatus together. We doubt if any thing more definite can be elicited from the words.

VER. 15. And she said unto him, “How canst thou say, I love thee, when thine heart is not with me? Thou hast mocked me these three times, and hast not told me wherein thy great strength lieth.

c Chap. xiv. 16.

*When thine heart is not with me.*—When thou dost not lay open thy heart to me; when thou canst not trust me with its secrets. An important practical truth lies at the foundation of this remonstrance of Delilah. It is true, that “they only have our love, who have our hearts;” and the remark holds eminently in regard to love to God. If we profess to love Him while the warmth of our affection is withholden, and a cold reserve takes the place of that free, filial, and unreserved intercourse which is the privilege of his people, what is to be inferred from it, but that we are deceiving ourselves with an empty show? His demand is, “My son, give me thy heart.”

VER. 16. And it came to pass, when she pressed

him daily with her words, and urged him, so that his soul was vexed unto death;

VER. 17. Then he “told her all his heart, and said unto her, “There hath not come a razor upon my head; for I have been a Nazarite unto God from my mother’s womb: if I be shaven, then my strength will go from me, and I shall become weak, and be like any other man.

d Mic. vii. 5. e Num. vi. 5. Chap. xiii. 5.

*When she pressed him daily—he told her all his heart.*—Alas! how are the mighty fallen! What an affecting exhibition of the weakness of human nature even in its best estate! Well could Samson now adopt the language of Solomon, “I find more bitter than death the woman whose heart is snares and nets, and her hands are bands: whoso pleaseth God shall escape from her; but the sinner shall be taken by her.” Wearied out by the ceaseless upbraidings of his vile paramour, and enslaved by the violence of his passion, the fatal secret is at length extorted from him, and the mighty Nazarite remains scarcely a common man! So perfectly captivated and intoxicated had he become, notwithstanding repeated warnings, by the vehemence of his affection, that, “like the silly dove without heart,” he rushed upon his ruin! Had he not been completely infatuated, he would have seen before that no alternative remained to him but to break away at once and at all hazards from the enchantress, and quit the field where it was so evident that he could not keep his ground. But no chains are stronger than those woven by illicit love, and with him who becomes their prisoner, reputation, life, usefulness, yea, even God’s glory, and the salvation of the soul, are put to peril in obedience to its unhallowed dictates. But the righteous judgment of God is not to be overlooked in this fearful fall of the champion of Israel. Having so long presumptuously played with his ruin, Heaven leaves him to himself, as a punishment for his former guilty indulgence. He is made to reap as he had sown, and consigned to the hands of his enemies for “the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.” But it becomes not us to exult over the apostasy of the fallen. “We wonder that a man could possibly be so sottish, and yet we ourselves by temptation become no less insensate. Sinful pleasures, like a common Delilah, lodge in our bosoms; we know they aim at nothing but the death of our soul; we will yield to them and die. Every willing sinner is a Samson. Let us not inveigh against his senselessness, but our own: nothing is so gross and unreasonable to a well-disposed mind, which temptation will not represent fit and plausible. No soul can, out of his own strength, secure himself from that sin which he most detesteth.”—*Bishop Hall.* Let us learn hence, (1.) That fidelity is never to be expected from those who show an utter unfaithfulness to God, and have stifled and triumphed over the inward warning voice of conscience. (2.) That when the heart is infatuated by unlawful desire, repeated warnings of danger will be disregarded. (3.) That they who feel themselves unable to resist

the importunity of their tempters, should instantly fly from their dangerous presence. *I have been a Nazarite unto God from my mother's womb.*—What a confession to be made in the lap of a vile Delilah! What a commentary upon his words was afforded by his present condition! Strange that the utterance of a sentence betraying such a glaring inconsistency in his conduct should not have awakened him from the spell by which he was bound, and made him break away with his secret but half divulged! Strange that when his own voice thus pronounced his condemnation, he should have remained as insensible as the nether mill-stone! *If I be shaven, then my strength will go from me, &c.*—Not that his strength lay in his hair, for this in fact had no natural influence upon it, one way or the other. His strength arose from his peculiar relation to God as a Nazarite, and the preservation of his hair unshaven or unshorn, was the mark or sign of his Nazaritiship, and a pledge on the part of God of the continuance of his miraculous physical powers. If he lost this sign, the badge of his consecration, he broke his vow, and consequently forfeited the thing signified. God abandoned him, and he was thenceforward no more, in this respect, than a common man; at least was deprived of supernatural strength.

VER. 18. And when Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called for the lords of the Philistines, saying, Come up this once, for he hath showed me all his heart. Then the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and brought money in their hand.

*When Delilah saw, &c.*—When she became satisfied by the serious tone in which he spake, and by the various tokens to be read in his countenance, air, general manner, &c., that he had told her the truth.

VER. 19. And she made him sleep upon her knees; and she called for a man, and she caused him to shave off the seven locks of his head; and she began to afflict him, and his strength went from him.

f Prov. vii. 26, 27.

*Made him sleep upon her knees.*—A custom very common in the East. "It is very amusing to see a full-grown son, or a husband, asleep on his mother's or wife's knees. The plan is as follows: the female sits cross-legged on the carpet or mat, and the man having laid himself down, puts his head in her lap, and she gently taps, strokes, sings, and soothes him to sleep."—*Roberts.* *Caused him to shave off.*—Heb. "shaved off;" that is, by the agency of another, as well rendered in our common version. That a man should be able not only to cut, but to shave off the hair, on which, during all Samson's life, razor had never before come, implies either that Samson slept very soundly, or that the man was very dexterous in his craft. In fact, the Oriental barbers do their work with so much ease, as to render the shaving of the head (the head is

usually shaven in the East) rather grateful than unpleasant. The most delicate sleeper would scarcely be awakened by it; and even those who are awake are scarcely sensible of the operation which they are undergoing. (*Pict. Bible.*) *Began to afflict him.*—That is, from this act of hers commenced that series of insults, injuries, and humiliations, which his enemies had before (ver. 5) announced their intention to bring upon him. He had hitherto sported thoughtlessly upon the brink of the precipice of degradation and ruin, and now his fall can no longer be delayed. As the next step in his downward career, his miraculous strength forsakes him. *His strength went from him.*—Having now violated the conditions of his Nazarite vow, on which it depended. "He that sleeps in sin must look to wake in loss and weakness."—*Bishop Hall.*

VER. 20. And she said, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he wist not that the LORD <sup>g</sup> was departed from him.

g Numb. xiv. 9, 42, 43. Josh. vii. 12. 1 Sam. xvi. 14; xviii. 12; xxviii. 15, 16. 2 Chron. xv. 2.

*Awoke out of his sleep, and said.*—That is, said to himself, thought, resolved. *Will go out—and shake myself.*—Shake myself free from the fetters with which I am bound, and rid myself of the enemies that would be upon me. It is not, indeed, expressly stated that he was bound at this time, but the probability is that such was the case, that Delilah had slyly tied his hands while he was asleep. *Wist not that the Lord was departed from him.*—Being newly awakened out of sleep, he knew not that his head had been shaven of its locks, and therefore did not suspect that God had withdrawn his special influences from him. This circumstance may serve as a striking illustration of what often happens to those who have provoked God by their transgressions. By a righteous dereliction he leaves them; he withdraws his favourable presence; and yet like Samson they are not aware of the desertion. They feel not the loss they have sustained; at least till they begin to be sensible, by frustrated schemes and adverse providences, that it is not with them as in days that are past. Though their souls languish and grow weak, and their gifts as well as their graces wither, and others perceive their spiritual decline, yet a strange delusion is upon them; they know not their real state; they fancy themselves in health and prosperity when the sources of both are effectually undermined within them. "God is departed from him" expresses one of the most fearful forms of the divine judgments.

VER. 21. But the Philistines took him, and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass; and he did grind in the prison-house.

*Put out his eyes.*—Heb. "bored out." "With the Greeks and Asiatics, the way of putting out the eyes, or blinding, was not (always) by pulling

or cutting out the eyes, as some have imagined; but by drawing or holding a red-hot iron before them. This method is still in use in Asia. According to Chardin, however, the pupils of the eyes were more frequently pierced and destroyed on such occasions. But Thevenot says, 'that the eyes in these barbarous acts are taken out whole with the point of a dagger, and carried to the king in a basin.' He adds, that, 'as the king sends whom he pleases to do that cruel office, some princes are so butchered by unskilful hands, that it costs them their lives.' In Persia it is no unusual practice for the king to punish a rebellious city or province by exacting so many pounds of eyes; and his executioners accordingly go and scoop out from every one they meet, till they have the weight required."—*Burder*. Thus was the lust of the eye in looking after and gazing upon strange women punished. The offending organ that he had refused to pluck out was in effect plucked out for him in the righteous providence of God. *Bound him with fetters of brass*.—A proof that iron, though now well known, had not yet come into general use; as otherwise we should doubtless have found Samson bound with fetters of that material. The emphasis here is not on brass, as distinguished from any other metal; but to show that his fetters were of metal, and that he was not, like the common class of offenders, bound with ropes or thongs of leather. *He did grind in the prison-house*.—Of course with mill-stones worked by the hands, this being still the usual method of grinding corn in the East. It is an employment, however, which usually devolves on women; and to assign it to such a man as Samson was doubtless with a view to reduce him to the lowest state of degradation and dishonour. To grind corn for others was, even for a woman, a proverbial term expressing the most degraded and oppressed condition; and how much more for Samson, who seems to have been made grinder-general for the prison-house.

"Ask for this great deliverer now, and find him  
Eycless at Gaza, at the mill with slaves."

*Milton.*

The champion and avenger of Israel is now become the drudge and the sport of the Philistines. The crown is fallen from his head, and his honour laid in the dust. We are ready to pity the degraded judge of Israel, when we see him reduced to such a state of misery by his enemies; but while we pity the man, we congratulate the sinner, to whose final salvation these heavy trials were made subservient. Let us not, however, lose sight of the solemn lesson which his misery teaches us. What a warning to those who "yield their members instruments of iniquity." They will find their bondage bitter and unbearable, when they are finally bound with the chains which their sins have forged for them.

VER. 22. Howbeit the hair of his head began to grow again after he was shaven.

*The hair of his head began to grow again after he was shaven*.—Rather, Heb. "according as it had been shaved;" i. e. in the same proportions

as it had been cut off. This circumstance, though in itself inconsiderable, is mentioned by way of suitable preface to what follows. The letting the hair grow was a prominent circumstance in the condition of a Nazarite; and the extraordinary strength of Samson was not a matter of thews and sinews, but was conferred upon him as a special gift of God, on condition of his remaining in the state of Nazariteship. The loss of his hair did not in itself deprive him of strength; but the loss of his hair involved the loss of his strength, because it took from him the condition of a Nazarite, with which his extraordinary physical powers were inseparably connected. Accordingly, when we find him again growing strong after the renewed growth of his hair, we are bound to believe that it was not because his hair grew, but because he repented of his past misconduct. God was pleased, therefore, having hereby become reconciled to his offending servant, to accept the renewal of his vow of Nazariteship, including the consecration of his hair; and in consequence of that acceptance re-invested him, as his hair grew, with the powers which he had before lost. In the language of Bp. Hall, "his hair grew together with his repentance, and his strength with his hair." The practical reflections of the same writer on this part of Samson's history are equally striking and just. "It is better for Samson to be blind in prison, than to abuse his eyes in Sorek; yea, I may safely say he was more blind when he saw licentiously, than now that he sees not; he was a greater slave when he served his affections, than now in grinding for the Philistines. The loss of his eyes shows him his sin, neither could he see how ill he had done till he saw not."—*Bp. Hall*.

VER. 23. Then the lords of the Philistines gathered them together, for to offer a great sacrifice unto Dagon their god, and to rejoice: for they said, Our god hath delivered Samson our enemy into our hand.

*The lords of the Philistines gathered them together, &c.*—This great festival scene had evidently been some time delayed, as appears from the fact of Samson's hair having had time to grow in the interval; but perhaps the necessary preparations for so grand an occasion consumed considerable time, or it may have been the second anniversary of the deliverance of their enemy into their hands. *Unto Dagon their god*.—A deity of the Philistines generally represented as having the head and upper parts human, while the rest of the body resembled a fish. It was called *Derceto* among the heathens, though the Heb. word "Dagon" comes from "Dag," a fish. The Philistines living on the sea coast, they had a sea-idol. *Our god hath delivered, &c.*—Though they knew that he was betrayed into their hands by Delilah, yet they foolishly attribute it to their god. The circumstance however affords a hint worth taking. If even a Philistine ascribes his victories to his idol gods, how much more are we bound to pay a similar tribute to our God, and give him the glory of every great and good work done by

us, in us, or for us. *Which slew many of us.*—Heb. “which multiplied our slain.”

VER. 24. And when the people saw him, they <sup>h</sup>praised their god: for they said, Our god hath delivered into our hands our enemy, and the destroyer of our country, which slew many of us.

<sup>h</sup> Dan. v. 4.

VER. 25. And it came to pass, when their hearts were ‘merry, that they said, Call for Samson, that he may make us sport. And they called for Samson out of the prison-house; and he made them sport: and they set him between the pillars.

<sup>i</sup> Chap. ix. 27.

*When their hearts were merry.*—Heb. “when their hearts were good.” A parallel usage occurs Ruth iii. 7; 1 Sam. xxv. 36, and elsewhere. *That he may make us sport.*—That is, passively, that he may be a subject of sport and merriment to us; that we may make ourselves merry at his expense. It is quite improbable, we think, that Samson, a poor blind prisoner, should be required actively to engage in any thing that should make sport to his enemies. The idea doubtless is simply, that he should be brought out to become a laughing-stock to them, a butt for their scoffs, mockeries, and insults. Accordingly the Sept. version of the next clause has, “And they buffeted him;” and Josephus says, he was brought out, “that they might insult him in their cups.” But their triumphing was short, and their joy but for a moment. “Nothing fills the measure of the iniquity of any person or people faster than mocking or misusing the servants of God, yea, though it is by their own folly that they are brought low. Those know not what they do, nor whom they affront, that make sport with a good man.”—*Henry.*

VER. 26. And Samson said unto the lad that held him by the hand, Suffer me that I may feel the pillars whereupon the house standeth, that I may lean upon them.

VER. 27. Now the house was full of men and women; and all the lords of the Philistines were there; and *there were* upon the <sup>h</sup>roof about three thousand men and women, that beheld while Samson made sport.

<sup>k</sup> Deut. xxii. 8.

*Upon the roof about three thousand men and women.*—The house or temple itself was full of the principal people below: while about three thousand, probably of the lower orders, had stationed themselves upon the roof, the roofs of eastern buildings, as is well known, being generally flat. In answer to the question, How this large number of persons on the roof could have seen Samson while made the subject of mirth below?—it may be remarked, that we are to form our ideas of the scene from the style of building

common to the East. The edifice in question undoubtedly formed a part of a quadrangular pile of buildings and walls, having a court or area in the centre, where Samson might be exhibited with ease to the whole assembled multitude. The principal building in such structures generally occupies that side of the inclosure which faces the entrance, and is advanced considerably out of the line of the square. It is, moreover, usually constructed with an open front to afford a clear view of what is going on in the court, having curtains to be drawn up or let down at pleasure, and supported by two or more pillars either in the front or in the centre. Samson probably after having been for some time paraded about the area, where every one could see him, requested to be conducted within the part of the edifice now described, that he might rest himself against its pillars, see on ver. 29.

VER. 28. And Samson called unto the LORD, and said, O Lord God, ‘remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes.

<sup>l</sup> Jer. xv. 15.

*Samson called unto the Lord, and said, &c.*—It is scarcely to be presumed that this prayer was uttered audibly. It was rather, we may suppose, a mental petition, breathed forth from the depths of a broken heart, where godly sorrow had been doing its perfect work. But though the voice of his prayer was not heard of man, yet it was graciously heard and answered of God, and though he himself did not live to recite or record it, yet God, by revealing it to the inspired penman, provided for its being registered for the benefit of the church. Whether it is to be considered as embracing all that he inwardly uttered, or merely the general drift, the substance of it, is uncertain; probably the latter, according to prevailing usage in the Scripture style of narration. By praying that God would once more remember and strengthen him, he virtually acknowledged that all the wonderful exploits he had hitherto performed were owing to a strength given him from above, and that he would be powerless for the present achievement unless the same divine aid were granted him. True it is, if we regard the bare letter of his petition, it has the air of being prompted mainly by a spirit of revenge; but from God’s accepting and answering the prayer, it cannot be doubted, that he looked upon himself in this transaction, not as a private but as a public person, extraordinarily called to be the instrument of a signal act of vengeance to the enemies of Israel and of God. The indignities heaped upon himself had indeed been great and grievous, and such as would be in fact worthily punished in the catastrophe which he meditated. But this was not his leading motive. The consideration of his personal sufferings was merged in a holy zeal for the Lord of hosts, the vindication of whose glory was of infinitely more consequence than the avengement of his own wrongs. In putting out his eyes, they had “touched the apple of God’s eye,” and this was

not to be done with impunity. Under the influence of this feeling, combined with the consciousness that his own past misconduct would be no more than justly visited by a painful end, he cheerfully devotes himself to death.

VER. 29. And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the house stood, and on which it was borne up, of the one with his right hand, and of the other with his left.

*Took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the house stood.*—To this it has been objected, How could a roof capable of accommodating three thousand persons be supported upon two pillars? But it is not said that there were no more than two. There might have been several others not standing in the middle or central part of the building, which contributed to the support of the roof, when at the same time the removal of the two in question would, more than all the rest, endanger the fall of the whole edifice. The celebrated architect Sir Christopher Wren says, that in considering what kind of fabric it must be that could with one pull be demolished, he conceived to himself a vast roof of cedar beams resting at one end upon the walls, and centering at the other upon one short architrave that united two cedar pillars in the middle. "One pillar would not be sufficient to unite the ends of at least one hundred beams that tended to the centre; therefore, I say, there must have been a short architrave resting upon two pillars, upon which all the beams tending to the entire centre might be supported. Now if Samson, by his miraculous strength pressing on one (or both) these pillars, moved it from its basis, the whole roof must of necessity fall."—(*Hewlett's Bible.*) *On which it was borne up.*—This idea had been already expressed in the words immediately preceding, nor does the original so well admit this rendering. The Heb. יָסַדְתָּ עֲלֵיהֶם may we think be more correctly translated, "he leaned or stayed himself upon them."

VER. 30. And Samson said, Let me die with the Philistines. And he bowed himself with *all his might*; and the house fell upon the lords, and upon all the people that *were* therein. So the dead which he slew at his death were more than *they* which he slew in his life.

*Let me die.*—I am content to die, if the glory of God requires it; as at once a suitable punishment to me, and means of judgment to the Philistines. Heb. "let my soul die;" *i. e.* according to the Hebrew usage, let my life become extinct. As to his "soul," as we understand the term, he would of course pray that that might live. Samson's death is no warrant for suicide, as it does not appear that he directly sought it, or designed to bring it about any farther than as it might be the inevitable consequence of destroying so many of the enemies of his people. He may be considered therefore as having perished in the same way as if he had fallen in battle like Josiah, (2 Chron. xxxvi. 23. 34,) resisting the

invaders of his country. *He bowed himself with all his might, and the house fell, &c.*—With arms extended he grasps the massy pillars, and feeling an answer to his prayer in the renewed strength bestowed upon him, he bends himself forward with all his force; the pillars rock, the building totters, the roof encumbered with the weight of the spectators, rushes down, and death in every tremendous shape appears. Crushed under the load or dashed to pieces in the fall, thousands expire. Their music is now changed to dying groans, and shrieks of agonizing pain, instead of songs of triumph, fill the air. Thus dies the mighty Samson, triumphant in his fall, and more terrible to the Philistines in his death than even during his life. Who can in this but be reminded of that adorable Saviour, who "triumphed over principalities and powers upon the cross, and by death overcame him that had the power of death, and delivered those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

VER. 31. Then his brethren and all the house of his father came down, and took him, and brought *him* up, and "buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the burying-place of Manoah his father. And he judged Israel twenty years.

m Chap. xlii. 25.

*Then his brethren—came down and took him.*—The overwhelming catastrophe which had destroyed the lives of so many of the lords and inferior rulers of the people, seems to have been such a crush to the Philistine power, that they troubled Israel no more for several years, and did not even attempt to hinder Samson's relations from taking away and burying his dead body. It was selected out from heaps of the slain, brought honourably to his own country, and interred in the sepulchre of his fathers.—Thus terminates the history of one of the most remarkable personages that ever distinguished the annals of the Jewish or any other people. We may learn from it, that great gifts are often connected with great imperfections. The champion of Israel possessed courage and strength, and did signal service to his country in contending with its enemies; but he had little self-government, and affords a melancholy proof how little corporeal prowess avails when judgment and prudence are wanting, and how dangerous, in fact, are all such gifts in the hands of any one, who has not his passions under proper discipline, and the fear of God continually before his eyes. While as a Nazarite he was careful to abstain from strong drink, he took little heed to cultivate that purity of sentiment and conduct which is a crown to every other excellence, and the want of which never fails to sully the lustre of the brightest characters.—It may here be remarked, that from the history of Samson it is generally supposed was derived that of the Hercules of the pagan mythology, and M. De Lavour, an ingenious French writer, has drawn out the parallel at full length, an abridgment of which may be seen in Dr. A. Clarke's commentary. The coincidences are certainly very striking, and to most minds would

perhaps afford an additional proof of how much the heathens have been indebted to the Bible.

### CHAPTER XVII.

THAT the events related in the remaining chapters of this book did not occur in the order in which they stand in the sacred narrative, is universally admitted. They constitute a regular appendix to the book, which is inserted here that it might not interrupt the previous history of the judges. The events themselves occurred long before the time of Samson, and probably in the interval that ensued after the death of Joshua and the elders who outlived him, and while the government was in a very unsettled state. In chronological order the proper place for these chapters would undoubtedly be between chap. ii. and iii., as remarked on chap. iii. 11. The history comprehended in the present and the following chapter is obviously connected with chap. i. 34, where the reasons of the emigration of a part of the tribe of Dan to the northern quarter of Canaan are stated. "The Amorites forced the children of Dan into the mountain; for they would not suffer them to come down to the valley." The consequence was, they sought a more enlarged inheritance, and while in the course of possessing themselves of this, the events here related, resulting in the establishment of idolatry in that tribe, occurred. The sad story of the Levite's concubine and the war with Benjamin occupies the remaining part of the appendix. These incidents are expressly said (chap. xx. 28) to have occurred while Phinehas, the grandson of Aaron, was high-priest, and must therefore be assigned to about the same period.

VER. 1. AND there was a man of mount Ephraim whose name was Micah.

*A man of mount Ephraim, whose name was Micah.*—Heb. מִיכָאֵל *Michayehu*, (*i. e.* who is like Jehovah?) but in the subsequent narrative the name is uniformly contracted into מִיכָאֵל *Micah*. This, the Jewish writers say, is owing to the fact of his having become an idolater, after which event the sacred penman, they affirm, regarded it as a profanation of the name Jehovah to have it connected in any manner with his. By "mount Ephraim" here is meant, as usual, the mountainous parts of Ephraim.

VER. 2. AND he said unto his mother, The eleven hundred *shekels* of silver that were taken from thee, about which thou cursedst, and spakest of also in mine ears, behold, the silver is with me; I took it. And his mother said, "Blessed be thou of the LORD, my son.

*a* Gen. xiv. 19. Ruth iii. 10.

*About which thou cursedst.*—Pronouncedst an imprecation upon the thief; or, perhaps, didst abjure or put under oath all the family to discover the money. It is not unlikely that Micah, hearing this, was alarmed and restored the money, lest the curses should fall on him. Although not

sufficiently restrained by moral principle to forbear the theft, yet his conscience had not yet become so hardened as to allow him to keep what he had stolen in despite of his mother's imprecations. This shows that he was a novice, and not a veteran, in sin; as otherwise he would not have scrupled to deny, excuse, or defend it, as he saw fit.

VER. 3. AND when he had restored the eleven hundred *shekels* of silver to his mother, his mother said, I had wholly dedicated the silver unto the LORD from my hand for my son, to <sup>b</sup>make a graven image and a molten image; now, therefore, I will restore it unto thee.

*b* See Exod. xx. 4, 23. Lev. xix. 4.

*I had wholly dedicated the silver unto the Lord.*—A striking illustration of the mistaken ideas which had arisen in Israel, and which gradually led them on to downright idolatry. Micah and his mother seem to have intended to honour the true God by their proceedings, which were, nevertheless, so contrary to the law as really to expose them to be punished by death. What they did seems to have been to set up a little religious establishment similar to that at Shiloh, with an imitation of the ark, cherubim, priestly dresses, &c., and finally crowning the whole by obtaining a Levite to officiate as priest; and all the while they thought they were doing God service! So blind and deluded in all ages have been those who have added their human inventions to God's perfect system of worship. "If religion might be judged according to the (professed) intention, there should be scarcely any idolatry in the world."—*Bishop Hall*. *Now therefore I will restore it unto thee.*—The apparent confusion in what is said in this and the ensuing verse of the "restoring" of the money affords no little plausibility to the rendering of this clause proposed by Schmid, "And then I will restore it unto thee," *i. e.* after it has passed through the hands of the founder and been converted to the proposed images. Of these it would seem from the letter of the text that there were two, one sculptured of wood or stone, and then plated with silver, the other made of the solid metal cast in a mould. The original, however, will perhaps admit of the rendering "a graven image, even a molten image;" *i. e.* an image in the first place graven or sculptured, and then molten, or spread over with a layer of silver. The latter we think the preferable sense, especially as in chap. xviii. 30, 31, mention is made only of the graven image, and in the final clause of ver. 4, of this chapter, it is said in the original, "And it was in the house of Micah," though in our version arbitrarily and erroneously rendered, "And they were in the house." It will be remarked, moreover, that she appropriated only two hundred out of the eleven hundred shekels to this purpose, which would hardly have been sufficient for the construction of even one image of any size; whereas if the silver were employed in plating or gilding, the quantity would have been ample for a good-sized statue. The remaining nine hundred shekels were probably laid out in the procurement of various other articles necessary to complete their

sacred apparatus, particularly the ephod and teraphim.

VER. 4. Yet he restored the money unto his mother; and his mother took two hundred *shekels* of silver, and gave them to the founder, who made thereof a graven image and a molten image; and they were in the house of Micah.

c Isa. xlv. 6.

VER. 5. And the man Micah had a house of gods, and made an ephod, and teraphim, and consecrated one of his sons, who became his priest.

d Chap. viii. 27. e Gen. xxxi. 19, 30. Hos. iii. 4.

*And the man Micah had a house of gods.*—Heb. "and as to the man Micah, there was to him a house of God," as the closing phrase may be rendered. It is spoken of as the result of the whole transaction; *q. d.* "Thus they managed the matter, and lo! the man, the humble individual, Micah, became possessed of a house of God, a sanctuary!" implying not that it was really such, but that it was such in his estimation. The words convey a latent touch of sarcasm or irony, and ought properly to constitute a period by themselves; the next clause would then begin with the repetition of the person, "and he made," &c., *i. e.* procured to be made. Of the Ephod, see on Exod. xxviii. 4; of the Teraphim, on Gen. xxxi. 19, 30; and of the import of the Heb. word for "consecrate," Exod. xx. 9, 41; Lev. vii. 37.

VER. 6. In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes.

f Chap. xviii. 1; xix. 1; xxi. 25. Deut. xxxiii. 5. g Deut. xii. 8.

*In those days there was no king in Israel, &c.*—Intimating the reason to which it was owing that such gross enormities as those here mentioned should have occurred. There was no king, judge, or controlling power to take cognizance of them; no one to give orders for destroying the images; no one to convince Micah of his error and guilt in making them, or to punish his offence; no one, in fine, to arrest in the outset an evil which was likely to spread and infect the whole nation. "Every man did that which was right in his own eyes, and then they soon did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord."—*Henry*. Did that which was right in his own eyes.—The original term *yashar*, is the same as that applied by Samson (chap. xiii. 3) to the Philistine woman whom he urged his parents to procure for him, "She is right in my eyes," on which see note.

VER. 7. And there was a young man out of Bethlehem-judah, of the family of Judah, who was a Levite, and he sojourned there.

h See Josh. xix. 15. Chap. xix. 1. Ruth i. 1, 2. Mic. v. 2. Matt. ii. 1, 5, 6.

*A young man of Bethlehem-judah.*—So called

to distinguish it from another Bethlehem in the tribe of Zebulun. (Josh. xix. 15.) *Of the family of Judah.*—This is doubtless to be understood not of the young man, but of the city. He was of that city Bethlehem which pertained to the family (*i. e.* tribe) of Judah, thus distinguishing the place with still greater accuracy. Otherwise the words are scarcely intelligible; for how could a Levite be at the same time of the family of Judah? *And he sojourned there.*—Sojourned rather than permanently dwelt; for Bethlehem was not a Levitical city, and therefore not the appropriate residence of one of the priestly tribe. But it is probable that a good deal of liberty was allowed in this respect, and that especially in times of general laxness and confusion, the Levites were dispersed in a very irregular manner over every part of the land.

VER. 8. And the man departed out of the city from Bethlehem-judah, to sojourn where he could find a place; and he came to mount Ephraim to the house of Micah, as he journeyed.

*And the man departed, &c.*—Prompted either by fancied necessity from the difficulty of obtaining a livelihood, or by the impulse of a roving mind; or rather perhaps from the influence of both these causes combined. The times were undoubtedly sadly degenerate and the whole Levitical order reduced to straits, yet it is scarcely conceivable that a Levite, for whom the law had made such express provision, Deut. xii. 19, saying, "Take heed to thyself that thou forsake not the Levite as long as thou livest upon the earth," should actually have been forced to wander for a maintenance. It was probably rather owing to a native waywardness of disposition. Nor is there any thing related of this individual calculated to shield him from such an imputation. *He came to the house of Micah, as he journeyed.*—Heb. "to make his way." That is, without the design of tarrying. He merely "turned aside as a way-faring man to tarry for a night," and contrary to his expectation found an opening of which he rashly concluded to avail himself.

VER. 9. And Micah said unto him, Whence comest thou? And he said unto him, I am a Levite of Bethlehem-judah, and I go to sojourn where I may find a place.

VER. 10. And Micah said unto him, Dwell with me, and be unto me a father and a priest, and I will give thee ten *shekels* of silver by the year, and a suit of apparel, and thy victuals. So the Levite went in.

i Ch. xviii. 19. k Gen. xlv. 8. Job xxix. 16.

*Be unto me a father and a priest.*—That is, be unto me a father, even a priest, a spiritual father, a teacher, guide, or overseer in religious things; in which sense the word "father," repeatedly occurs in the sacred writers. See 2 Kings vi. 21; viii. 9; xiii. 4. Is. xxii. 21. "He pretends reverence and submission to him, and what is wanting in wages, he pays him in empty

titles."—*Poole. A suit of apparel.*—Heb. "an order of garments;" Cocceius, "a fitting out of garments," *i. e.* such as would be suitable to wear on ordinary occasions, and such as he should need in his official ministrations. *So the Levite went in.*—By no means the exact import of the original, which is *הלך* "and he went or walked," whereas the appropriate term for "went in" is *כנס*. They were doubtless already in the house, when the bargain was concluded. Either the sense given to the words by Jarchi, "And he went after his counsels," *i. e.* Micah's; or that assigned by Kimchi, "And he went about the duties of his office," comes undoubtedly much nearer the scope of the writer. For the use of "walk" in the sense of ministerial service, see 1 Sam. ii. 30, 35, and also note on Gen. v. 22.

VER. 11. And the Levite was content to dwell with the man; and the young man was unto him as one of his sons.

*And the Levite was content to dwell.*—The original implies a peculiar complacency in dwelling with his employer. Being kindly treated and receiving respectable wages for the times, he thought himself happy in lighting upon so eligible a situation.

VER. 12. And Micah 'consecrated the Levite; and the young man <sup>m</sup>became his priest, and was in the house of Micah.

<sup>l</sup> Ver. 5. <sup>m</sup> Ch. xviii. 30.

*Consecrated the Levite.*—Heb. "filled his hand;" furnished him with the proper offering which he was to present on his inauguration. The act, however, was wholly unlawful. Micah had no right even to undertake to set apart a person to the priestly office, nor had the Levite any right to think of accepting such a dignity, even had the occasion been lawful, for it appears from ch. xviii. 30, that this young man, whose name was Jonathan, was not of Aaron's family, but the son of Gershom, another branch of the same tribe.

VER. 13. Then said Micah, Now know I that the LORD will do me good, seeing I have a Levite to my priest.

*Now know I that the Lord will do me good, seeing, &c.*—Having provided an epitome of the tabernacle, with models of its various furniture, such as the ark, the mercy-seat, the cherubim, &c., and having procured the proper sacerdotal vestments, with a Levite to wear them and officiate, he takes it for granted that all will now be well, and that he may confidently expect the divine blessing. His delusion in this was very gross, and yet how strikingly does it represent the false confidence of ungodly men in every age. The fact of his having put away his son from the priesthood of his establishment, and appointed one of the Levitical order, seems to have banished all his doubts and fears as to the issue, though his graven image still remained. In like manner, thousands flatter themselves that a partial reformation of conduct, or the correction of a single fault, will atone for persisting in multi-

tudes of others, and that a decent observance of the prescribed forms of religion will answer in the place of spirituality of mind and real purity of heart. Though they retain their idols, they will still cleave to their altar and priests, and, serving God according to such rules as they have laid down for themselves, have no fears but that all will be well with them both in this world and the next. And yet how often is it the case, that the very deeds of self-righteousness, on which they rely as commending them to God's favour, are precisely the ones which he most abhors, and which most effectually incur his wrath. Let us then renounce every vain confidence. Let us not promise ourselves exemption from ill on the mere ground of external privileges, or sacred relations. The Jews could boast of having Abraham to their father, and the temple of God for their place of worship, and esteem this a sufficient ground of hope, though living in constant violation of every known duty. Thus too it is certain that many from the fact of being born of pious parents, dwelling in praying families, enjoying a valuable ministry, and being associated with the excellent of the earth, build a hope that all will be well with them, though they are heedless of cultivating the graces of the Spirit, and of laying hold of eternal life. All such fancied security is but exemplifying the infatuation of Micah when he said, "Now know I that the Lord will do me good, seeing that I have a Levite to my priest."

## CHAPTER XVIII.

VER. 1. IN <sup>a</sup> those days *there* was no king in Israel: and in those days <sup>b</sup> the tribe of the Danites sought them an inheritance to dwell in; for unto that day *all their* inheritance had not fallen unto them among the tribes of Israel.

<sup>a</sup> Chap. xvii. 6; xxi. 25.

<sup>b</sup> Josh. xix. 47.

*In those days there was no king in Israel.*—That is, about the time mentioned in the preceding chapter, and not long after the death of Joshua. *The tribe of the Danites.*—Not the whole, but a part of this tribe, some families of it, to the number of six hundred men of war with their households. (Ver. 16, 21.) *Unto that day all their inheritance had not fallen unto them among the tribes of Israel.* Not but that the tribe of Dan had had an inheritance assigned to them as well as the other tribes, (Josh. xix. 40,) but up to this time they were not in the actual enjoyment of their possession. In consequence of their culpable remissness in expelling the old inhabitants, they lost the advantages they might otherwise have gained over them, and not only so, but as appears from Josh. xix. 47, (where see note,) a part of their territories had actually been wrested out of their hands, leaving them so straitened for room, that a portion of the tribe was induced to migrate to a distant section of the land in quest of ample accommodations. See a brief account of this, Josh. xix. 47.

VER. 2. And the children of Dan sent of their family five men from their coats, men of valour, from <sup>c</sup> Zorah, and from Eshtaol, <sup>a</sup> to spy out the land, and to search it; and they said unto them, Go, search the land: who when they came to mount Ephraim, to the <sup>c</sup> house of Micah, they lodged there.

<sup>c</sup> Chap. xiii. 25. <sup>d</sup> Num. xiii. 17. Josh. ii. 1.  
<sup>e</sup> Chap. xvii. 1.

*Men of valour.*—Heb. “sons of valour.” *They lodged there.*—Not in the house, but by it, as is evident from the next verse.

VER. 3. When they *were* by the house of Micah, they knew the voice of the young man the Levite: and they turned in thither, and said unto him, Who brought thee hither? and what makest thou in this *place*? and what hast thou here?

*Knew the voice of the young man.*—Either recognized him in this way as an old acquaintance, or perceived by his dialect, his mode of pronunciation, that although now residing at mount Ephraim he was yet of a different stock; for we have already seen that the Ephraimites had a pronunciation peculiar to themselves, (chap. xii. 6.) *What makest thou?*—Rather, what doest thou? *What hast thou here?*—Hast thou a family with thee, and what are thy means of subsistence?

VER. 4. And he said unto them, Thus and thus dealeth Micah with me, and hath <sup>f</sup> hired me, and I am his priest.

<sup>f</sup> Chap. xvii. 10.

VER. 5. And they said unto him, <sup>g</sup> Ask counsel, we pray thee, <sup>h</sup> of God, that we may know whether our way which we go shall be prosperous.

<sup>g</sup> 1 Kings xxii. 5. Is. xxx. 1. Hos. iv. 12.  
<sup>h</sup> See chap. xvii. 5; xviii. 14.

*Ask counsel, we pray thee, of God.*—We see from this circumstance how deep was the degeneracy of the times. Had these men of Dan possessed the spirit of true Israelites, they would have been indignant to learn that a rival sanctuary to that of Shiloh had been set up, and that a renegade Levite had sacrilegiously assumed the functions of the sacred office. But the circumstance, instead of giving rise to censure or remonstrance, seems rather to have ministered occasion for drawing out the latent idolatrous propensities of their own hearts. Probably conscious of having neglected at the outset of their expedition to consult the Most High and implore his blessing, they determined to avail themselves of the professed oracle at hand, and learn from the Tera-phim what they ought to have learned from the Urim. So much more prone is man's depraved nature to idolatrous superstition than to real piety. *Whether our way which we go, &c.*—Whether our enterprisc which we have undertaken shall suc-

ceed. On this import of the word “way,” as including not the journey only, but every thing pertaining to it, see on chap. iv. 9.

VER. 6. And the priest said unto them, <sup>i</sup> Go in peace; before the LORD *is* your way wherein ye go.

<sup>i</sup> 1 Kings xxii. 6.

*Go in peace.*—That is, go and prosper. This being strictly no more than the expression of a friendly wish, did not commit his foresight as a prophet. *Your way is before the Lord.*—An ambiguous expression, capable of being interpreted, according to the event, either in a good or bad sense, and thus bearing the equivocal character of the responses of all the ancient heathen oracles. Its prevailing sense in the Scriptures is undoubtedly that of approbation on the part of God, and so in the present case he intended it should be understood. Yet it has not exclusively this import. When rigidly weighed it amounts only to the general truth elsewhere affirmed, that “The ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and he pondereth all his goings.” If, therefore, the event should be propitious, he would of course gain the credit of a true prophet, whereas if it were adverse, he would at once take shelter under the ambiguity of the expression. While we recognize the subtlety of Satan in this reply, we may still gather from the incident the importance of bespeaking the divine direction and blessing at the outset of all our ways. We may go comfortably and cheerfully forward in them, if they are only such as he approves. His smile is success, his frown disaster.

VER. 7. Then the five men departed, and came to <sup>k</sup> Laish, and saw the people that *were* therein, <sup>l</sup> how they dwelt careless, after the manner of the Zidonians, quiet and secure; and *there was* no magistrate in the land, that might put *them* to shame in *any* thing; and they *were* far from the Zidonians, and had no business with *any* man.

<sup>k</sup> Josh. xix. 47.

<sup>l</sup> Ver. 27, 28.

*Came to Laish.*—Made sanguine and confident by the Levite's prediction, they set forward on their journey and came to Laish, or Leshem, as it is called by Joshua, xix. 47, and afterwards Dan, ver. 29. The inhabitants of this place are supposed to have been a colony of the Zidonians, or Sidonians, at a very considerable distance from the parent country. *Dwelt careless, after the manner of the Zidonians.*—The habitual security of the Zidonians probably arose mainly from their position and pursuits. They lived in a flourishing sea-port town, and were chiefly addicted to commerce, and not being included in the seven devoted nations of Canaan, they probably gave themselves but little concern about the wars and conquests that were going on around them. In this respect the people of Laish resembled them. Conscious of no ill design themselves, and free from the apprehension of being molested by others, they dwelt

at ease in their rich and fertile valley, (ver. 28,) their gates left open, and their walls neglected. But the grasping cupidity of man leaves nothing secure on earth, and the peaceful abodes of rural life are often visited by calamities that populous cities and the crowded marts of commerce would have more reason to dread. *No magistrate in the land, &c.*—Heb. “no heir, or possessor, of restraint.” It is not absolutely certain that what is here said of the people of Laish is to be understood by way of reproach, as the original, “heir of restraint,” may simply mean that there was no hereditary government exercised among them, but that they lived under a free republic, and yet so peaceably and harmoniously that there was no one disposed to “shame,” *i. e.* to injure, to vex, to put indignity upon, his neighbour or fellow citizen. And all this may be stated as mere matter of fact respecting their political condition, and perhaps with the design of intimating the cruelty of the Danites in barbarously invading and putting to the sword such an inoffensive community. At the same time, the evidence in favour of the common interpretation, which makes the words to convey a reflection upon the lawless and dissolute state of things among them, is perhaps still stronger, and we incline to abide by it. *Were far from the Zidonians.*—Consequently far from succour in case of a sudden attack. *Had no business with any man.*—No treaties of alliance, no commercial intercourse, no established connexion of any kind. Depending upon their own resources, and feeling little need of foreign luxuries, they lived in an insulated state in respect to the rest of the world. The words of themselves convey no impeachment of their character on the score of industry or activity, and yet taken in connexion with the whole passage, they may perhaps warrant the inference drawn from them by most commentators, that the Laishites were an indolent and idle people. Still a positive affirmation cannot be built upon the premises.

VER. 8. And they came unto their brethren to  
“Zorah and Eshtaol : and their brethren said  
unto them, What say ye ?

m Ver. 2.

VER. 9. And they said, “Arise, that we may go  
up against them : for we have seen the land,  
and behold it is very good : and are ye <sup>o</sup> still ?  
be not slothful to go, and to enter to possess  
the land.

n Numb. xiii. 30. Josh. ii. 23, 24.  
o 1 Kings xxii. 3.

*Are ye still ?*—Heb. “silent ;” *i. e.* inactive. On the peculiar use of Heb. terms for “silence,” see on Josh. x. 12. The spirit of this report may be applied to a higher theme. Heaven is a good land, made sure by promise to all believers, and if we have a heart to travel thither, boldly facing the dangers in the way, we shall find every want supplied for ever. Yet so insidious and powerful an enemy is sloth to the soul in its journey heavenward, that we have need to exhort one an-

other daily to arise and be doing. No one knows how much comfort he loses here, or how much glory hereafter, by sinful negligence.

VER. 10. When ye go, ye shall come unto a people <sup>r</sup> secure, and to a large land : for God hath given it into your hands ; <sup>s</sup> a place where there is no want of any thing that is in the earth.

p Ver. 7, 27.

q Deut. viii. 9.

*Where there is no want of any thing that is in the earth.*—Probably the more correct rendering is, “in the land,” *i. e.* the land of Canaan. No part of the land of promise held out greater advantages ; none was on any account more eligible. This is the usual sense of the original.

VER. 11. And there went from thence of the family of the Danites, out of Zorah and out of Eshtaol, six hundred men appointed with weapons of war.

*Of the family of the Danites.*—Meaning, of the tribe of the Danites ; the aggregate of the families ; collect. sing. for plur. as often before. *Appointed with weapons of war.*—Heb. “girded.”

VER. 12. And they went up, and pitched in <sup>r</sup> Kirjath-jearim, in Judah : wherefore they called that place <sup>s</sup> Mahaneh-dan unto this day : behold, it is behind Kirjath-jearim.

r Josh. xv. 60.

s Chap. xiii. 25.

*Pitched in Kirjath-jearim.*—Not in the city itself, but in its immediate vicinity, as is clear from the final clause. See on Josh. x. 10. *Mahaneh-dan.*—That is, “The camp of Dan,” so called from the circumstance of this expedition encamping there. By comparing chap. xiii. 25, it appears quite obvious that this transaction occurred previous to the days of Samson. *Behind Kirjath-jearim.*—Westward of Kirjath-jearim ; for as the face is always supposed to be turned to the east when the sacred writers speak of the points of the compass, the west of course falls behind one. Thus Deut. xi. 24, the Mediterranean, or western, sea, is called the hindmost sea (הַיָּם הַחֲדָרִים), as the east on the other hand, is designated by a term (הַיָּם הַקֶּדֶם) which has the sense of before or anterior.

VER. 13. And they passed thence unto mount Ephraim, and came unto <sup>t</sup> the house of Micah.

t Ver. 2.

VER. 14. “Then answered the five men that went to spy out the country of Laish, and said unto their brethren, Do ye know that <sup>u</sup> there is in these houses an ephod, and teraphim, and a graven image, and a molten image ? now therefore consider what ye have to do.

u 1 Sam. xiv. 28.

x Chap. xvii. 5.

*Then answered.*—Then spake. An idiom both

of the Hebrew and the Greek, by which this word is used for addressed, accosted. See 1 Kings i. 28. Ezra x. 2. Isa. xiv. 10. *Consider what ye have to do.*—Consider what ye shall do; it is a point worth deliberating whether this priest and his oracle, of the truth of whose responses we have had experience, will not be a valuable acquisition to us in our new settlement. Their subsequent actions are the best commentary on these words.

VER. 15. And they turned thitherward, and came to the house of the young man the Levite, even unto the house of Micah, and saluted him.

*And saluted him.*—Heb. “asked him of peace;” i. e. inquired respecting his welfare, which is usually expressed by the term peace. See Gen. xliii. 27. Ex. xviii. 7.

VER. 16. And the six hundred men appointed with their weapons of war, which were of the children of Dan, stood by the entering of the gate.

y Ver. 11.

VER. 17. And the five men that went to spy out the land went up, and came in thither, and took the graven image, and the ephod, and the teraphim, and the molten image: and the priest stood in the entering of the gate with the six hundred men that were appointed with weapons of war.

z Ver. 2, 14.

a Chap. xvii. 4, 5.

*The five men—came in thither.*—Entered into what might be called the sanctuary, the chapel, of Micah's house. From its being said that they “went up” (עלה) for this purpose, Rosenmüller conjectures that it was an upper apartment, and adduces Dan. vi. 10, in confirmation. *The priest stood in the entering of the gate.*—Where the other party no doubt detained and held him in talk, while their comrades effected the abduction of the gods with all their appurtenances. “See what little care this sorry priest took of his gods; while he was sauntering at the gate, his treasure (such as it was) was gone. See how impotent these wretched gods were, that could not keep themselves from being stolen.”—*Henry.* The whole scene, including the conduct of all parties, is a singular mixture of the impious and the ludicrous.

VER. 18. And these went into Micah's house, and fetched the carved image, the ephod, and the teraphim, and the molten image. Then said the priest unto them, What do ye?

*These went into Micah's house.*—The five men mentioned above went in, while the six hundred armed men stood at the gate.

VER. 19. And they said unto him, Hold thy peace, lay thy hand upon thy mouth, and go Job xxi. 5; xxix. 9; xl. 4. Prov. xxx. 32. Mic. vii. 15.

with us, and be to us a father and a priest. Is it better for thee to be a priest unto the house of one man, or that thou be a priest unto a tribe and a family in Israel?

c Chap. xvii. 10.

*Lay thy hand upon thy mouth.*—A well known token of silence among all nations. Comp. Job xxi. 5. Prov. xxx. 32. *That thou be a priest unto a tribe and a family in Israel.*—That is, “to a tribe, even a collection of families.” From the narrated facts of the case it is evident that a whole tribe could not have been intended.

VER. 20. And the priest's heart was glad, and he took the ephod, and the teraphim, and the graven image, and went in the midst of the people.

*The priest's heart was glad.*—Swayed wholly by self-interest, and unmindful of the claims of gratitude and of truth, he forsakes his former employer merely from the motives of covetousness and ambition. But who can be surprised to find him false and treacherous to men who has been convicted of the grossest perfidy towards God? *Went in the midst of the people.*—Or, Heb. “went into the midst of the people.” Took his place in the centre of the company, both to secure him from the pursuit of Micah, and in imitation of the order of Israel's march through the wilderness, in which the ark and the priests moved in the middle of the host.

VER. 21. So they turned and departed, and put the little ones, and the cattle, and the carriage before them.

*The carriage before them.*—Heb. כבודא *kebudah*, “the weight,” i. e. the luggage or baggage, the various moveables which a body of emigrants would naturally carry with them. No allusion whatever is had to wheel-carriages, as these vehicles, even to this day, are entirely unknown as a means of travelling in that country. The arrangement here mentioned was a precautionary measure designed to guard against the consequences of an attack on the part of Micah, which, should he see fit to make one, would naturally be upon the rear.

VER. 22. And when they were a good way from the house of Micah, the men that were in the houses near to Micah's house were gathered together, and overtook the children of Dan.

VER. 23. And they cried unto the children of Dan. And they turned their faces, and said unto Micah, What aileth thee, that thou comest with such a company?

*What aileth thee, that thou comest with such a company?*—Heb. “what to thee, that thou art gathered together?” An individual, of course, could not be said to be “gathered together;” but the Heb. idiom by which the leader or head of a multitude is put for the multitude itself, is of very frequent occurrence. See note on Gen. xiv. 15.



ness for them that they were Danites by birth, though removed to so great a distance from their brethren. As this fact might possibly in after times be called in question, they would make the very name of their place a ground on which to establish their claim to relationship. "We should be concerned not to lose the privilege of our relation to God's Israel, and therefore should take all occasions to own it, and preserve the remembrance of it to ours after us."—*Henry*. This city became afterwards very remarkable, as one of the extremities of the promised land. The extent of the Israelitish territory, from its northern to its southern border, was generally expressed by the phrase, "From Dan to Beersheba."

VER. 30. And the children of Dan set up the graven image: and Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh, he and his sons were priests to the tribe of Dan <sup>h</sup> until the day of the captivity of the land.

<sup>h</sup> Chap. xlii. 1. 1 Sam. iv. 2, 3, 10, 11. Psa. lxxviii. 60, 61.

*The children of Dan set up the graven image.*—Thus was idolatry first publicly established in Israel. It began in the tribe and city of Dan, from which it gradually spread like an evil contagion, and though checked from time to time by pious rulers, yet it eventually infected nearly the whole nation. As a mark of the Divine indignation towards the prime agents of this wickedness, Lightfoot suggests, that in the mystical sealing of the tribes, mentioned Rev. vii., that of Dan is entirely omitted. It may also be supposed, that having had the precedent now set, Jeroboam was encouraged afterwards to establish the idolatrous worship of one of his golden calves at this very place. *Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh.*—It is conjectured by many expositors, that instead of Manasseh (מנשה) the true reading is Moses (משה), which differs, it will be perceived, only by a single letter; and this letter (ש), it is supposed, the Jews have interpolated in order to save the credit of their great lawgiver and prophet. The singular name of Gershom, the name of one of Moses' sons, and the date of the transaction, concur, it is said, in establishing this view. Accordingly, the Vulgate and some copies of the Septuagint actually exhibit the name of "Moses" instead of "Manasseh." The interpolation, however, has been very timidly executed. The letter ש was originally placed above the line of the other letters (as it now appears in the printed Hebrew Bibles,) as if rather to suggest than to make an alteration; but in process of time the letter sunk down into the body of the word. The Hebrew writers themselves admit this, and say that the intention was to veil this disgrace in the house of Moses, by suggesting a figurative descent of Jonathan from Manasseh, the idolatrous king of Judah, who lived about eight hundred years afterwards! Bishop Patrick and others are disposed to rank this among the idle conceits of the Jewish critics; but for ourselves, without positively adopting the opinion, we think it by no means improbable. The most excellent cha-

racters are often but badly represented by their descendants. Children are not always the crown of old men, any more than fathers are always the glory of their children. The point, however, is one of little importance. *Until the day of the captivity of the land.*—Probably the captivity of the ten tribes by Shalmaneser, king of Assyria. If so, this passage is to be considered as an addition made by a later hand, of which there are numerous acknowledged instances in the Old Testament.

VER. 31. And they set them up Micah's graven image, which he made, 'all the time that the house of God was in Shiloh.

<sup>l</sup> Josh. xviii. 1. Chap. xix. 18; xxi. 12.

*All the time that the house of God was in Shiloh.*—Not that its continuance there was limited to the period now specified, as this would be inconsistent with what is affirmed in the preceding verse. But it seems to be stated as a remarkable and discreditable fact, that even during all the time that the true tabernacle and altar were standing at Shiloh, and notwithstanding the reforming efforts of all the Judges, yet here was a rival establishment of an idolatrous character subsisting in the face of all the injunctions made against it! Probably the remote situation of Dan, on the extreme borders of the country, put it in a measure out of the reach of those influences which would otherwise have gone to extirpate the abominations which it cherished.

## CHAPTER XIX.

VER. 1. AND it came to pass in those days, "when there was no king in Israel, that there was a certain Levite sojourning on the side of mount Ephraim, who took to him a concubine out of <sup>h</sup> Bethlehem-judah.

<sup>a</sup> Chap. xvii. 6; xviii. 1; xxi. 25.

<sup>b</sup> Chap. xvii. 7.

*And it came to pass, &c.*—The tragical tale that follows seems to be inserted here in order to afford a melancholy illustration of the disorders which sprang from the lack of due restraint. In the absence of an efficient magistracy, confusion and every evil work prevailed. *Took to him a concubine.*—Heb. "a woman, a concubine," or "a wife, a concubine;" or, as Geddes renders it, "a concubine-wife;" *i. e.* a lawful but a secondary wife; as in ver. 3, he is expressly called her "husband," and ver. 4, her father his father-in-law. Such connexions were not disreputable in those times, being tolerated in the law, and countenanced by the practice of the best of men. It is a great mistake to conceive of a concubine as a harlot.

VER. 2. And his concubine played the whore against him, and went away from him unto her father's house to Bethlehem-judah, and was there four whole months.

VER. 3. And her husband arose, and went after

her, to speak friendly unto her, *and* to bring her again, having his servant with him, and a couple of asses: and she brought him into her father's house: and when the father of the damsel saw him, he rejoiced to meet him.

*To speak friendly unto her.*—Heb. “to speak to her heart;” that is, to conciliate her affection, to rekindle her tenderness, and to treat her to return to the home she had left cheerless. Comp. Gen. xxxiv. 3; 1. 21. Ruth ii. 13. The phrase is commonly applied to speaking comfortably to one that is in distress or sorrow, and may perhaps here imply that the woman was penitent and grieved for her offences. *Rejoiced to meet him.*—Hoping that now a complete reconciliation would be effected between his daughter and her husband.

VER. 4. And his father-in-law, the damsel's father, retained him; and he abode with him three days: so they did eat and drink, and lodged there.

*And lodged there.*—That is, the Levite and his servant. It would scarcely be said of the father-in-law, that he lodged in his own house.

VER. 5. And it came to pass on the fourth day, when they arose early in the morning, that he rose up to depart: and the damsel's father said unto his son-in-law, “Comfort thy heart with a morsel of bread, and afterward go your way.”

e Gen. xviii. 5.

*Comfort thine heart with a morsel of bread.*—Heb. “strengthen thine heart;” *i. e.* refresh thy spirits.

VER. 6. And they sat down, and did eat and drink both of them together: for the damsel's father had said unto the man, Be content, I pray thee, and tarry all night, and let thy heart be merry.

VER. 7. And when the man rose up to depart, his father-in-law urged him: therefore he lodged there again.

VER. 8. And he arose early in the morning on the fifth day to depart: and the damsel's father said, Comfort thy heart, I pray thee. And they tarried until afternoon, and they did eat both of them.

*They tarried until afternoon.*—Heb. “till the day declined.” The original for “tarried (דוּמְמָרְתָּי) implies a reluctant delay, a forced compliance with urgent solicitations, and the issue of the affair teaches us very impressively the danger, as well as the weakness of suffering ourselves to be overcome by pressing importunity against the convictions of our better judgment. The hospitable entertainment and agreeable society of

friends is indeed a strong inducement to protract a visit, but no man should forget that he has calls at home of paramount claim, and that there is a limit beyond which complaisance is at war with duty, and where we should turn a deaf ear to the most urgent requests. The warm-hearted and friendly entertainer too should remember that his intended kindness when too far urged may prove a real injury to its objects, and should therefore moderate its promptings by reason and religion. It is altogether probable that the fearful calamity which overtook this unfortunate couple would have been avoided had they been less urged, or, when urged, had they acted with more decision.

VER. 9. And when the man rose up to depart, he, and his concubine, and his servant, his father-in-law the damsel's father, said unto him, Behold, now the day draweth toward evening, I pray you tarry all night; behold, the day groweth to an end, lodge here, that thy heart may be merry; and to-morrow get you early on your way, that thou mayest go home.

*The day draweth towards evening.*—Heb. “the day is weak, is become relaxed, remitteth itself.” The phrase points to a time of the day the opposite of what is termed, (Gen. xxix. 7,) “high day,” *i. e.* the hour when the heat of the day has attained its utmost intensity, when it has reached the meridian. *The day groweth to an end.*—Heb. הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה “it is the pitching time of day;” *i. e.* it is near the time when travellers ordinarily pitch their tents and take up their lodging for the night. *Mayest go home.*—Heb. “to thy tent.”

VER. 10. But the man would not tarry that night, but he rose up and departed, and came over against Jebus, which is Jerusalem: and there were with him two asses saddled, his concubine also was with him.

d Josh. xviii. 28.

VER. 11. And when they were by Jebus, the day was far spent; and the servant said unto his master, Come, I pray thee, and let us turn in unto this city of the Jebusites, and lodge in it.

e Josh. xv. 8, 63. Chap. i. 21. 2 Sam. v. 6.

VER. 12. And his master said unto him, We will not turn aside hither into the city of a stranger, that is not of the children of Israel; we will pass over to Gibeah.

f Josh. xviii. 28.

*Into the city of a stranger.*—That is, of a strange or foreign people; for though the city of Jerusalem had been before taken by Caleb, (chap. i. 8,) yet the stronghold of Zion was still in the hands of the Jebusites, who were not fully dispossessed till the days of David. The event, however, showed that he could scarcely have fared worse among the most barbarous hordes of Canaanites than he did among his own brethren. In all

probability he would have done better to have followed his servant's advice.

VER. 13. And he said unto his servant, Come, and let us draw near to one of these places to lodge all night, in Gibeah, or in <sup>s</sup> Ramah.

g Josh. xviii. 25.

*In Gibeah or in Ramah.*—These places were both north or rather north-west from Jerusalem, and distant, the former about four miles, the latter about six.

VER. 14. And they passed on and went their way; and the sun went down upon them *when they were* by Gibeah, which *belongeth* to Benjamin.

VER. 15. And they turned aside thither, to go in and to lodge in Gibeah: and when he went in, he sat him down in a street of the city: for *there was* no man that <sup>a</sup>took them into his house to lodging.

<sup>a</sup> Matt. xxv. 43. Heb. xiii. 2.

*No man that took them into his house to lodging.*—Heb. אִישׁ אֶת־בֵּיתוֹ לֹא־קָבַץ "no man gathering." On the expressive import of this phrase, see on Josh. vi. 9. It seems that up to this time no caravansaries or inns, in which travellers now obtain lodgings in the East, existed. At least we have met with no certain traces of the existence of such accommodations. Strangers, therefore, relied entirely on private hospitality for entertainment in the places to which they came, as is still the case in many parts of the East. Under these circumstances, such an inhospitable reception as that which the Levite now experienced is of very rare occurrence, and can only be explained on the ground of the pre-eminently vile and abandoned character of the citizens of Gibeah. The general courteousness of the orientals in this respect is well set forth in the language of Job, (xxxi. 32,) "The stranger did not lodge in the street; but I opened my doors to the traveller."

VER. 16. And, behold, there came an old man from <sup>h</sup>his work out of the field at even, which *was* also of mount Ephraim; and he sojourned in Gibeah; but the men of the place *were* Benjamites.

<sup>h</sup> Psa. civ. 23.

*There came an old man from his work out of the field at even.*—Had all the inhabitants of Gibeah been of the stamp of this good old Israelite, in whom we see such a pleasing specimen of patriarchal times, as he returns at evening from his daily toil, so gross and horrid a deed of wickedness would not have disgraced their city. But it may well be doubted whether he were not the only labourer whom this evening brought home from the field; and as the virtues usually go together, "he," as Henry remarks, "who was honestly diligent in his business all day, was disposed to be generously hospitable to these

poor strangers at night." *Which was also of mount Ephraim.*—"Gibeah was a second Sodom; even there also is another Lot; which is therefore so much more hospitable to strangers, because himself was a stranger. The host, as well as the Levite, is of mount Ephraim; each man knows best to commiserate that evil in others which himself hath passed through. All that profess the name of Christ are countrymen and yet strangers here below. How cheerfully should we entertain each other, when we meet in the Gibeah of this inhospitable world."—*Bp. Hall.*

VER. 17. And when he had lifted up his eyes, he saw a wayfaring man in the street of the city: and the old man said, Whither goest thou? and whence comest thou?

VER. 18. And he said unto him, We *are* passing from Bethlehem-judah toward the side of mount Ephraim; from thence *am* I: and I went to Bethlehem-judah, but I *am now* going to <sup>a</sup>the house of the LORD; and there *is* no man that receiveth me to house.

<sup>a</sup> Josh. xviii. 1. Chap. xviii. 31; xx. 18. 1 Sam. i. 3, 7.

*No man that receiveth me to house.*—Heb. אִישׁ אֶת־בֵּיתוֹ לֹא־קָבַץ "that gathereth me;" the same phrase with that above, (ver. 15.)

VER. 19. Yet there is both straw and provender for our asses; and there is bread and wine also for me, and for thy handmaid, and for the young man *which is* with thy servants: *there is* no want of any thing.

*Both straw and provender, &c.*—Intimating that it was not necessary for him to tax the hospitality of any one except for lodging. He had abundance of provision of his own, both for himself and his asses. In entering upon a journey, the orientals lay in a supply of food for the beasts with which they travel, as well as for themselves. This food is of different kinds. They make little or no hay in these countries, and are therefore very careful of their straw, which they cut into small bits with an instrument, which at the same time threshes out the corn (grain); this chopped straw, with barley, beans, and balls made of bran and barley-meal, or of the pounded kernels of dates, is what they feed them with. "People (in the East) still carry provisions with them in a journey, even through a peopled country. No one calculates on obtaining, unless in very great towns, more than house-room, with the chance of being able to buy bread and fruit. It is not certain that even bread can be procured; and not to leave the matter entirely to chance, the traveller usually takes from one great town to another so much bread as will serve him intermediately. If he desires better fare than he is likely thus to obtain, he takes with him cooking utensils, rice, vegetables, preserved meat, butter, &c., and at the resting-place for the day has a warm meal prepared by a servant or himself, from his own stores and with his own utensils. We have

known a single traveller accompanied by a male exclusively laden with his bedding, provisions, and cooking vessels. It is within the writer's own experience, that in a journey of more than a fortnight through a comparatively well-peopled part of Western Asia, it was not possible more than twice (in two great towns) to obtain other food than bread and fruit, and often this not without much difficulty, and sometimes not at all."—*Pict. Bible.*

VER. 20. And the old man said, 'Peace be with thee; howsoever, let all thy wants lie upon me: "only lodge not in the street.

*l* Gen. xliii. 23. Chap. vi. 23. *m* Gen. xix. 2.

Let all thy wants lie upon me.—This is not inconsistent with the Levite's assertion in the preceding verse, that there was "no want of any thing." The original signifies defect, lack; and the Levite said, that although he was supplied with every thing else, yet he did lack a lodging place. His kind entertainer here tells him to dismiss all care, for he would take it upon him to see that his deficiency in this and every other respect should be supplied, *q. d.* Keep your bread and wine, your straw and provender for your own and your asses' use; you may need them before you finish your journey; I will provide for all your wants this night; therefore do not think of lodging in the street." This was generosity worthy of an Israelite. *Lodge not in the street.*—Unless they had bedding, which travellers often carry with them, this would not have been convenient; and it would be thought disgraceful to the character of a town to allow a stranger accompanied by his wife to do so even then. But, in other respects, lodging in the streets of a town is a less singular circumstance in the East than it would seem to us in England. When the Bedouin Arabs visit a town, they usually prefer sleeping at night in the street to sleeping in a house. So also, when a person walks through the streets of Malta in the nights of summer, he finds the foot-pavements obstructed by beds, occupied by married couples and single people. These belong to shop-keepers and others, who rent the ground-floors; and having no right to take their beds to the roof, bring them out into the street to enjoy the luxury of sleeping in the cool open air."—*Pict. Bible.*

VER. 21. "So he brought him into his house, and gave provender unto the asses: "and they washed their feet, and did eat and drink.

*n* Gen. xxiv. 32; xliii. 24.  
*o* Gen. xviii. 4. John xliii. 5.

VER. 22. Now as they were making their hearts merry, behold, "the men of the city, certain "sons of Belial, beset the house round about, and beat at the door, and spake to the master of the house, the old man, saying, "Bring forth the man that came into thy house, that we may know him.

*p* Gen. xix. 4. Chap. xx. 5. Hos. ix. 9; x. 9.  
*q* Deut. xiii. 13. *r* Gen. xix. 5. Rom. i. 26, 27.

*Making their hearts merry.*—Refreshing themselves with the provisions set before them. It does not necessarily convey the idea of banqueting and revelry. *Sons of Belial.*—Vile, abandoned, profligate fellows; men lost to all sense of right, honour, and decency. See note on Deut. xiii. 13. *Beat at the door.*—Rendered "beat" in order to imply something more than simply knocking. The original has the import of an earnest, eager, violent assault at the door. *Bring forth the man, &c.*—This demand, and indeed the whole of the incidents here mentioned, have a striking resemblance to the affair of Lot and the Sodomites. Under the ambiguous term "know," these sons of Belial in each instance convey a sense in the last degree abominable and brutal, and in each instance the father makes a proposal which the extremest case could not justify.

VER. 23. And "the man, the master of the house, went out unto them, and said unto them, Nay, my brethren, nay, I pray you, do not so wickedly; seeing that this man has come into my house, 'do not this folly.

*s* Gen. xix. 6, 7. *t* 2 Sam. xiii. 12.

VER. 24. "Behold, here is my daughter, a maiden, and his concubine; them I will bring out now, and "humble ye them, and do with them what seemeth good unto you: but unto this man do not so vile a thing.

*u* Gen. xix. 8. *x* Gen. xxxiv. 2. Deut. xxi. 14.

VER. 25. But the men would not hearken unto him: so the man took his concubine, and brought her forth unto them; and they "knew her, and abused her all the night until the morning: and when the day began to spring, they let her go.

*y* Gen. iv. 1.

*The man took his concubine, and brought her forth.*—The conduct of the Levite in this transaction is utterly inexplicable. His going after her to her father's house would indicate that he still cherished towards her a real affection, and he appears thus far along the journey to have treated her with every kindness. Yet now in the hour of danger apparently to save his own life, he determines to sacrifice her. He suffered her to be brought out and exposed to these fiends in human shape, while he, it would seem, secure from harm, either sits down or lies down in calm indifference to her fate. We infer this from its not being intimated that he made the least inquiry respecting her during the night, but "rose up"—(could it be from his bed?)—"in the morning, and opened the doors of the house, and went out to go his way," as if he did not once think what had become of his unhappy companion, but designed to set forward alone! It would seem that it was only by stumbling upon her lifeless corpse at the door that he was reminded of there being such a person either living or dead. And even admitting he thought her alive as she lay

prostrate on the ground, how unfeeling, how inhuman his address! "Up, and let us be going." Could he thus rudely accost a tender female, who, for his sake, had submitted through the live-long night to the most savage brutalities, if he possessed the common feelings of a man? Suppose he thought her asleep; yet we ask, would he have felt no emotions of surprise, of grief, of pain, to find her sleeping in such a place and in such a posture? Would he not anxiously and tenderly have awakened her, and inquired of her welfare? The man's conduct throughout is a riddle, which we know not how to solve. One thing however is certain. When the attack was made on the house, the duty of the inmates was to have thrown themselves upon the protection of Providence, without yielding an iota to the demands of the detestable ruffians without. If they could not have withstood their violence, but must have been overpowered by superior numbers, they had better have died calling upon God for mercy than to have basely jeopardized the lives of feeble women to appease a ferocious rabble. That would have been the pious chivalry of true Israelites. The probability we think is, that Omnipotence would in some way have interposed for their rescue.

VER. 26. Then came the woman in the dawning of the day, and fell down at the door of the man's house where her lord *was*, till it was light.

VER. 27. And her lord rose up in the morning, and opened the doors of the house, and went out to go his way: and, behold, the woman his concubine was fallen down *at* the door of the house, and her hands *were* upon the threshold.

*Was fallen down at the door of the house.*—While we cannot but be moved with deep compassion in view of the hard lot and the miserable end of this unhappy woman, yet the righteous judgment of God is not to be overlooked in this her closing scene. She had sinned, and she now suffers. Though her father and her husband had both forgiven her, yet God remembered against her her fault when she was consigned to the hands of these ruthless monsters. We may hope, however, though it be almost hoping against hope, that her soul was touched with penitence at the eleventh hour, and that when she fell with outstretched arms upon the threshold it was with a fervent supplication for the Divine forgiveness. But the justice of God in this melancholy event does by no means extenuate the enormous wickedness of the men of Gibeah in executing it, than which nothing could be more barbarous and inhuman.

VER. 28. And he said unto her, Up, and let us be going. But <sup>a</sup> none answered. Then the man took her *up* upon an ass, and the man rose up, and gat him unto his place.

<sup>a</sup> Chap. xx. 5.

VER. 29. And when he was come into his house, he took a knife, and laid hold on his concubine,

and <sup>a</sup> divided her, *together* with her bones, into twelve pieces, and sent her into all the coast of Israel.

<sup>a</sup> Chap. xx. 6. See 1 Sam. xi. 7.

*Divided her—into twelve pieces, and sent her, &c.*—It is to be presumed that with the pieces he sent to each tribe a circumstantial account of the barbarity of the men of Gibeah, which had deprived him of his wife. To our ideas there is something peculiarly shocking in the procedure, but it was doubtless in accordance with the notions of the times, and as there was no supreme magistrate to whom to appeal for redress, it was probably the most effectual method of rousing the nation to take up the Levite's cause as one that concerned them all. It was a measure, in fact, that seems to have been considered as putting the twelve tribes under an anathema, and solemnly binding them, on pain of being themselves dealt with in the same manner, to avenge the horrible outrage. The whole nation accordingly instantly understood it as a universal anathema, and entered into an indissoluble covenant to see justice done to the injured Levite. This appears from the fact of the tribes actually taking up arms, as they did—from their swearing before the ark not to return to their tents or into their houses, till they had punished the offenders, (chap. xx. 8, 9.)—from their putting to the sword all that remained in Gibeah, both man and beast, and burning all the cities and towns of Benjamin, (chap. xx. 48.)—from their swearing with an imprecation not to give their daughters in marriage to the sons of Benjamin, and cursing him who should do so, (chap. xxi. 1—18.)—and finally, from their engaging themselves by a terrible oath to kill every Israelite who should not take arms against the Benjamites, (chap. xxi. 5.) These are all marks of a solemn act of anathema, and in no other light can the transaction be rightly viewed. See "Scripture Illustrations," p. 146.

VER. 30. And it was so, that all that saw it said, There was no such deed done nor seen from the day that the children of Israel came up out of the land of Egypt unto this day: consider of it, <sup>b</sup> take advice, and speak *your minds*.

<sup>b</sup> Chap. xx. 7. Prov. xlii. 10.

*There was no such deed done nor seen, &c.*—Its enormity was unparalleled, and they were struck dumb and confounded, as it were, at the bare mention of it. It seems accordingly to have passed into a proverb, "They have deeply corrupted themselves, as in the days of Gibeah," (Hos. ix. 9.) *Consider of it, take advice, speak your minds.*—Heb. "put it to yourselves, take counsel upon it, and speak." This was the prelude to the council held and the measures adopted, which are recited in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER XX.

VER. 1. THEN <sup>a</sup> all the children of Israel went out, and the congregation was gathered to-

gether as one man, from <sup>b</sup>Dan even to Beersheba, with the land of Gilead, unto the LORD <sup>c</sup>in Mizpeh.

<sup>a</sup> Deut. xiii. 12. Josh. xxii. 12. Chap. xxi. 5. 1 Sam. xi. 7.

<sup>b</sup> Chap. xviii. 29. 1 Sam. iii. 20. 2 Sam. iii. 10; xxiv. 2.

<sup>c</sup> Judg. x. 17; xi. 11. 1 Sam. vii. 5; x. 17.

*From Dan even to Beersheba, with the land of Gilead.*—From the utmost borders of the land in every direction. By the land of Gilead is meant the trans-Jordanic region, where were planted the tribes of Reuben and Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh. The convention seems not to have been summoned together by any superintending head, but by the consent and agreement, as it were, of one common heart, prompted by a holy zeal for the Lord of hosts, and the honour of Israel. *Unto the Lord in Mizpeh.*—The usual import of the phrase יְהוָה אֵל יִמְצֵחַ “to the Lord,” is the same with לִפְנֵי יְהוָה “before the Lord,” *i. e.* before the tabernacle, or in the presence of the ark of the covenant, where God was wont to be inquired of by his people. But as the ark was now at Shiloh, and not at Mizpeh, it has been supposed by many commentators that the phrase “unto or before the Lord,” may signify simply meeting in the name of the Lord, to consult him and offer up prayers and supplications. But although it is true that God is wherever his people are piously assembled in his name, yet so uniform throughout the Scriptures is the sense of the phrase given above, that we are averse to departing from it in this instance. By comparing ver. 18, it would appear that they did not immediately resort to the tabernacle, but assembled first at Mizpeh and thence went up to the house of the Lord either at Shiloh or Bethel. The expression, however, “were gathered unto the Lord,” is warranted by the fact, that it formed a part of their plan to consult the oracle in reference to their present expedition. The Mizpeh here mentioned was a place in the borders of Judah and Benjamin, and therefore sometimes spoken of as belonging to the one and sometimes to the other. (Josh. xv. 38; xviii. 26.) It was but a short distance from Shiloh.

VER. 2. And the chief of all the people, *even* of all the tribes of Israel, presented themselves in the assembly of the people of God, four hundred thousand footmen <sup>a</sup> that drew sword.

<sup>a</sup> Chap. viii. 10.

*The chief of all the people, even of all the tribes of Israel.*—The original exhibits a very remarkable phraseology: “The corners (פִּינּוֹת *pinnoth*) of the people, all the tribes of Israel,” where the “corners,” or chiefs, of the people are identified with the people themselves, instead of being distinguished from them, as is erroneously done in our translation by the gratuitous insertion of the word “of” before “all the tribes.” This is evident from its being immediately said that they were assembled to the number of four hundred thousand, which certainly cannot be meant of the chiefs alone. See on chap. x. 18. The leaders of a community, as the Scriptures represent go-

vernment, are merely the executive organs of the mass of the people, having no interest or will separate from theirs. The term “corners” here employed is a metaphor taken from the corner-stones of a building, which are its main support. What these corner-stones are to a material fabric, the chiefs of the tribes were to the tribes themselves. Comp. 1 Sam. xiv. 38. Isa. xix. 13. *In the assembly of the people of God.*—Heb. כְּהִקָּה Gr. ἐκκλησία, the usual word for church, as if from the object of their meeting they had convened ecclesiastically, or as a religious assembly. This is confirmed from the qualifying adjunct, “people of God.” Though the occasion was a very exciting one, and they were in danger of giving way to unhallowed passion, yet they did not forget that they came together as the people of God, and were bound to demean themselves accordingly. Christians sometimes lose sight of this in their public assemblies, and consequently act very much out of character.

VER. 3. Now the children of Benjamin heard that the children of Israel were gone up to Mizpeh. Then said the children of Israel, Tell us, how was this wickedness?

*The children of Benjamin heard, &c.*—But they paid little or no attention to it. Though they had probably received a formal summons like the rest of their brethren, yet they heeded it not; they took no steps towards healing the breach that had occurred, and preventing the consequences that ensued; on the contrary, they were rather hardened and exasperated than otherwise by the proceedings of the other tribes. *Then said the children of Israel, Tell us, &c.*—Heb. “tell ye us,” pl. a general challenge to any one, or to all who were acquainted with the facts, to come forward and testify to them.

VER. 4. And the Levite, the husband of the woman that was slain, answered and said, “I came into Gibeah that *belongeth* to Benjamin, I and my concubine, to lodge.

<sup>e</sup> Chap. xix. 15.

*And the Levite.*—Heb. “and the man, the Levite.” He and his servant, and the old man his host were undoubtedly all present, prepared to unite in the same statement. The Levite’s narration of facts, made “without preface or passion,” is remarkable for its brevity and directness. He speaks like a man who felt that he had no need to employ oratorical arts to work upon the feelings of his hearers and excite their just indignation. The bare recital of the facts themselves would be sufficient.

VER. 5. <sup>f</sup> And the men of Gibeah rose against me, and beset the house round about upon me by night, *and* thought to have slain me: <sup>g</sup> and my concubine have they forced, that she is dead.

<sup>f</sup> Chap. xix. 22.

<sup>g</sup> Chap. xix. 25, 26.

*Thought to have slain me.*—In case I should refuse to accede to their vile wishes. *Forced.*—Heb. "humbled."

VER. 6. And <sup>h</sup>I took my concubine, and cut her in pieces, and sent her throughout all the country of the inheritance of Israel: for they <sup>i</sup> have committed lewdness and folly in Israel.

<sup>h</sup> Chap. xix. 29.

<sup>i</sup> Josh. vii. 15.

VER. 7. Behold, ye *are* all children of Israel; <sup>k</sup> give here your advice and counsel.

<sup>k</sup> Chap. xix. 30.

VER. 8. And all the people arose as one man, saying, We will not any of us go to his tent, neither will we any of us turn into his house:

*We will not any of us go to his tent.*—We will have satisfaction for this wickedness before we return home.

VER. 9. But now this *shall be* the thing which we will do to Gibeah: *we will go up* by lot against it;

VER. 10. And we will take ten men of a hundred throughout all the tribes of Israel, and a hundred of a thousand, and a thousand out of ten thousand, to fetch victual for the people, that they may do, when they come to Gibeah of Benjamin, according to all the folly that they have wrought in Israel.

*To fetch victual for the people.*—A tenth part of them were selected to provide food and forage for the army, which might thus be wholly occupied in punishing the inhabitants of Gibeah.

VER. 11. So all the men of Israel were gathered against the city, knit together as one man.

VER. 12. <sup>l</sup> And the tribes of Israel sent men through all the tribe of Benjamin, saying, What wickedness *is* this that is done among you?

<sup>l</sup> Deut. xiii. 14. Josh. xxii. 13, 16.

VER. 13. Now therefore deliver us the men, <sup>m</sup> the children of Belial, which *are* in Gibeah, that we may put them to death, and <sup>n</sup> put away evil from Israel. But the children of Benjamin would not hearken to the voice of their brethren the children of Israel:

<sup>m</sup> Deut. xiii. 13. Chap. xix. 22. <sup>n</sup> Deut. xvii. 12.

*The children of Benjamin would not hearken.*—Thus in effect bringing the whole tribe to be partakers of the guilt of the men of Gibeah. By thus refusing to comply with the just and reasonable requisition of their brethren they virtually said; "We will stand by them in what they have done; nay, we would ourselves have acted the same part had we been present." It is difficult to conceive a case of more hardened and aggravated depravity than this. "Who would not have looked that the hands of Benjamin

should have been first on Gibeah; and that they should have readily sent the heads of the offenders for a second service after the fragments of the concubine? But now instead of punishing the sin, they patronize the actors, and will rather die in resisting justice, than live and prosper in furthering it! The abetting of evil is worse than the commission; this may be on infirmity, but that must be on resolution. Easy punishment is too much favour to sin; connivance is much worse; but the defence of it, and that unto blood, is intolerable."—*Bp. Hall.*

VER. 14. But the children of Benjamin gathered themselves together out of the cities unto Gibeah, to go out to battle against the children of Israel.

VER. 15. And the children of Benjamin were numbered at that time out of the cities twenty and six thousand men that drew sword, besides the inhabitants of Gibeah, which were numbered seven hundred chosen men.

VER. 16. Among all this people *there were* seven hundred chosen men <sup>o</sup> left-handed; every one could sling stones at a hair-breadth, and not miss.

<sup>o</sup> Chap. iii. 15. I Chron. xii. 2.

*Left-handed.*—Heb. "shut or obstructed of the right-hand." See note on chap. iii. 15. It is somewhat of a curious circumstance, that Benjamin, which signifies the son of the right-hand, should have had so much of a left-handed posterity. *And not miss.*—Heb. יָשָׁר וְיָמִין. Gr. και οὐκ ἐξαρτανοντες, and not sin: thus affording a clue to the true import of the word sin, viz. missing the mark, erring from one's scope. This is well expressed in the New Testament by *αμαρτανω*, from a negative, and *μαρτω*, to hit the mark. 'To love, serve, and enjoy God is "our being's end and aim," which the sinner in his course of transgression, misses, and too often, alas! to his final undoing,

VER. 17. And the men of Israel, beside Benjamin, were numbered four hundred thousand men that drew sword: all these *were* men of war.

VER. 18. And the children of Israel arose, and <sup>p</sup> went up to the house of God, and <sup>q</sup> asked counsel of God, and said, Which of us shall go up first to the battle against the children of Benjamin? And the LORD said, Judah *shall go up* first.

<sup>p</sup> Ver. 21, 26. <sup>q</sup> Num. xxvii. 21. Chap. i. 1.

*The children of Israel arose and went to the house of God.*—Heb. בֵּית־אֱלֹהִים Bethel, which some expositors take to be the place so denominated, supposing that the ark had been removed thither on this occasion from Shiloh. And it must be admitted that there is some force in the remark of Rosenmüller, that the habitation of the ark is elsewhere uniformly called בֵּית־אֱלֹהִים and in no other instance בֵּית־אֱלֹהִים as here. Still, as we can see no sufficient reason for such

a transfer of the tabernacle at this time, we abide by the sense given in our translation, and suppose that the "house of God" at Shiloh is intended. This place was very near to Mizpeh, where they were now assembled, and the enterprise in which they were now engaged was altogether too important to allow them to think of engaging in it without previously taking counsel of God. But the defective manner in which this was done will appear very strikingly in the sequel. *Which of us shall go up first, &c.*—It will be observed that they do not ask whether they should go up at all, which undoubtedly ought to have been their first inquiry on an occasion of so much importance. But, confiding in the justness of their cause, they take it for granted that all is right in resorting to arms against their brethren, and merely inquire who should take the lead in the expedition, about which it is not unlikely there had been some contention in the assembly. For wise reasons the Most High was pleased to leave them to learn their error, or at least their precipitance in this respect, by the event. He says in reply, not as our translation has it, "Judah (shall go up) first," but simply יהודה בראשית "Judah (is) in the precedence," *q. d.* "Judah has already (chap. i. 2.) been constituted leader of the tribes, the pre-eminence in every important point has been before assigned to that tribe; of what use, then, is inquiry on that head now?" This answer, instead of being construed as implying the divine approbation of their proceedings, is rather to be regarded as a sovereign connivance in their rashness. Designing undoubtedly to bring about the punishment of the mass of the people for their guilty toleration of the idolatry established in Dan, he is pleased for the present to "choose their delusions." It may be admitted that, apart from their delinquency in sparing the Danites, they had justly incurred defeat by their precipitate entrance upon the war; but God, in his righteous providence, often makes a lesser sin the occasion of punishing a greater, and yet no iniquity can be laid to his charge. A decaying tree, which has withstood the violence of many a tempest, may at last be blown down by the merest breath of wind. Let no sinner, from long forbearance, promise himself final impunity. "Man knoweth not his time; as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare; so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them."

VER. 19. And the children of Israel rose up in the morning, and encamped against Gibeah.

VER. 20. And the men of Israel went out to battle against Benjamin; and the men of Israel put themselves in array to fight against them at Gibeah.

VER. 21. And the children of Benjamin came forth out of Gibeah, and destroyed down to the ground of the Israelites that day twenty and two thousand men.

*r* Gen. xlix. 27.

VER. 22. And the people, the men of Israel, en-

couraged themselves, and set their battle again in array in the place where they put themselves in array the first day.

*The men of Israel encouraged themselves.*—Heb. "strengthened themselves;" *i. e.* assumed fresh courage. Attributing the recent defeat to some misconduct which they conceive themselves able to remedy, they are altogether sanguine in view of the result of another engagement. *In the place where they put themselves in array the first day.*—Determined, it would seem, to retrieve the disgrace of their failure on the very spot where it had been incurred. Should they succeed in a second conflict, under the same circumstances, it would effectually wipe away the ignominy contracted by the issue of the first.

VER. 23. ("And the children of Israel went up and wept before the LORD until even, and asked counsel of the LORD, saying, Shall I go up again to battle against the children of Benjamin my brother? And the LORD said, Go up against him.)

*s* Ver. 26, 27.

*Went up and wept before the Lord.*—Yet all their arrangements for battle had been previously made, and they seem now to have consulted God, as some men consult the Scriptures, to establish a previously formed opinion. It was not to learn their duty in the first instance, but to obtain sanction for a measure upon which they had already resolved. They should have deferred making their preparations till after they had made their confession and taken counsel. Their tears and lamentations under these circumstances availed them nothing; at least, did not secure them from defeat; and as, in their self-confidence, they made no inquiry as to success, nor invoked assistance, God gave them no promise on that score. *And the Lord said, Go up against him.*—As if he had said, "You have good cause for going up against them, they have justly rendered themselves liable to punishment;" and yet the result plainly proves that he did not design hereby to convey to them any intimation that his blessing or protection would accompany them so long as they were not duly humbled and penitent for their sins, and thus prepared for success. The permission, therefore, to go up was similar to that given to Balaam to go with the elders of Moab—a mere tolerance, not an approbation, of the step, as viewed in connexion with the motives by which it was prompted. Seeing them resolved to go forward at all events, he was pleased to exercise his prerogative, and return to them an answer apparently coinciding with their wishes, and capable of being so understood, as to mislead them, in case the perverseness of their hearts should put such a construction upon it. But there was no necessity for their misinterpreting the oracle, and God is still to be accounted righteous, though his words or his ways may prove an occasion of stumbling to those whose hearts are already predisposed to it. He is under no obligation to correct the erroneous impressions of those who "draw near to him with their lips while their hearts are far from him."

VER. 24. And the children of Israel came near against the children of Benjamin the second day.

VER. 25. And Benjamin went forth against them out of Gibeah the second day, and destroyed down to the ground of the children of Israel again eighteen thousand men; all these drew the sword.

† Ver. 21.

*Destroyed—again eighteen thousand men.*—The remarks already made above will serve to throw light upon the reasons of this disastrous issue of a cause in itself good. God had ulterior designs to effect beyond the merited punishment of the Benjamites. He had great moral lessons to teach, not to the men of that age only, but to the most distant generations. Especially may we suppose that he proposed by such a result to impress upon our minds the conviction, that the success of any cause depends, not solely upon its intrinsic goodness, but also upon its being conducted with a right spirit and by proper means. Israel had ample grounds for proceeding to extremities against their offending brethren, and yet from not going forward in an acceptable manner they met with a terrible rebuke when they least expected it; and not only so, for a time the cause of the wicked seemed to triumph. The prophet, (Hosea x. 9,) in allusion to this event, says, "The battle in Gibeah against the children of iniquity did not overtake them," *i. e.* did not at first overtake them, and any one who should have witnessed the two defeats of Israel would have been ready to conclude that the cause for which victory had decided was right. But we are not to judge from events. Righteousness is not always triumphant in this world. It may be oppressed, and the supporters of it for a long time foiled in their labours and apparently trodden under foot; but, though cast down, they shall not be destroyed; a day is at hand when God will vindicate his own cause, and evince the equity of all his dispensations. In the meantime let us make the unalterable word of God the rule of our judgment as well as of our actions, and we can never go far amiss.

VER. 26. Then all the children of Israel, and all the people, "went up, and came unto the house of God, and wept, and sat there before the LORD, and fasted that day until even, and offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings before the LORD.

¶ Ver. 18

*Went up, and came unto the house of God, and wept, &c.*—Confounded by these repeated strokes of adverse Providence, they are led at length to "accomplish a more diligent search" into the true causes of the sad disaster which had befallen them. They see now that they had trusted too much to the goodness of their cause and the superiority of their numbers. They are now convinced that they ought to have begun at the outset with repentance and reformation, with solemn sacrifices and earnest supplications, instead of rushing forward with unhumiliated hearts,

reckless of their own apostasies, and prompted by a zeal for God in which was largely mingled the "strange fire" of human resentment. The consequence is, that in deep affliction they now compass God's altar, abasing their souls under the sense of conscious guilt, rejecting every vain confidence, bewailing not so much their losses as the unworthiness which had caused them, and devoutly imploring that aid which they had before so rashly taken for granted. This was the right method of procedure, and the happy fruits of their weeping and fasting begin at once to appear. Being brought to a proper frame of spirit they are prepared to receive the blessing, and the Most High accordingly gives them positive assurance of success; "Go up, for to-morrow I will deliver them into thine hand." Whenever a soul, in true humiliation, is brought low before God, the end of its calamities is at hand; the day of deliverance has already dawned. *Sat there before the Lord.*—Implying either that they assumed the usual posture of mourners, (Lam. i. 1; Psa. cxxxvii. 1,) or that they abode there, as the same phrase is rendered, (chap. xxi. 12,) during the whole day, in the exercise of unfeigned contrition of spirit, or perhaps more properly both. Every thing in the phraseology conveys the idea that their repentance was deep, thorough, and sincere. Extraordinary cases require extraordinary acts of self-abasement and godly sorrow. Men are often but little aware how deep their spiritual wounds need to be probed in order to effect a perfect cure. We are apt to heal the hurts of our souls too slightly. Probably one great design of this narrative was to teach us that God often sees beneath a fair exterior an amount of corruption, which an ordinary or superficial repentance will not avail to remove.

VER. 27. And the children of Israel inquired of the LORD, (for <sup>†</sup> the ark of the covenant of God was there in those days

¶ Josh. xviii. 1. 1 Sam. iv. 3, 4.

VER. 28. <sup>¶</sup> And Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, <sup>†</sup> stood before it in those days,) saying, Shall I yet again go out to battle against the children of Benjamin my brother, or shall I cease? And the LORD said, Go up; for to-morrow I will deliver them into thy hand.

‡ Josh. xxiv. 33.      § Deut. x. 8; xviii. 5.

*Phinehas—stood before it in those days.*—Or, Heb. "before him," *i. e.* God. "Standing," or "standing before," any one, is a scriptural term for ministering, as appears from Deut. x. 8; xviii. 7; Prov. xxii. 29; Jer. lii. 12, compared with 2 Kings xxv. 8, in the former of which the original for "served" is "stood before." This was the same Phinehas who so remarkably signaled his zeal for the glory of God on a former occasion. (Numb. xxv.) Had this war occurred after the death of Samson, Phinehas must now have been upwards of three hundred years old; but it fell out between the death of Joshua and the first judge.

VER. 29. And Israel "set liers in wait round about Gibeah.

a Josh. viii. 4.

*Israel set liers in wait.*—Notwithstanding the express promise which had been given them of success, yet they expected it not without the use of the proper means. Divine assurances rightly received, instead of leading to remissness and presumption, will never fail to inspire every prudent precaution. The management of the stratagem here employed is very largely described in the ensuing verses, but it is sufficient to say that in its general features it was very similar to that employed with so much success by Joshua in the taking of Ai, (Josh. chap. viii. 1—29.) "When God hath used Benjamin to execute his justice against Israel for not punishing idolatry; he then useth Israel to punish Benjamin, for not delivering Gibeah up to justice."—*Lightfoot.*

VER. 30. And the children of Israel went up against the children of Benjamin on the third day, and put themselves in array against Gibeah, as at other times.

VER. 31. And the children of Benjamin went out against the people, and were drawn away from the city; and they began to smite of the people, and kill, as at other times, in the highways, of which one goeth up to the house of God, and the other to Gibeah in the field, about thirty men of Israel.

*Were drawn away from the city.*—By the feigned flight of a portion of the invaders. *Began to smite of the people, and kill, as at other times.*—Heb. "began to smite of the people wounded, as at other times;" i. e. to smite so as mortally to wound them; a Hebraic idiom of not uncommon occurrence. See on chap. xv. 19. *In the highways.*—That is, perhaps, "in the meeting of the ways." The subsequent phrase, "in the field," instead of being connected with Gibeah, ought, we imagine, to be connected with "highways," implying that this junction of ways or roads was at considerable distance from the city of Gibeah. It is difficult to conceive what is meant by "Gibeah in the field," as the city so called was undoubtedly situated on a hill, and we have no intimation of any other place of the same name situated "in the field."

VER. 32. And the children of Benjamin said, They are smitten down before us, as at the first. But the children of Israel said, Let us flee, and draw them from the city unto the highways.

VER. 33. And all the men of Israel rose up out of their place, and put themselves in array at Baal-tamar: and the liers in wait of Israel came forth out of their places, even out of the meadows of Gibeah.

*Out of the meadows of Gibeah.*—Heb. מבעדו גבע

more properly rendered "caves of Gibeah;" for how could an ambuscade be placed in meadows? The details of the narrative, (included ver. 31—43,) are extremely perplexed, and we despair of being able by any explanation to simplify them. The general drift of the writer, however, is evident, and to understand that is perhaps sufficient.

VER. 34. And there came against Gibeah ten thousand chosen men out of all Israel, and the battle was sore: but they knew not that evil was near them.

b Josh. viii. 14. Isa. xlvi. 11.

VER. 35. And the Lord smote Benjamin before Israel: and the children of Israel destroyed of the Benjamites that day twenty and five thousand and a hundred men: all these drew the sword.

*The Lord smote, &c.*—In this verse the sacred writer relates the event of the battle in general terms. In the sequel he resumes the story, giving the particulars of the battle, and the consequences of the victory more in detail.

VER. 36. So the children of Benjamin saw that they were smitten: for the men of Israel gave place to the Benjamites, because they trusted unto the liers in wait which they had set beside Gibeah.

c Josh. viii. 15.

VER. 37. And the liers in wait hasted, and rushed upon Gibeah; and the liers in wait drew themselves along, and smote all the city with the edge of the sword.

d Josh. viii. 19.

*Drew themselves along.*—Extended themselves. We have only to conceive of a dense mass of men hitherto confined to a narrow compass suddenly stretching themselves out in a long train, and rapidly urging their way to the city.

VER. 38. Now there was an appointed sign between the men of Israel and the liers in wait, that they should make a great flame with smoke rise up out of the city.

*A great flame with smoke.*—Heb. "a great elevation of smoke." See also ver. 40.

VER. 39. And when the men of Israel retired in the battle, Benjamin began to smite and kill of the men of Israel about thirty persons: for they said, Surely they are smitten down before us, as in the first battle.

VER. 40. But when the flame began to arise up out of the city with a pillar of smoke, the Benjamites looked behind them, and, behold, the flame of the city ascended up to heaven.

e Josh. viii. 20.

*The flame of the city ascended up.*—Heb. “the whole, the entireness of the city ascended.” The general sense, but not the exact meaning of the Hebrew, is preserved in our translation.

VER. 41. And when the men of Israel turned again, the men of Benjamin were amazed: for they saw that evil was come upon them.

VER. 42. Therefore they turned *their backs* before the men of Israel unto the way of the wilderness; but the battle overtook them; and then which *came out* of the cities they destroyed in the midst of them.

*Turned their backs before the men of Israel, &c.*—Undoubtedly an erroneous reading. As we read the original, instead of turning their backs, they turned their faces towards the enemy. Seeing their city on fire, and all hope cut off in that quarter, they again face the enemy, with a determination, if possible, to cut a passage through them, and escape to the wilderness. But while attempting this, the ambush from the city (here, according to a Hebrew idiom, chap. xii. 7, called “cities,”) fell upon them in the rear, so that they were properly said to be “destroyed in the midst of them,” i. e. between the two divisions.

VER. 43. Thus they enclosed the Benjamites round about, and chased them, and trode them down with ease over against Gibeah toward the sun-rising.

VER. 44. And there fell of Benjamin eighteen thousand men; all these *were* men of valour.

VER. 45. And they turned and fled toward the wilderness unto the rock of Rimmon: and they gleaned of them in the highways five thousand men, and pursued hard after them unto Gidom, and slew two thousand men of them.

f Josh. xv. 32.

*They turned and fled towards the wilderness unto the rock of Rimmon.*—A small remnant escaped, notwithstanding every effort to prevent it, and fled to the rock of Rimmon, supposed to lie in the wilderness of Judah, about twenty-six miles south-west of Jerusalem. *Gleaned of them in the highways.*—Cut off all the stragglers that they found scattered here and there over the country. The metaphor is highly expressive, implying that they were cut off as clean as a field or a vineyard that has been gleaned after the harvest or the vintage has been gathered in.

VER. 46. So that all which fell that day of Benjamin were twenty and five thousand men that drew the sword; all these *were* men of valour.

*Twenty and five thousand.*—The additional hundred mentioned ver. 35 is here omitted, and merely the round number retained. There lacks also another thousand to make out the whole force of the Benjamites, as given ver. 15, but these are

supposed to have fallen in the two former battles, and so are omitted here, where he speaks only of those slain in the third day.

VER. 47. *g* But six hundred men turned and fled to the wilderness unto the rock Rimmon, and abode in the rock Rimmon four months.

g Chap. xxi. 13.

*The rock Rimmon.*—This was doubtless some strong rocky hold or fastness, but where situated is uncertain. It is probable, however, that it was near, and took its name from, the village of Rimmon, mentioned by Eusebius, fifteen miles north from Jerusalem. It appears that rocks are still resorted to in the East as places of security, and some of them are even capable of sustaining a siege. De la Roque says, that the Grand Seigneur, wishing to seize the person of the Emir, (Fakaddin, prince of the Druses,) gave orders to the pacha to take him prisoner; he accordingly came in search of him with a new army, in the district of Cheuf, which is part of mount Lebanon, wherein is the village of Gesin, and close to it the rock which served for a retreat to the emir. The pacha pressed the emir so closely, that this unfortunate prince was obliged to shut himself up in a cleft of a great rock with a small number of his officers. The pacha besieged them for several months, and was going to blow up the rock with a mine, when the emir capitulated.—*Bagster.*

VER. 48. And the men of Israel turned again upon the children of Benjamin, and smote them with the edge of the sword, as well the men of every city, as the beast, and all that came to hand: also they set on fire all the cities that they came to.

*Smote them with the edge of the sword, &c.*—Probably the excessive severity of the slaughter on this occasion, considered as the act of Israel, cannot be justified; and so they themselves seem to have viewed it after their passions had had time to cool. (Chap. xxi. 3.) The crime of the men of Gibeah was indeed great, but it does not appear to have been sufficient to warrant the extirpation of a whole tribe. Considered, however, as the sovereign allotment of Jehovah we must acquiesce in it as a dispensation to the justice of which we can make no reply.

## CHAPTER XXI.

VER. 1. Now “the men of Israel had sworn in Mizpeh, saying, There shall not any of us give his daughter unto Benjamin to wife.

a Chap. xx. 1.

*The men of Israel, &c.*—At the commencement of the war, when assembled at Mizpeh. We have no previous account of this oath, but it is plainly of a piece with the general precipitancy and rashness which characterised their conduct on this occasion, and serves still farther to ac-

count for the sad discomfiture which marked the outset of their enterprise. The oath, which, as appears from ver. 18, was attended with an execration, was not probably made with the design of extirpating the tribe, for it supposes that some of the Benjamites might survive, and if so, they might marry the surviving women of their own tribe; but it merely expresses a general determination to treat the actors and abettors of the horrid deed perpetrated at Gibeah, as they would treat the worst of the devoted Canaanites, with whom they were utterly forbidden to intermarry. Their own subsequent conduct, however, as related in the present chapter, proves that they were sensible of having gone too far, and reminds us of the fact, that when our spirits are exasperated we too often say and do that which in our calmer moments we wish unsaid and undone. Nothing more requires the controlling influence of the wisdom which is from above, than the impulses of an ardent zeal. "There may be over-doing in well-doing. That is no good divinity which swallows up humanity."—*Henry.*

VER. 2. And the people came <sup>b</sup> to the house of God, and abode there till even before God, and lifted up their voices, and wept sore;

<sup>b</sup> Chap. xx. 18, 26.

*Lifted up their voices, and wept sore.*—They found but melancholy matter for triumph in their recent victory. It was an event not to be celebrated by the voice of joy and praise, but by that of lamentation and mourning and woe. Having satisfied their revenge, they now experience the truth of the remark, that "strong passions make work for repentance." Still they did well in appealing to God in their extremity. His infinite compassion allows us to have recourse to him to repair the breaches which our own folly and infatuation have made. Provided we are truly penitent in view of the past, we may say to him of the desolations we have wrought, "This ruin be under thy hand," *i. e.* under thy remedial, thy restoring, hand.

VER. 3. And said, O LORD God of Israel, why is this come to pass in Israel, that there should be to-day one tribe lacking in Israel?

*Why is this come to pass in Israel, &c.*—This, if we regard the mere letter, has somewhat the air of irreverent remonstrance or expostulation with God, for suffering such a calamity to befall his people; but considering the penitent frame of mind in which they were now assembled, we know not how to attribute to them so gross an impiety as this interpretation would suppose. We take it rather as an expression of mingled self-reproach and supplication, equivalent to saying, "Alas! how is it possible that we could have been guilty of such an outrage! that we should have uttered a vow involving such a necessity as the virtual extinction of a tribe! O Lord God, is there no way of extrication from the dilemma in which we have so thoughtlessly ensnared our-

selfes?" The prayer evidently implies the belief on their part, that it would be more offensive in the eyes of Heaven if they should persist in adhering to their rash purpose, than if they should renounce it, and yet the burden of a solemn obligation rests upon their consciences, from which they dare not deem themselves released except by a divine dispensation. See note on Josh. ix. 15.

VER. 4. And it came to pass on the morrow, that the people rose early, and <sup>c</sup> built there an altar, and offered burnt-offerings, and peace-offerings.

<sup>c</sup> 2 Sam. xxiv. 25.

*Built there an altar.*—There was undoubtedly an altar already established at Shiloh for the ordinary round of services, but the probability is, that they now built one of larger dimensions than the other, in order to accommodate the greater multitude of sacrifices which they proposed to offer on this occasion. A similar measure, we learn 1 Kings viii. 64, was adopted by Solomon for a similar reason. The motives by which they were governed made the step lawful. The altar was erected, not in competition, but in communion, with that already established at the door of the tabernacle.

VER. 5. And the children of Israel said, Who is there among all the tribes of Israel that came not up with the congregation unto the LORD? <sup>d</sup> For they had made a great oath concerning him that came not up to the LORD to Mizpeh, saying, He shall surely be put to death.

<sup>d</sup> Chap. v. 23.

*Had made a great oath, &c.*—That is, an oath attended with fearful execration, an anathema, against him who should fall under its effects. They now begin to perceive a clue to guide them out of the labyrinth of perplexity in which they were previously involved. Whether this expedient was divinely suggested, we are not informed. *He shall surely be put to death.*—A severe sentence, but perhaps just under the circumstances. Indifference to so aggravated a crime as that of the men of Gibeah showed an extremely depraved state of moral feeling, and their brethren could not but look upon their refusal to aid in bringing the offenders to condign punishment as a virtual sanction of the deed. They felt bound, therefore, to proceed against them just as if they had personally shared in the guilt of the heinous transaction. Yet we know not that the actual execution of their oath in the indiscriminate slaughter of men, married women, and children, is to be any more excused than the previous unsparing destruction of the Benjamites. Without presuming to denominate the passions by which they were prompted "cursed," as did Jacob the spirit of Simeon and Levi in their conduct towards the Shechemites, we may still say in the patriarch's language of "their anger, it was fierce, and their wrath it was cruel."

VER. 6. And the children of Israel repented them for Benjamin their brother, and said, There is one tribe cut off from Israel this day.

*There is one tribe cut off from Israel this day.*—Likely to be cut off; that will be cut off, unless some measures are taken to prevent it. For it appears from the next verse, though nowhere expressly asserted, that they had destroyed all the women of Benjamin, and as only the small remnant of six hundred men remained, who had fled to the rock of Rimmon, there was evident danger of the extinction of the whole tribe. But this was an event not to be thought of, if it were possible to prevent it. "God had taken care of every tribe; their number twelve was that which they were known by; every tribe had his station appointed in the camp, and his stone in the high priest's breastplate; every tribe had his blessing both from Jacob and Moses, and it would be an intolerable reproach to them, if they should drop any out of this illustrious jury, and lose one out of twelve; especially Benjamin, the youngest, who was especially dear to Jacob their common ancestor, and whom all the rest ought to have been in a particular manner tender of. Benjamin is not; what then will become of Jacob? Benjamin becomes a Benoni; the son of the right hand, a son of sorrow!"—*Henry*.

VER. 7. How shall we do for wives for them that remain, seeing we have sworn by the LORD, that we will not give them of our daughters to wives?

VER. 8. And they said, What one *is there* of the tribes of Israel that came not up to Mizpeh to the LORD? And, behold, there came none to the camp from *ᶜ*Jabesh-gilead to the assembly.

*ᶜ* 1 Sam. xi. 1; xxxi. 11.

*There came none to the camp from Jabesh-gilead.*—This was a city of the half-tribe of Manasseh, east of Jordan, situated on a hill near Mount Gilead, about fifteen miles east of Jordan, and about an equal distance south of Gadara. It was not far from the lake of Genesaret. Eusebius and Jerome say that it was a large town in their time, standing upon a hill six miles south of Pella, in the way to Gerasa, now Djerash. The Wadi Yabes, mentioned by Burckhardt, which empties itself into the Jordan, in the neighbourhood of Bisan or Bethshan, and upon which Pella was situated, seems to have taken its name from Jabesh. Near this spot therefore we must look for its site; and the place called Kalaut Rabbad seems to correspond very nearly to the spot; though it probably still retains, among the Arabs, its ancient name.—*Bagster*.

VER. 9. For the people were numbered, and, behold, *there were* none of the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead there.

VER. 10. And the congregation sent thither twelve thousand men of the valiantest, and commanded them, saying, *f*Go and smite the

inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead, with the edge of the sword, with the women and the children.

*f* Ver. 5. Chap. v. 23. 1 Sam. xi. 7.

*Sent thither twelve thousand men of the valiantest.*—Heb. "of the sons of might, or prowess." It is seriously to be questioned whether they were justifiable in resolving upon such a summary mode of vengeance, without any previous inquiry, or giving them any opportunity of defence. The presumption, it is true, was decidedly against the men of Jabesh-gilead, yet it is still possible that they might have been able to plead some extenuating circumstances in their behalf, and if so, they certainly should have had an opportunity afforded them. But when the passions are vehemently excited, men are prone to be carried beyond all bounds of equity or decorum, and the Israelites in this instance appear to have committed a second crime to repair the consequences of a first.

VER. 11. And this *is* the thing that ye shall do, *ᶑ*Ye shall utterly destroy every male, and every woman that hath lain by man.

*ᶑ* Numb. xxxi. 17.

*That hath lain by man.*—Heb. "knowing, or having experience of the lying by man." This order excepted of course the virgins from its effects. They were perhaps influenced in this by the precedent recorded Numb. xxxi. 17, 18, where Moses when he sent the same number of men to avenge the Lord upon Midian, gave it in charge, as here, that all the married women should be slain with their husbands, but that the virgins should be preserved alive. We may suppose the unmarried maidens to have been easily distinguishable by their mode of dress from the married women.

VER. 12. And they found among the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead four hundred young virgins that had known no man by lying with any male: and they brought them unto the camp to *ᶓ*Shiloh, which *is* in the land of Canaan.

*ᶓ* Josh. xviii. 1.

*Four hundred young virgins.*—Heb. "four hundred young women, virgins." Unmarried, but marriageable. It is to be presumed that all other younger females were also spared. *Shiloh which is in the land of Canaan.*—Thus particularly designated, because Jabesh-Gilead was not situated in Canaan Proper, but in the land of Gilead east of Jordan.

VER. 13. And the whole congregation sent *some* to speak to the children of Benjamin *ᶔ*that were in the rock Rimmon, and to call peaceably unto them.

*ᶔ* Chap. xx. 47.

*In the rock Rimmon.*—That is, in a cave in the rock in which they made a fastness, and there vigorously maintained their position. *To call peaceably unto them.*—Heb. "to proclaim peace

unto them." Arab. "saluting them and giving them a pledge." To assure them that their former enmity was now extinguished, and that they might now with safety leave their stronghold. They had escaped the slaughter and been thus far preserved by the special providence of God to prevent the utter extinction of the tribe. Had the Israelites succeeded to the utmost of their wishes, they would have cut them off entirely.

VER. 14. And Benjamin came again at that time; and they gave them wives which they had saved alive of the women of Jabesh-gilead: and yet so they sufficed them not

*Benjamin came again.*—The scanty remnant of the tribe returned from their place of retreat; assured of safety, they came again into the midst of Israel. *Yet so they sufficed them not.*—Heb. "and they found not for them so;" i. e. found not enough; there was still a remainder of two hundred left unsupplied.

VER. 15. And the people <sup>k</sup>repented them for Benjamin, because that the LORD had made a breach in the tribes of Israel.

<sup>k</sup> Ver. 6.

*The people repented them.*—Rather, "commiserated, or were grieved about Benjamin their brother." *The Lord had made.*—Had permitted to be made; had so ordered things in his providence that a breach was made. The divine permissions are incessantly spoken of in the Scriptures as positive acts. The same event which is referred to men as far as it is a sin, is referred to God as far as it is a punishment. It is in this sense that the prophet's language is to be interpreted. "Is there evil in the city, and the Lord hath not done it?"

VER. 16. Then the elders of the congregation said, How shall we do for wives for them that remain, seeing the women are destroyed out of Benjamin?

VER. 17. And they said, *There must be an inheritance for them that be escaped of Benjamin, that a tribe be not destroyed out of Israel.*

*There must be an inheritance for them that be escaped of Benjamin.*—Or, Heb. "the inheritance (i. e. of the whole tribe of Benjamin) (is, or belongs to) the escaped remnant of Benjamin." We must therefore procure wives for them all, that they may be capable of possessing and cultivating the whole of their territory.

VER. 18. Howbeit, we may not give them wives of our daughters: <sup>l</sup>for the children of Israel have sworn, saying, Cursed be he that giveth a wife to Benjamin.

<sup>l</sup> Ver. 1. Judg. xi. 35.

VER. 19. Then they said, Behold, *there is a feast of the LORD in Shiloh yearly in a place which*

is on the north side of Beth-el, on the east side of the highway that goeth up from Beth-el to Shechem, and on the south of Lebanon.

*A feast of the Lord in Shiloh.*—That is, a festival. In modern acceptation, "feast" implies a banquet, or eating entertainment, but this is not necessarily included in the scriptural sense of the term. It often means no more than a festive occasion however celebrated, and probably has that import here. But what particular solemnity is intended it is impossible to determine. It might have been either the passover, pentecost, or feast of tabernacles, all of which were celebrated at that time of the year when the vines were in full leaf, so that the Benjamites might easily conceal themselves in the vineyards. *On the north side of Bethel.*—This is a particular indication of the situation, not of Shiloh, but of the place in the neighbourhood where the young women were likely to come to dance. It is probably thus precisely described, that the Benjamites might not mistake the place. It was not certain that the young women would come there, (ver. 21.) but it was probable, the custom being common. The orientals generally have no places in their towns where assemblies may be held for festivity and dancing. It is therefore customary to hold such assemblies in some pleasant places in the neighbourhood, in the gardens or plantations, or in small valleys, if there be any. This is a favourite mode of enjoyment with the women. There are certain occasions of annual recurrence in which the women are allowed this indulgence in the fullest extent, and thus they form large parties, which go out to amuse themselves with music, dancing, and such other recreations as are common among females. The approaches of the place where they assemble are now usually guarded by eunuchs to prevent intrusion. The different sexes never participate in each other's amusements; and this was the case in the times of the Bible; for we never read of any amusement or festivity in which they mingled; and if men had in this instance been present with the daughters of Shiloh, the Benjamites would not so easily have secured their prey.—*Pict. Bible. Lebanon.*—Maudrell supposes the site of the ancient Lebanon to be occupied either by Khan Leben, situated on the eastern side of a delicious vale, four leagues south from Shechem, and two leagues north from Bethel, or by the village of Leban, which is on the opposite side. It is eight hours, or about twenty-four miles, from Jerusalem, according to Dr. Richardson.

VER. 20. Therefore they commanded the children of Benjamin, saying, Go, and lie in wait in the vineyards;

VER. 21. And see, and, behold, if the daughters of Shiloh come out <sup>m</sup>to dance in dances, then come ye out of the vineyards, and catch you every man his wife of the daughters of Shiloh, and go to the land of Benjamin.

<sup>m</sup> See Ex. xv. 20. Chap. xi. 34. 1 Sam. xviii. 6. Jer. xxxi. 13.

*Catch you every man his wife.*—Heb. “a woman, his wife.” Seize and carry off a woman, whom he is, from that hour, to consider as his wife.

VER. 22. And it shall be, when their fathers or their brethren come unto us to complain, that we will say unto them, Be favourable unto them for our sakes: because we reserved not to each man his wife in the war: for ye did not give unto them at this time, that ye should be guilty.

*Be favourable unto them for our sakes.*—Rather, Heb. “be gracious to us with them, or, as it respects them.” The reasons urged for this clemency they go on immediately to state. *Because we reserved not to each man his wife in the war.*—Intimating that they were conscious of having done wrong in the indiscriminate slaughter of the women of Benjamin; that they ought at least to have reserved enough to furnish wives for the remnant that survived. By this construction of their vow not to match with them, they would if possible atone for the rashness of their vow to destroy them. *Ye did not give unto them at this time that ye should be guilty.*—By not giving your daughters or sisters voluntarily, ye have avoided the guilt of violating your solemn vow. As they were taken away by force and fraud, without your knowledge or consent, you have no reason to blame yourselves for the transaction, and the exigency of the case is so pressing, that it behoves all parties to submit to it in silence. Of the measure in general we can only say, that although they escaped by it the literal breach of their vow, yet it was, in fact, an actual evasion of it, and one tending to give direct license to fraud, violence, and the marriage of children without the consent of their parents. The incident, however extenuated by circumstances, adds one more to the numerous proofs afforded by holy writ of the weakness, the folly, and pernicious consequences of precipitate vows.

VER. 23. And the children of Benjamin did so, and took *them* wives according to their number, of them that danced, whom they caught:

and they went and returned unto their inheritance, and repaired the cities, and dwelt in them.

n Chap. xx. 48.

*Went and returned unto their inheritance.*—Although the end can never justify the means, yet in the present case the abducted maidens of Israel probably had no cause in the issue to rue the lot which had made them wives against their wills, or at least without their consent. The Benjamites seem to have acted towards them in the most honourable manner, and as the six hundred men shared by survivorship the inheritance of many thousands, they were probably better provided for in the things of this world, than if they had married within the bounds of their own tribes. But man's evil is evil still, though God in his sovereignty may bring good out of it.

VER. 24. And the children of Israel departed thence at that time, every man to his tribe and to his family, and they went out from thence every man to his inheritance.

*Every man to his tribe.*—By comparing this with chap. xx. 47, it appears that although this was at least four months after the war with Benjamin, yet the forces did not disband themselves and retire to their homes till the affair of the remnant of that tribe was finally and peaceably adjusted.

VER. 25. *In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes.*

o Chap. xvii. 6; xviii. 1; xix. 1.  
p Deut. xii. 8. Chap. xvii. 6.

*No king in Israel.*—Repeated, undoubtedly, in order to account for the disorders and enormities related in the preceding chapters. The writer informs us that these events occurred in a time of complete anarchy, when every man did that which was right in his own eyes—the only apology that could be offered for such atrocious scenes. Such an impartial relation of facts so highly discreditable to his own nation affords the strongest proof of the truth and authenticity of the whole narrative.

## INDEX OF PHRASES.

	Page		Page
<i>Abiding among the sheep-folds</i> , what meant thereby . . . . .	152	<i>Find</i> , used in the sense of <i>attack, encounter</i> . . . . .	122
<i>Anathema</i> , term explained . . . . .	32	<i>Fire coming out of the bramble</i> , phrase explained . . . . .	181
<i>Ancient</i> , epithet how applied to the river Kishon . . . . .	153	<i>Fortifying the city</i> , in what sense phrase used . . . . .	184
<i>And</i> , used for <i>even</i> . . . . .	54	<i>Give for one's self</i> , phrase explained . . . . .	86
<i>Angel of the Lord</i> , what the import of the phrase . . . . .	127	<i>Giving glory to God</i> , what meant thereby . . . . .	49
<i>Arising</i> , what implied by it in Scripture . . . . .	43	<i>Go out</i> , phrase how used . . . . .	63
<i>Arising to defend</i> , what meant by phrase . . . . .	187	<i>God being with one</i> , what implied in phrase . . . . .	11
<i>Ark of the covenant</i> , called by the name of the Lord . . . . .	20	<i>Going in</i> , phrase how sometimes used . . . . .	232
<i>Ashamed</i> , in what sense term used in Scripture . . . . .	137	<i>Great</i> , in what sense applied to Zidon . . . . .	64
<i>Before the Lord</i> , equivalent to before the sanctuary . . . . .	106	<i>Grief</i> , in what sense ascribed to God . . . . .	190
<i>Blessing</i> , what meant by giving one . . . . .	80	<i>Groves</i> , used for <i>gods of the grove</i> . . . . .	132
<i>Border</i> , in what sense term used . . . . .	90	<i>Handling the pen of the writer</i> , what meant by phrase . . . . .	151
<i>Borders of Jordan</i> , what implied by phrase . . . . .	97	<i>Harlot, Rahab one</i> . . . . .	13
<i>Bringing one low</i> , what meant by it . . . . .	199	<i>Heads of fathers</i> , phrase explained . . . . .	93
<i>Building a city</i> , used for repairing it . . . . .	91	<i>Hearken</i> , Scriptural usage in regard to the term . . . . .	12
<i>Cannot serve the Lord</i> , what meant by the expression . . . . .	110	<i>Heart, hardening of</i> , explained . . . . .	67
<i>Carriage</i> , used for baggage . . . . .	235	<i>Hinnom</i> , valley of the son of, name explained . . . . .	178
<i>Casting one's life</i> , what meant by the phrase . . . . .	182	<i>Inherit and disinherit</i> , original terms for . . . . .	103
<i>Cattle and tents</i> , what implied under these terms . . . . .	158	<i>Jeoparding one's life unto death</i> , what meant by phrase . . . . .	152
<i>Children</i> , raised up instead of their fathers, what meant by it . . . . .	27	<i>Jerusalem</i> , origin and import of the name . . . . .	53
<i>Circumcising again</i> , how to be understood . . . . .	25	<i>Judging Israel</i> , what meant by phrase . . . . .	133
<i>City</i> , how often to be understood in scripture style . . . . .	30	<i>Keeping alive</i> , what meant by the expression . . . . .	75
<i>Cleaving a hollow place in the jaw</i> , what meant by the phrase . . . . .	221	<i>Knowing</i> , used for <i>making known</i> . . . . .	132
<i>Coast going out</i> , words explained . . . . .	91	<i>Lamenting Jephthah's daughter</i> , what meant by phrase . . . . .	202
<i>Could not drive out</i> , phrase how used . . . . .	83	<i>Lapping water like a dog</i> , method of, described . . . . .	167
<i>Covering the feet</i> , what meant by the expression . . . . .	136	<i>Law departing not out of one's mouth</i> , what meant by phrase . . . . .	10
<i>Cutting down</i> , original term how used . . . . .	84	<i>Loosing the shoe from one's foot</i> , what denoted by it . . . . .	29
<i>Describing in a book</i> , phrase how used . . . . .	87	<i>Lordly dish</i> , what meant by phrase . . . . .	154
<i>Discomfited</i> , term how to be understood . . . . .	55, 143	<i>Lordships or Satrapies</i> of the Philistines, what meant by phrase . . . . .	70
<i>Divisions of Reuben</i> , phrase how to be understood . . . . .	151	<i>Lot</i> , how said to come out . . . . .	77, 88
<i>Drawing a band or army of men</i> , what implied by the term . . . . .	151	<i>Magnifying one</i> , what meant by phrase . . . . .	20, 23
<i>Embassador</i> , import of the word in Hebrew . . . . .	48	<i>Make war</i> , import of the phrase . . . . .	55, 107
<i>Encamping</i> , in what sense term used . . . . .	157	<i>Making dens</i> , phrase how to be interpreted . . . . .	157
<i>Falling</i> , how spoken of a lot . . . . .	82	<i>Many days</i> , how phrase to be understood . . . . .	66
		<i>Melting</i> , in what sense spoken of the heart . . . . .	17
		<i>Men at one's feet</i> , what meant by phrase . . . . .	142
		<i>Men of Israel</i> , in what sense phrase to be understood . . . . .	49

	Page		Page
<i>Mentioning the name of a god, what meant by phrase</i>	103	<i>Say, used in the sense of purpose, intend</i>	101
<i>Middle of the river, unusual sense of the phrase</i>	68	<i>Second bullock, what meant thereby</i>	162
<i>Mountain, for mountainous region</i>	93	<i>Seeing, in what other sense used in Scripture</i>	44
<i>Mouth, according to, meaning of the phrase</i>	87	<i>Seeking an occasion against one, what meant by phrase</i>	213
<i>Moving the tongue, phrase how to be understood</i>	59	<i>Selling a people, what meant by phrase</i>	129
<i>Name, term how used in the Scripture</i>	210	<i>Sent on foot into the valley, what meant by the expression</i>	213
<i>Neck, putting the feet upon the, phrase how to be interpreted</i>	60	<i>Servant, in what sense used</i>	7
<i>Officers, term explained</i>	11	<i>Setting a statute, what meant by phrase</i>	111
<i>Opening the mouth to the Lord, what meant by phrase</i>	199	<i>Shoes clouted, phrase how to be understood</i>	49
<i>Ordering a child when born, what meant by phrase</i>	209	<i>Silence, import of the Hebrew word for</i>	57
<i>Outgoings, import of the term</i>	85	<i>Slacking one's hand, import of the phrase</i>	55
<i>Ox-goad, import of the original term</i>	138	<i>Smiting hip and thigh, what meant by phrase</i>	220
<i>Peace, used for welfare in general</i>	162	<i>Sowing a city with salt, what denoted thereby</i>	186
<i>People and princes identified</i>	190	<i>Spirit of the Lord coming upon one, what meant by phrase</i>	133
<i>Perishing alone in one's iniquity, what meant by phrase</i>	100	<i>Stand before one, how to be understood</i>	9
<i>Ploughing with one's heifer, what meant by phrase</i>	217	<i>Stars fighting from heaven, what meant by phrase</i>	153
<i>Possessing, in what sense term used</i>	124	<i>Strange woman, what meant by phrase</i>	191
<i>Prosper, in what sense term used</i>	10	<i>Strength, cities standing in, import of the expression</i>	65
<i>Proving his people, the Lord's, what meant by phrase</i>	131	<i>Stroke, at one, phrase how to be understood</i>	62
<i>Putting away false gods, phrase explained</i>	109, 111	<i>Subdue, expressive import of the original</i>	199
<i>Putting one's life in his hand, what meant by phrase</i>	204	<i>Tail, how employed in Hebrew</i>	59
<i>Raising up judges and deliverers, in what sense to be understood</i>	130, 133	<i>Taking gain of money, what meant by phrase</i>	155
<i>Reigning, term how employed</i>	182	<i>Taking honey from bees, in what sense expressed of Samson</i>	215
<i>Rendering one's wickedness, requiting it</i>	187	<i>Teaching by thorns and briers, what meant by phrase</i>	174
<i>Repentance, how ascribed to God</i>	130	<i>Tents for settled habitations</i>	97
<i>Reproach of the Egyptians, rolling away of, what it means</i>	26	<i>Touch, in the sense of hurt, injure</i>	51
<i>Requiring a sin, what meant by phrase</i>	100	<i>Treading down strength, what meant by phrase</i>	153
<i>Reverse-ward, the import of the term</i>	31	<i>Trouble, how spoken of Achan</i>	41
<i>Resting from war, what implied in the words</i>	76, 133	<i>Turning again to one, what meant by it</i>	192
<i>Riddle, Samson's, explained</i>	216	<i>Turning, how ascribed to God</i>	111
<i>Right in one's eyes, to be, phrase how to be interpreted</i>	212	<i>Vain men, import of the term</i>	191
<i>Save alive, phrase how to be understood</i>	34	<i>Vering, in what sense used</i>	188
		<i>Vows, different kinds of</i>	195
		<i>Uncleanness of a land, what meant by phrase</i>	99
		<i>Uttering words before the Lord, what meant by phrase</i>	192
		<i>Wedge of gold, term explained</i>	40
		<i>Would dwell, spoken of the determination of the Canaanites</i>	83