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THE PENTATEUCH

AND BOOK OF

JOSHUA.



And are they in the right who, free from doubt,
Can sit in sweet abstraction from each thought
Of Earth, pondering the lives of those who fought
The battles of Jehovah ; viewing the rout
That Israel spread as God's own act, the shout
Upraised for victory, glorious most when fraught
With deepest ruin to the foe, as taught
By the Creator ! 'T may not be ! Without
The special faith that suffers me to view
In one among the multitude of creeds,
Each by its advocates alone held true,
The truth, or other than the pregnant seeds
Of discord among men, I take my flight
From blood-stained legends, Nature, to thy Light !

Bible
Com (O.T.)
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THE PENTATEUCH

AND BOOK OF

JOSHUA

IN THE LIGHT OF THE

Science and Moral Sense of our Age.

A COMPLEMENT TO ALL CRITICISMS
OF THE TEXT.

by
Robert Willis

"Contingent historical statements can never be vouchers for necessary intellectual [and moral] truths."—LESSING.

LONDON:
WILLIAMS AND NORGATE,
Henrietta Street, Covent Garden.

1877.



CORRIGENDA.

- Page 197, top line, for "Deity," read "Duty."
,, 219, line 3 from bottom, for "in this," read "in the
latter."
,, 283, line 5 from top, for "mutilatory," read "initiatory."
,, 486, lines 2 and 12 from bottom, for "Jordon," read
"Euphrates."

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THE PENTATEUCH

AND BOOK OF

JOSHUA.

INTRODUCTION.

WITH every wish to find the Bible all it is commonly said to be, against the persuasions of earlier years, and near the end of a long life, the writer feels bound to own that a somewhat careful study of so much of the Hebrew Scriptures as falls within the limits of the Pentateuch and Book of Joshua leaves him with the conviction that this portion of the Bible, at least, is not any Word of God, gives no true account of God's dealings with the world, and enjoins little or nothing that is calculated to edify or to raise man in the scale of his proper humanity. On the contrary, and passing for the moment the incongruities, contradictions, and impossibilities in which it abounds, Ideas of the Supreme are everywhere encountered that were derogatory to man, and averments made that gainsay knowledge and reason, whilst misdeeds are commanded and condoned that outrage humanity, and shock

the moral sense of our age. The Bible, however, is scarcely read without a foregone conclusion in respect of its origin and import; still more rarely is it perused with the amount of general, scientific, historical, and archæological lore that are indispensable to a right understanding of its text—truths which have led a late lamented great biblical critic to ask: How many even of the educated Laity understand the Bible—how many of the Clergy understand—how many of them *are willing* to understand it?*

I.

It is long, however, since it was definitely shown that the Pentateuch, so persistently ascribed to Moses, could neither have been written by him nor by any one of his presumed age, but must be the work of men who lived long—very long—after the great mythical leader and legislator;† and it may be confidently maintained that all subsequent critical inquiry by the competent and candid, has not only substantiated, but has greatly enlarged the scope and significance of this conclusion. Writing, in the proper sense of the word, appears not to have been practised by the Jews in times so relatively recent as the days of David. The Hebrew word for ink is of Persian derivation, and the art of writing on prepared sheep and goat skins among them dates from no more remote an age than that of the Babylonian captivity. The very character in which all the Hebrew writing we possess has reached us, is

* Strauss, *Der alte und der neue Glaube*.

† Spinoza, *Tract. Theologico-Politicus*, 4to, Hamb., 1670. Eng. version, 8vo, Lond., 1868.

Chaldæan, and only came into use after the Exile. A few slabs and pillars rudely cut in Intaglio, and in a more ancient character, are all we possess from which an idea can be formed of the kind of writing that was practised in the earlier ages of their existence by the Semitic tribes inhabiting Western Asia.

How long the legends, which enter so largely into the constitution of the Hebrew writings proper, floated among the people before they were reduced to writing, it is impossible to say; but the date at which they acquired the shape in which they have reached us, is now hardly doubtful. These writings have, in fact, been brought ever near and nearer to times concerning which we have something like reliable records, whilst the events of which they speak and the personages who figure in them, so long regarded as historical realities, are seen in the same measure to resolve themselves into phantoms, with no more of substance or reality than the dreams of the poet or the visions of the Seer.

II.

Every addition of late years made to our knowledge of the early history of mankind seems to make it more and more certain that though we seem to have so much, yet have we in reality less of reliable information about the Hebrews in the earlier periods of their existence than of many others among the nations of antiquity. The pious people who in person or by delegate are at the present moment so busy excavating in Palestine and Babylonia with a view to demonstrate the divine origin and historical truth of

the Hebrew Scriptures, seem verily to be pursuing their work to their own discomfiture. It is the reverse of the picture they would show that mostly appears. All the evidences of culture and civilisation brought to light of late from the ruined cities of Asia Minor prove their inhabitants to have been well advanced in polity, and the arts of life, in mechanics, engineering, and the rudiments of astronomical science, whilst the Israelites were still wandering Nomads in search of settled homes; nor, save in music, have they yet distinguished themselves otherwise than as petty traders and magnificent money dealers. Some parts of the Hebrew Scriptures, the most important of all in their far-reaching after influence, lose their presumed character of Revelations from God entirely, and appear to be derived from the same source as the mythical tales of the Babylonians;—source whence, in the days of the Captivity, the sons of Israel obtained the whole of the narratives that figure in the earlier parts of the Book of Genesis. The Garden in Eden, the Tree of Life, the Serpent, the Flood and the Ark, and much besides, turn out to be neither history nor original Revelation from Jehovah to the Jews, but stories found among neighbours, their superiors in war at all times as they were also in letters, until, after contact with their conquerors and teachers, the great lyrical and rhapsodical writers called prophets,—the Isaiahs, Jeremiahs, Micahs, and others,—appeared in the late days of the Kings.

III.

The Individuals, again, the personages with whom through their names we are made so familiar in the Bible story of patriarchal times, turn out, under the light supplied by critical inquiry, to be nothing more than mythical personifications. Abraham, who comes from Ur of the Chaldees, is discovered to be a NAME never borne by any individual, but a generic Title applicable, if applicable at all, to God, the Universal Father. He is the Rock, as Sarah his wife is the Cavern, whence the Hebrew people sprang. Abraham is, in fact, a word of like significance with the Dyaus, Zeus, and Deus of the Aryan race. He is the Heaven-God, the active principle in nature, as Sarah is the Heaven-Goddess, the passive principle; the pair being parents of the laughing Isaac (Istzack the laugher), wedded to Rebekah (Fruitfulness), counterparts of the "Ἡελιος and Γεα of the Greeks.

Jacob, the Son of Isaac, so distinguished a figure in the Hebrew story, like Abraham, is also the embodiment of a name, fitted with a character in correspondence with its import. Jacob is the heel-holder, the tripper up, as he is made the deceiver of his blind old father, the filcher of the blessing and superseder of his brother. He is another, yet a counterpart of Abraham, "the friend of God;" nay, he is more than Abraham; for after a wrestling bout with his Deity he is complimented with his name, and instead of Jacob is called Israel, being thereafter always spoken of as the Father of the Israelites.

Moses and Aaron, in like manner, are personifications of names in consonance with incidents

attached to their legendary history;—that of Moses, which is believed to be old, being plainly enough connected with his fabled rescue from the water, that of Aaron, which is certainly modern, from the office assigned him about the Altar and Ark of the Covenant (אֲהֲרֹן Ahrun.) The very latest researches, however, have given us a Babylonian Moses, Sargon by name, who may very possibly be the original of the Hebrew leader. Sargon, it is said, was by his mother placed in a cradle of rushes daubed with bitumen, and launched on the Euphrates, but was rescued by a water-carrier, and by him brought up as his son.*

IV.

What the absolute age of these names and the personages they are assumed to represent, may be, is questionable; but of this we are well assured, that of the Jacob-legend there is not a trace to be found until we come down to post-Davidic times; the latest researches of a critical kind seeming to show that the whole series of legends in which Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob figure, are products of days posterior to the secession of Israel from Judah. It was after this disastrous event, and when the States were waging an internecine war, that the scribes of the two great religious as well as political parties into which the country had split—the Elohist and Jehovists—took to tampering with each other's records, and their poets to producing those wonderful lyrics laudatory of their God and themselves, on the one hand, and those libellous tales of rape,

* Smith, 'Assyrian Discoveries,' p. 224, 8vo, Lond., 1875.

murder, and arson, in disparagement of their enemies on the other.*

Then it was that El, Bel, Baal, or Isra-El—other forms of El, chief God of the Hebrews in the olden time—was set up under the form of the Bull by the Israelites at Shechem and Dan, in the kingdom of Ephraim, and Jehovah, the latest conception of Deity by the Jewish priesthood, was established as Supreme God, with his sole lawful shrine at Jerusalem, the capital of Judah. Under what material form Jehovah was represented we are left in doubt; everything that would have satisfactorily informed us on the subject having been expunged from the record, although enough remains incidentally scattered through the Scriptures, to satisfy us that neither was this God without his *similitude*, and that the interdict against making an image of their Deity must therefore be one of the latest products of the Jewish legislation.

V.

The exodus from Egypt under the conditions and in the proportions specified we have shown to be physically impossible; and, recognising no interruption of the laws of nature, which we hold to be the laws of God, we have referred all the miracles in which Jehovah is made to glorify himself, and to show how far he exceeds the Gods of Egypt in power, together with the dramatic passages between Moses and Pharaoh as prologues to that event, to the realm of legendary myth.

* Vide Bernstein on the Origin of the Legends of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; one of Mr. Scott's Series of Papers; a striking production, but held by competent judges to push matters to excess.

VI.

The Decalogue, still so persistently assigned to the remote age of Moses, even by advanced Biblical critics, we have spoken of as an eclectic summary, the product of much more modern times, emanating as surely from Mount Zion in the City of Jerusalem, in the peaceful days of Hezekiah in all likelihood, as it most certainly did not come *viva voce* from God on Mount Sinai "all on a quake." The accompaniments of the assumed delivery thence, as described, suffice of themselves to relegate the story to the limbo of the mythical.

VII.

That the conquest and settlement of the Land of Canaan, to conclude, were not effected at the time and in the manner set forth in some parts of the Book of Joshua, appears plainly enough on the face of that incongruous and contradictory document itself; and more and more persuaded as we are of the relatively modern composition of the Pentateuch, we grow more and more suspicious that the accounts we have of the feats of Joshua are after models found in the history of the Babylonian Empire. The chronicles lately deciphered of the doings of more than one of the Kings of Babylon and Assyria; the vast numbers slain; the extraordinary amount of the booty collected; the tale of the woman made captive, &c.; may very well have served as prototypes from which the writer of Joshua drew, having made himself master during his captivity of the cuneiform inscriptions that still abound.*

* Vide Smith, Op. cit.

VIII.

The history of the Children of Israel, therefore, as it is delivered in the Pentateuch, is, in truth, nothing more than the mythical tale of a barbarous people, steeped in sensuality, superstition, ignorance, and cruelty; their God a demon delighting in blood, requiring the first-born of man and beast to be sent to him in the smoke of the altar as his most acceptable oblation, and having a lamb supplied him night and morning throughout the year by way of food! Among a people with such conceptions of Deity and such a Cult, with ancestors like Abraham and Isaac, Jacob and Rebekah, and with heroes and heroines having the stamp of the Eleazars and Deborahs, the Samsons, Judiths, Jaels, Jephthas, and, coming down to the really historical times of David and Solomon, what could have been the character of the religious, moral and social usages and principles that prevailed? The question suggests the only possible reply. Yet, strange to say, the blood-stained annals and barbarous lives of this extraordinary people have been taken by the modern world as the foundation of its religious ideas, and as fit introduction to its moral conceptions.

IX.

But shall we, living in this nineteenth century of the era from which we date, continue to look to a source of the kind for such knowledge of the Being and Attributes of God as may be attained by man; for guidance in the service that might be acceptable to the Supreme, and in the conduct that were becoming in our dealings with one another? Shall we, who think of God as All-

Pervading CAUSE, persist in viewing the Book as his revealed word and will, which tells of the Earth created in six days, and of its fashioner, like a foredone workman, "resting on the seventh day and hallowing it," when we know most positively that the Earth was not created in six days, necessarily conclude that God never rests, and believe that to him all days must be hallowed alike? Shall we, with the better knowledge we possess, go on putting into the hands of our children the book that narrates how God *came down* from heaven *to walk in his Garden in the cool of the Evening*, and at sundry other times, to ascertain how things were going on below; how he cursed the creatures he had made in his own image, as said; repented him of what he had done in creating man at all, and brought a flood of water on the Earth to drown all that breathed? Shall we, who measure our distance from the Sun and the fixed Stars, calculate their masses, weigh them as in a balance, analyse their light, and thereby learn that they all are Units in ONE Stupendous Whole, continue to look with respect on tales that tell of the arrest of the Sun and Moon in their apparent path through heaven, to the end that a barbarous horde may have light effectually to exterminate the unoffending people, they have come—by God's command, too, as said—to plunder and to murder? It were surely time to quit us of such worse than childish folly.

Reflection and candour alike compel us to say that the teachings of the Pentateuch, in almost every particular, have to be set aside if we would escape erroneous conceptions of nature and of almost all that civilised man associates with the

name of God and Religion. If the Bible is to be continued as one of the instruments available in the education of our children, it should be carefully weeded of so much that is false and offensive, and be used in a *negative* rather than a positive sense as a means of instruction; the unworthy behaviour of Abraham and Isaac with their wives, and of Jacob and Rebekah with the father and husband, among other instances, being pointed out as examples religiously to be shunned; the recommendation we find in the New Testament, "Not to give heed to Jewish fables" (Titus i. 14), being at all times steadily kept in view.

X.

As hitherto apprehended, Religion can be said to have brought nothing but misery on the world at large. Deeds of a dye that shock humanity have been committed from first to last in its name, and unreason has still been seen in the seat of reason so often as aught presumed to be due to God has come into question. Of old it said:—"If thy brother, thy son, or thy daughter, the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend that is as thine own soul, entice thee saying:—Let us go and serve other Gods [*i.e.*, differ from thee in thy creed and would have thee follow their's], thou shalt not consent to him nor hearken to him; neither shalt thou spare him, but thou shalt surely kill him; thy hand shall be first upon him, afterwards the hands of all the people, and thou shalt stone him with stones that he die." In later days it has excavated the dungeon, built the torture-chamber and furnished

it with the rack, lighted the slow fire about the stake to consume, drenched the battle-field with blood, and driven into exile from their home and country the best and noblest of their kind.

XI.

Yet is the Religious Sense as certainly an element in the constitution of man as his bodily frame. But emotional in its nature it is *Blind*, and requires association with those other emotional and intellectual faculties proper to man from which it has hitherto been dissevered, before it can conduce to good and advantageous issues. Happily the world is slowly emerging from its dream about the Jews being the chosen people of God and the medium of his oracles to mankind. The Hebrew Scriptures are now known to be but *one* among many other books to which a divine original, and sacred character is ascribed by the peoples among whom they took shape. The Sole Revelation which God ever made he still makes to man; and this the truly educated have at length begun to see lies open for perusal by all of cultured mind in the Book of Nature, from which alone can we, without fear of being led astray, know aught of what GOD IS, of that wherein the Providential order of the world consists, and of that which is required of us as agents responsible to God through our fellow-men for our deeds. "Ancient creeds and time-honoured formulas," says a great writer, "are yielding as much to internal pressure as to external assault. The expansion of knowledge is loosening the very earth clutched by the roots of creeds and churches. Science is

penetrating everywhere, and slowly changing men's conceptions of the world and of man's destiny. Some considerable thinkers are therefore of opinion that Religion has played its part in the evolution of humanity, whilst others—and I hold with these—believe that it has still a part to play, and will continue to regulate the evolution. To do so, however, it must express the highest thought of the time. It must not attempt to imprison the mind, nor force on our acceptance, as explanations of the Universe, dogmas which were originally the childish guesses at truth by barbarous tribes. It must no longer put forward principles which are unintelligible and incredible, nor make their unintelligibility a source of glory, and a belief in them a higher virtue than belief in demonstration. Instead of proclaiming the nothingness of this life, the worthlessness of human love, and the impotence of the human mind, it will proclaim the supreme importance of this life, the supreme value of human love, and the grandeur of the human intellect.”*

With every word of this who in the present day will not sympathise? But the Religious Sense, as we have but just said, is blind, and cannot be trusted to *regulate* the evolution of humanity. On the contrary, Religion, as commonly understood, must itself consent to regulation, and descend to a lower place than it has hitherto held in our Western civilisation. As represented in the most powerful of all the formulated systems in which it has yet been

* G. H. Lewes's 'Problems of Life and Mind.' Vol. I.

seen, religion shows itself at the present moment antagonistic to the peace of the State and the Family, as well as to all Evolution—it gives Discord a seat at the home-hearth, and would stem the tide of human progress if it could; and it is more than questionable whether there exists any other system that would not be disposed to do as much, and to lead the evolution on to some devious or narrow way ending in a preserve of its own. But Religion is not; in fact, as in these later ages it has been made, the *prime factor* in the moral life of man. Justice, mercy, truthfulness, integrity, reverence, and steadfastness—the moral element in human nature, in a word, outcome of the higher emotional powers in blended action with enlightened understanding, are of far more moment in the aggregate life of humanity than any conceivable form of religious belief and observance. The IDEA OF GOD is the GOAL, not the starting point, in the evolution of mankind, and only presents itself in a guise that can be held worthy of its object in societies the most advanced in moral and intellectual development. Then, but not till then, comes the conclusion that the sole yet all-sufficing service that can be rendered to God by man is study of his laws, which are the laws of Nature; as obedience to their behests is the sum of man's duties to God, to himself, and to his kind. It would indeed be well could an end now be made of the folly men commit when they personify God, endow him with feelings and passions after the pattern of their own, and attach significance and a literal meaning to Eastern tales, the product of rude and ignorant

ages of the world. It were surely good did men now acknowledge that God, ubiquitous essence, in and over all, never spoke in human speech to man; was never jealous of other Gods, for there be none such; never cursed the creature who had come into being in conformity with his laws, nor the ground that fed him; never repented of aught that was as it was through him, and never, in abnegation of his universal fatherhood, elected one among the nations that people the earth to be his own and the medium of his oracles to the rest of mankind.

XII.

The works of De Wette, Vatke, Von Bohlen, Kuenen, Colenso, Davidson, and Kalisch, to name a few among a number we have read, following in the wake of Spinoza, Astruc, Simon, Eichhorn, and others, have gone far to exhaust what may be spoken of as the criticism of the letter and structure of the Bible. That several hands have had part in the composition of this wonderful book; that the text as it stands is the product of dissimilar minds; was written at various times in different ages, and has been derived from different and often discrepant sources—mythical, legendary, and documentary,—is no longer doubtful, but a demonstrated fact. Bernstein, moreover, if his conclusions stand the test of criticism, will have farther shown the very free play the writers of the Pentateuch have sometimes given to their inventive faculties. In suggesting grounds for some of the tales, and pointing to historical personages poorly disguised under slightly altered names, he will

also have fixed beyond the possibility of question, as it seems, the date at which certain parts of the Bible commonly believed to be among the oldest, were actually written; and this, it may almost be needless to say, is not the mythical age of the Patriarchs and Moses, of which so little or rather nothing is known, but the really historical times of Solomon and the Kings. Bernstein might thus in a sense be said to have done for the part of the Old Testament, to which we refer, what F. C. Baur and the Tübingen School have done for the New. In his hands Jehovist and Elohist present themselves as Judahite and Ephraimite; and even as in the Synoptic Gospels and the Acts of the New Testament we find records of the differences between Petrinists and Paulinists, so, in the Old, instead of the word of God, we have but evidence of the conflicting views and hostile feelings of the followers of El-Elijon, Belitan or Baal, and Jahveh.

XIII.

Among ourselves Biblical criticism, in any acceptable sense of the term, can scarcely be said to have existed until the present day. We had Commentaries and Expositions of the Scriptures, indeed, in almost endless succession from after the middle of the last to the middle of the present century; but these were all more or less alike, and after the same rigidly orthodox and uncritical pattern: the Jews were the chosen people of God, the vessels of his word and will to the world; the Pentateuch was the work of Moses, who had the Ten Commandments direct from the mouth of God, and written besides with

his finger on two tables of stone—and there an End; Doubt was sin; Question was Atheism; and as for criticism there was, there could be none. But the Spirit of Time and of Progress

Sitzend am sausenden Webstuhl der Zeit
Wirkend der Gottheit lebendiges Kleid,*

had been at work all the while, and found a voice at length from an unexpected quarter in the able *Textual Criticism of the Pentateuch and Book of Joshua* by no less a personage than a dignitary in the Church, the Bishop of Natal.

XIV.

Though not without something like a herald of its coming, in the volume entitled 'Essays and Reviews,' Dr. Colenso's book fell like a thunderbolt from a clear sky among his clerical brethren, and took the laity at large, aroused to something like an interest in the matters discussed, not a little by surprise. "Replies" to the criticisms of the Bishop by clergymen were not wanting, as matter of course. But these were found less satisfactory to the more intelligent of the laity than their authors imagined they would prove. This element in the outside world had outgrown its relish for the old style of Scriptural Exposition, and was not satisfied with the assurance that the Bishop of Natal's objections were not new and had all been answered long ago. They desired to see something like a demonstration of the truth.

* Sitting at Time's murmuring loom,
Weaving the living garb of God.

that this was so, and were minded, that a work so ably and conscientiously composed should be met by arguments of a better kind than unsupported assertion, evasion, and abuse.

Accordingly, at the suggestion of a late Speaker of the House of Commons, the Right Hon. J. E. Denison, and after consultation with the Archbishop of York, a Committee of gentlemen, Dignitaries and others of scholarly attainments in the Church, was formed for the purpose of investigating and satisfactorily replying to the matters called in question,—and these amounted to nothing less, in fact, than the Inspiration and Historical Truth of the Sacred Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, and their consonance as formulated Word of God with the Word of God as announced in the truths of Science and the religious and moral consciousness of educated man. Such, at all events, was the great and worthy object which it was understood Mr. Denison had in view when he broached the subject of an exhaustive Commentary to the Clergy of his Church. “It seemed to him,” says Mr. Cook, the writer of the Preface to the first volume of ‘The Speaker’s Commentary,’ when at length it made its appearance, “that in the midst of much controversy about the Bible, there was a want of some Commentary in which the latest information might be made accessible to men of ordinary culture. It seemed desirable that every educated man should have access to some work which might enable him to understand what the original Scriptures really say and mean, and in which he might find an explanation of any difficulties which his own mind might

suggest, as well as of any new objections raised against a particular book or passage.

“Although the difficulties of such an undertaking were very great, it seemed right to make the attempt to meet a want which all confessed to exist, and the Archbishop accordingly undertook to form a Company of Divines, who, by a judicious distribution of labour amongst them, might expound, each, the portion of Scripture for which his studies might best have fitted him.”

XV.

This is all clear and to the point: we were to be furnished with a simple, truthful interpretation of the Bible by able men, from the point of view supplied by the latest and most advanced critics and scholars of the day, in consonance with the science and moral sense of the age. But wherein the great difficulties hinted at, though not more particularly specified, consisted, and whence the long delay of seven years (!) that intervened between the conception and the execution of the project, the writer of the preface does not say. A Company of learned Divines had been formed, ample funds had been subscribed, an eminent publisher had been engaged, and by him *carte blanche* was given to the *foreign* bookseller in particular to supply the parties engaged, “to expound the portion of Scripture for which their studies might best have fitted them,” with all they required in the shape of literature. How can we doubt that these gentlemen went to work with a will? They were to have liberal pay, they had been furnished with books in abundance, and the opportunity to distinguish them-

selves in the interesting field of Biblical criticism lay before them. But time flew by—a year, two years, four, six, seven years! elapsed, and all this while the public at large had no intimation, through their work, of what the learned men were about. Not a line in the shape of Note or Comment to help men of “ordinary culture” to understand the Scriptures of the Jews had seen the light in all that time. But rumours were rife of great and even unsurmountable difficulties having arisen in the course of the projected enterprise. Nor was the nature of these kept altogether from the public ear. The workers specially engaged had discovered, one after another, as was said, that the task they had undertaken could not conscientiously be carried out to the issue they had believed possible when they undertook it. They had been led by the hands of their Dutch, and German, and English brethren, to “the tree that grew in the midst of the garden,” they had seen that the fruit it bore “was pleasant to the sight,” and was “fruit to be desired to make men wise.” They had “put forth their hands, taken of the fruit, and eaten,” and lo! “their eyes were opened and they knew that they were naked.”

When they now met one another and the “Company,” their superiors, in conclave, it was not as Marcus Tullius tells us he thought the Haruspices of his day could only meet, to laugh, but with grave looks and bated breath. Colenso and the free critics were not after all the men of straw they had been supposed to be, and not to be slain with lathen swords and pointless spears; they were rather found like the “well-greaved Greeks”

in panoply of proof, their line compact and as little assailable as it seemed on the flanks as in front. For awhile—a long while, therefore, there must have appeared nothing for it but retreat from an untenable position,—or, could it have been the bolder and nobler alternative that presented itself, and gave the pause—“to speak truth and shame the Devil,” as the saying goes? If this were ever contemplated it certainly has not been followed. And yet there was a great opportunity for the Clergy of the Anglican Church to show themselves as exponents of the Bible on at least as high a level as their continental Protestant brethren. Mr. Cook in his preface acknowledges the want of a real Commentary; but he and his colleagues have not given it. Retreat from the position forced on them, perchance, rather than willingly assumed, must have been the contemplated course. Silence breaks no bones, it is said, and the “Speaker and his Commentary” would perhaps pass out of mind and be relegated to the limbo of things forgotten. But the thought of retreat—if it ever were a thought—was vain. The outside world grew clamorous for its ‘Commentary,’ and something must be done to satisfy it. The “conscience that makes cowards of us all” had procured a respite of seven years, indeed, but the business must be faced at last. If the workers first engaged had disqualified themselves through the pains they had taken to execute their task in the best possible way, the way, too, that was held desirable; and as they in entering on it had believed it could be done, but as they had been brought to see that it could not truthfully and

without reservation be accomplished, others might be found who took a different view of the matter. There were orthodox as well as heterodox commentators in plenty—there were Hengstenbergs as well as Hupfelds, Delitzsches as well as Colensos. Why not take them for guides? Or if even the least liberal of these were too outspoken for our insular orthodoxy, why not fall back on the good old-fashioned English style of the Browns and Henrys, the Doyleys and Mants, and give explanations by simple iteration of the text, discover harmony amid discord, and congruity in discrepancy; to say nothing of so much that could safely be referred to the inscrutable will of God, and that passed the power of human comprehension? The workers first selected could not be suffered to make victims of themselves, and have their names enrolled beside those:—

Die thöricht g'nug ihr volles Herz nicht wahrten,—
 Dem Föbel ihr Gefühl, ihr Schauen offenbarten,
 [Und die] man hat von je gekreuzigt und verbrannt.*

They would too obviously be acting under the ægis of Hierarchs of the Church who would be compromised with them, of Dignitaries who had no taste for martyrdom, and who doubtless thought “of the fish, and the leeks and the onions, the cucumbers, the melons, and the garlick, which they did eat freely in Egypt.” Of others, also, conscientious enough in their ortho-

* Who have been fools enough not to keep their minds to themselves, but to the people have revealed their hearts, their thoughts, and for their pains have hitherto been crucified and burned.

doxy, having minds cast in a believing mould, unfamiliar with the fruit of the tree that grew in the midst of the garden, who did not see why the sworn and salaried officers of a system should be held bound to say aught in disparagement of the grounds on which it rested, and who could not be persuaded that there was not a perfectly legitimate and even proper way of escaping from the dilemma in which they had become involved by the strike among their workmen.

Many and anxious, we must conceive, were the consultations that now were held, deep and long the discussions as to what had best be done, that followed. It was even thought, as reported, that Escape from the dead-lock might be found through Counsel out of doors, as there was none within; a suggestion which led to an interview with a late lamented Dean, not one of "The Company;" for he having eaten of the fruit of the marvellous tree in years gone by, and spoken somewhat freely of the Patriarchs, was held too *far advanced* for such Society. But from this liberal writer came little comfort. He is said rather to have enjoyed the difficulty in which his learned brethren had become involved, he even *chuckled* over their distress; but assured them he could help them with no advice; it was their business, not his, and they must get through the work they had undertaken as they best could.

To proceed, indeed, was matter of necessity: a Commentary and Exposition must be forthcoming; but why need it be of the kind that was contemplated by the Speaker? It might be of a sort that would satisfy the *many* and such as had no misgivings; and the *few*—the doubters

and such as were dissatisfied—might be left to their doubts and dissatisfaction. A dangerous course as concerns the future, though meeting the most pressing want of the hour; for reaction inevitably follows, and the recoil is not always comparable to the gentle lapping of the summer sea, but sometimes comes like the upheaval wave laden with destruction.

XVI.

The work, then, had to be gone on with, and a fresh staff of workers to be found; and this, not without difficulty nor without a second secession in more than one instance, by report at the time, was at length got together. But such must have been the obstacles still encountered, we must needs surmise, that before any real progress could be made, *seven years* had passed away! for it was at the end only of this long period of incubation that the first instalment of the 'Speaker's Commentary' saw the light.

XVII.

And here we avail ourselves of the appreciation of the work by a distinguished continental Biblical critic and scholar, Dr. A. Kuenen, Professor of Theology in the University of Leyden.* After premising that much is to be learned from the work, especially by laymen, for whose benefit it was written; that the composers of it are learned men, and farther—yet hardly in keeping with what he goes on to say—that

* See Three Notices of the 'Speaker's Commentary' from the Dutch of A. Kuenen, by J. Muir, D.C.L., one of Mr. Scott's Series of Papers.

they have shown an able apprehension of what they had to do, he continues: "But they lack one thing; and this vitiates the whole. *They are not free.* The apologetic aim of the work is never lost sight of, and constantly operates to disturb the course of the enquiry. It is, in one word, Science such as serves a purpose that is here put before us. The writers place themselves in opposition to the Critics of the Pentateuch, depreciate their arguments, make sport in the well-known childish manner of their mutual differences, and try to refute them with reasonings which they themselves in any other case would reject as utterly insufficient or regard as unworthy of notice. None of them sins in this respect so *naïvely* and grossly (sterk) as Dr. Harold Browne, the Bishop of Ely. But they are miserable, far-fetched, and unnatural suppositions to which he treats us. . . . Dogmatical considerations have clouded the understanding and exegetical perception of this apologist, and on fitting occasions his fellow-labourers do not fall short of him in this respect. If I am not deceived, this 'Commentary,' entirely against the intentions of those who planned it, will, before all things, have powerfully contributed to make Biblical criticism indigenous in England."

With the work of so thorough a critic and accomplished scholar as Dr. Colenso, and the excellent Introduction to the Study of the Old Testament of such a Hebraist as Dr. Samuel Davidson (to name but two among several others), at command, it cannot fairly be said that Biblical criticism had not already become indigenous among us. It was, indeed, well established, though

rare, but all the more firmly rooted from having grown in the light of freedom, truthfulness, and competence; and though ignored by the Clergy at large, who shut their eyes to it themselves and denounce it from their pulpits as impiety, it is by no means without its influence among us.

“When, after reading the Introductions to the several Books and the Notes to the ‘Speaker’s Commentary,’” continues Dr. Kuenen, “I reflect how much time, labour, and money have been expended on the writing and printing of this work, I receive a painful impression. Here learned theologians, and such, too, as are high dignitaries in the Church, come forward as instructors of the participators in their religious belief, and all that these learn from them they must afterwards unlearn. Many faults in the authorised version, indeed, are amended, and points of an archæological and geographical nature are illustrated. But such is not the question here. The point of importance is this: Do the contributors to the work make their learning subservient to the diffusion of a sound [*i.e.*, a truthful and reasonable] method of estimating the Bible? The reverse is the fact. They regard it as their duty to maintain that which appears to them to be the *sound* [*i.e.*, the orthodox] view, and to reject all more reasonable conceptions as unbelieving and sacrilegious. Now and then, indeed, the truth is too powerful for them, and they find themselves forced to give up the correctness of the Biblical narrative, but the concessions form the exception. As a rule, the traditional view is maintained, even in cases where it may be said to be absolutely untenable; and then the diffi-

culties are either passed over in silence or are not recognised in their real force, or are answered with childish arguments. But it will one day become manifest that that which the adverse critics already know must before long become known to all, and that it is fearless criticism alone which opens up the access to Israel's sanctuaries. *Magna est veritas et prævalebit.*"

XVIII.

So far Dr. Kuenen, the studied moderation of whose adverse criticism is conspicuous. But the Doctor is still a theologian, although a Liberal one. It is habit and the prospect he enjoys from his Professor's Chair that enable him to speak of fearless criticism of the Record the Israelites have left of themselves in their Pentateuch and historical books as opening up the access to *any sanctuary*. We who write here as Physician, as Naturalist, cannot see the matter in the same light as Dr. Kuenen; and do not scruple to avow that the purpose of the Exposition which follows is to aid, in so far as this is possible, in disabusing the public mind of the false conceptions it entertains of so much of the Bible as falls within the Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua; to which portions of the Hebrew Scriptures, we would have it understood, is our criticism intended to apply. We are behind none in our appreciation of the beauties that abound in many parts of the writings of the Lyrist and Rhapsodists of Israel—though neither are we blind to their blemishes—but we deny *in toto* that we have either in these, in the so-called Five Books of Moses, or in the historical writings that precede

the Psalms, any true account of God's government of the world. We are even bold enough to believe that he who accompanies us through our exposition will scarcely fail, however reluctantly, to arrive at the same conclusion.

XIX.

The laity of this country, we believe, were really looking for a perfectly truthful and authoritative exposition of the Bible, of the Hebrew Scriptures especially; and a great opportunity undoubtedly presented itself for the production of such a work; but it has not only been neglected; it may even be said to have been abused. The most cursory perusal of so much of the 'Speaker's Commentary' as applies to the Pentateuch and Book of Joshua, will enable any one possessed of the mere Alphabet of Biblical criticism to see that the writers do but "keep their promise to the ear and break it to the hope." The intelligent inquirer will gain from them none but the most unsatisfactory responses to his most pressing questions,—if perchance he finds response at all—and the ignorant be only confirmed in his ignorance, his errors, and his superstitions. The views of the great liberal enlightened critics of the Continent and our own country, men of unblemished lives, the purest piety and ripest scholarship, are scarcely noticed, the conclusions of science ignored, and the moral blemishes passed by unheeded, whilst nothing absolutely is ever said that will help men of "ordinary culture" to know more of what the "original Scriptures really say and mean" than the text itself supplies. Iteration of a proposition in other

terms is no demonstration of its meaning or its truth; and where the exposition is not simply of the old-fashioned orthodox and now untenable character, it is hardly ever of a kind that will enable the reader to see the matter referred to in any more reasonable and acceptable light.

XX.

Dr. Kuenen in this notice of the first and second volumes of the 'New Commentary' gives a few examples of the perfunctory way in which the Speaker's Exegetes proceed in their work;* and we, too, had got together some samples of the chaff they present so carefully sifted from the grain of truth and common sense, for illustration in this direction. But they would be out of place here. We, however, add below, the very First and One among the Last of Bishop Harold Browne's comments to Genesis, by way of justification of aught we have said that seems disrespectful.†

* Vide Three Criticisms, &c., already quoted.

† Gen. i. 1. *In the beginning.* "Not "first in order," but "in the beginning of all things," says the Bishop. "The same expression is used in John i. 1, of the existence of the "Word of God:" "In the beginning was the Word." The one passage illustrates the other, though it is partly by the contrast of thoughts. The Word *was* when the world was *created.*' The reader may be left to make what he can out of such a style of exposition; for how the mystical assertion of the Neo-platonic author of the Fourth Gospel that "In the beginning was the Word," should be brought in to throw light on the simple statement of the writer of Genesis, that God in the beginning created the heaven and the earth, passes our faculty of understanding. Was the note introduced for any end but to give Dr.

XXI.

The Exposition of the Pentateuch and Book of Joshua that follows, it may be needless to say, is conceived in a totally different spirit from that which has guided the writers of the 'Speaker's Commentary.' Holding that "*suppression of the truth is near akin to assertion of the false,*" and that truth can never be dangerous save to error,

Harold Browne an opportunity of showing at the very outset the out-and-out orthodox flag under which he was enlisted?

Gen. xlvi. 8, 9. "And Pharaoh said unto Jacob : How old art thou? And Jacob said unto Pharaoh : The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years." To the words *my Pilgrimage*, the Bishop appends this gloss, 'Literally my sojournings.' 'Pharaoh asked of the days of the years of his life ; he replies by speaking of the days of the years of his pilgrimage. Some have thought that he called his life a pilgrimage because he was a nomad, a wanderer in lands not his own : but in reality the patriarchs spoke of life as a pilgrimage or sojourning, because they sought another country, that is a heavenly. Earth was not their home, but their journey homewards.' Now the Bishop of Ely—when he wrote, the Bishop of Winchester now (for orthodoxy unflinching brings preferment)—knows full well that the patriarchs never spoke of their lives in any such sense. They had no idea of any state of existence after the present life ; and when in later days the children of Israel, after contact as slaves with a people entertaining an idea of the kind, did attain to it, the place to which they went after death was not thought of as a *heavenly* home of light and love and joy, but a dark and dismal pit under the earth, called Scheol, whence the Hell of the modern world, peopled by Satan and his angels, and furnished with its burning lake of brimstone and other appliances as a place of punishment for the wicked. Was it not in some sort the Bishop's *duty* to inform his readers of so much ?

we have not hesitated to give expression to the views that are most adverse to the idea of the Divine Original of the Hebrew Scriptures, and of the Israelites, in the earlier periods of their history at all events, as worthy recipients of the oracles of God. So much progress had been made in Comparative Mythology and the Science of Religion of late years, that it did not appear so difficult to us to discover what "the original Scriptures really say and mean," as it seems to have done to the writer of the Preface to the 'Speaker's Commentary.' Unfettered by foregone conclusions, having subscribed no Articles, and sworn allegiance to no system of doctrine, but under the guidance of such lights as the somewhat miscellaneous reading we have indulged in has supplied, we have striven to give a thoroughly truthful exposition of so much of the Bible as has come under our scrutiny; the result being, as the tenor of this Introduction will already have made manifest, that this extraordinary Book is but one among a number of other Books held sacred by the followers of the several religious systems of which they are the exponents; that though its literary merits may be more, it has no higher title to be held a Revelation from God than any one of these; that its contents are not always of a kind calculated to raise our estimate of the people among whom it took its rise, or to prove beneficial to ourselves, and that it enunciates no such Ideas of God and his providential government of the world as can be accepted by civilised man.

XXII.

The world of to-day does, in truth, stand in need of more than the ablest and most outspoken exposition of any Book expressing the Religious Ideas, the Social Usages, and the Guesses at Scientific Truth of a bygone age. It is waiting for a BIBLE OF ITS OWN DAY,—a great Intellectual Survey of Nature, Nature's Laws and Nature's God, as Revealed in the Universe of things apprehended by the Mind of Man. *Veniat, veniat, cito veniat!*



THE PENTATEUCH—THORA, THE LAW.

G E N E S I S .

“**I**N the beginning,” it is said, “God created the heaven and the earth.” What are we to understand by a “beginning”?

The epoch in eternity, doubtless, which the writer of this part of the Hebrew Scriptures imagined to have dawned when God created or fashioned, or set about creating or fashioning, heaven and the earth, first or oldest of things in his belief.

Is this belief borne out by what natural philosophers conclude as to the constitution of heaven and the earth?

Heaven, to the modern philosopher, is no firmament or solid sphere stretched above and subordinate in some sort to the earth, as it was to the Hebrews, but is infinite space, only to be conceived of as co-eternal with, and an element in the nature of, Deity; whilst the earth is but a middle-aged member of one of the great astral systems that stud The Boundless, and a much more recent production, in its compact form, than the whole of the planetary bodies that circle round the sun in orbits outside its own.

Creation, to the modern philosopher, is therefore something different from the creation, evoking, or fashioning out of nothing of the Hebrew writer.

It is impossible to conceive *something* coming out of *nothing*. But God *was*, and with and of God were the elements, which, in conformity with the laws of force and matter, also inherent in the nature of God, took form and fashion as suns, planets, satellites, and comets amid infinite space and in time.

Creation, as now apprehended, implies evolution—evolution from what?

As regards the particular aggregations in space, whereof the *solar system* is one, and the earth we dwell on among the least of its members, from a mass of nebulous matter, extending, in the first instance, far beyond the limits of the outermost of the planetary bodies which, with their satellites, now circle round the sun.

Vast intervals of time must be presumed to have elapsed between the epochs when the first, or outermost, and the last, or innermost, of the planets that attend the sun took form and fashion?

Such is the conclusion of modern philosophers; the planets outside the earth's orbit being regarded as the older, those within it as the younger members of the family, the great sun itself being the youngest or latest formed of all.^a

"The earth," it is said, "was without form and void."

The earth, in conformity with the laws of attraction, repulsion, and cohesion inherent in matter, could never have been without form, and could not have been void, if by void emptiness be understood. From the moment of its acquiring, and even before it had

^a The reader is referred to an admirable paper ascribed to Mr Hennessey, headed "Recent Astronomy and the Nebular Hypothesis," in the *Westminster Review*, July, 1858. In this able essay the GENESIS of the Solar System is treated exhaustively, though briefly, in conformity with the most advanced views of natural philosophers.

acquired, consistency it was a globe, revolving on an axis, flattened at the poles, bulging at the equator, and made up, in the several stages of its evolution, of gaseous, vaporous, liquid, and solid matters, as it is at the present hour, though these matters must all have existed in states far different at first from those in which they now present themselves.

“And darkness was upon the face of the deep.”

As yet the deep was not; and at no time, probably, did absolute darkness prevail in the universe. Any light that reached the earth, however, could not have been of the bright kind that is shed from the sun as it now exists. There must have been light, nevertheless, as well from the nebulous matter which had become compact in the older planets and in the earth, and was still undergoing compaction into the younger planets within the earth's orbit and into the sun itself,—not to speak of the nebulous and stellar masses plunged in the depths of space, that were either in process of condensation, and so eliciting a feebler light, or that had already acquired the density which fitted them as fixed stars or suns to shine more brightly.

“Bright effluence of bright essence increate,”

light was a principle in the nature of God, and must have existed from eternity :

“Before the sun,
Before the heavens thou wert, and at the voice
Of God, as with a mantle, didst invest
The rising world of waters dark and deep,”

sings one of the great heroic poets, inspired by the diviner mind he had through his more perfect organization.

“And the Spirit of God moved on the face of the waters.”

The spirit or breath of God (ruach Elohim) was *in* the waters and moved in rhythmic harmony with them as with all things else. It was not only *on* or outside of the waters and other things, but *within* and of them, even as the manifestation we call life is within and of the organisms, vegetable and animal, wherein and whereby it is made known to us.

“And God said, Let there be light, and light was.”

Not called into being, however, as but just said, at some particular moment of time, not distinct from the Godhead :

“ [But] of the Eternal, co-eternal beam,
 since God is Light,
 And never but in unapproached light
 Dwelt from Eternity, dwelt then in thee,”

sings in lofty rhyme our own inspired Bard.

“And God divided the light from the darkness, and he called the light day, and the darkness he called night.”

The writer speaks of darkness—a purely negative state or condition,—as if it were a positive something. But darkness is a mere consequence of the absence of light; and it is obvious that he could not have known by what name God called either the light or the dark: God *ordained* the light and the dark, but he left man to give them names.

“Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters; and let it divide the waters from the waters.”

The writer fancied that the over-arching canopy of the sky was a transparent solid, in which the sun, moon, and stars were set, somewhat perhaps after the manner of the precious stones in the breast-plate of the high priest; and that as there was an ocean below or on the earth, so must there be an ocean above or in heaven, from which at times—on certain sluices, presumably, being opened—rain fell to moisten the ground and fit it for the growth of plants.

“ Let the waters on the earth be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.”

Geological facts and reasonable inferences from them lead to the conclusion that the earth, on its emergence from the nebulous or gaseous state in which it first existed, appeared as an incandescent fluid, and next as a semi-solid ball, when all that was still vapourable in its constitution surrounded the glowing mass as a heterogeneous atmosphere, something, in all probability, like that which we now believe to constitute the photosphere of the sun. Heat, however, passing off into space, precipitation first of the more and then of the less refractory substances took place, and a crust of some consistency was formed. This, shrinking on the still melted mass within, caused it to burst through in lines and at particular points, whereby mountains and mountain-chains were formed, and the surface was made uneven. The temperature continuing to fall lower and lower, the aqueous vapour of the atmosphere was finally in great measure precipitated and condensed into water, which, running down the slopes, gathered itself into the hollows and there formed rivers, lakes, and seas, with more or less of dry land between; irregularities of surface, doubtless, exerting a paramount influence on the future distribution of land and water. For with shrinkings or subsidences here, and upheavals there, in combination with the tremendous rainfalls that must have occurred in the earlier geological epochs of the earth's history, whole continents with mountain-chains for their backbones, were disintegrated and swept away, whilst mighty oceans congregated here, were dissipated in vapour and dried up there; that being made over and over again the wet which had been the dry, and that the dry which had been the wet.

The rainfalls in these early geological epochs we cannot but presume must, indeed, have been tremendous?

If we only consider that the whole of the water now stored in the oceans that cover so large a portion of the earth's surface was once suspended first as gas or viewless vapour and then as steam in the atmosphere, we may form some idea of their extent and influence in fashioning the crust of the earth as it now appears. The mass of the stratified rocks which compose the proper crust of the globe is index enough of the extent of the continents that must have been disintegrated and ground down to supply the vast amount of material of which they consist, and of the combined powers of the rain and rivers that strewed this material at the bottom of the shoreless oceans where the strata took shape, as well as of the degree of heat still present in the central mass that fused or welded them into the solids they now present.

Disintegration of the first consolidated body of the earth did not, however, presumably supply the whole of the materials that now enter into the constitution of its stratified crust?

By no means; from all we know it seems reasonable to suppose that some very considerable proportion of these was furnished by the matters still suspended in the vaporous state amid the fiery atmosphere that must long have surrounded the incandescent body of the globe. It was not the water only of our present oceans, lakes, and rivers, the oxygen of our earthy and metallic oxydes, the carbonic acid of our mineral carbonates and coal measures that existed in the first instance as gas or vapour about the glowing globe; the salts, the metals, and the mineral substances most useful to man, and most prized by him, must probably all have been there originally in the form of elements, and only acquired their distinctive states and qualities when the temperature had fallen low enough to allow the law of the elective affinities to come into play. (See Appendix A.)

“And God called the dry land earth, and the waters called he seas.”

It is the Hebrew poet himself who calls the dry land *Arets*, and the gathered waters *Imim*—words which we translate Earth and Seas. Had God called these aggregates of solid and liquid matter by any names—and we venture to think that he never did, otherwise than through the mouths of men,—the writer of the sentence quoted could very certainly no more have known what they were than he could have known by what names day and night were called.

“Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed and the tree yielding fruit.”

The waters which at several epochs and for such lengthened periods covered the whole or a vast proportion of the globe, were undoubtedly the source, seed-bed, and nursery of the vegetable tribes which at length, and after the lapse of countless æons, gained a footing on the land, and from the lowly forms of sexless flags, lichens, mosses, ferns, horse-tails, &c., finally acquired sexuality, and showed themselves as the palm and pine, the fig, orange, olive, vine and host of other seed and fruit-bearing herbs and trees that prepared the way for the advent of the higher organisms, the conscious living creatures which made their appearance on the earth at last.

“Let there be lights in the firmament of heaven to divide the day from the night, to be for signs and for seasons, for days and for years, and to give light upon the earth.”

In our modern geological cosmogony we feel assured that a long interval elapsed between the formation of the moon and the definite formation of the sun as he now exists—if indeed the formation of the sun can yet be said, with any propriety, to be definite or complete. The moon, we conclude, circled round the earth in a period other than that she now observes, and shed a paler light than she does at present upon

its unpeopled surface, whilst the sun yet showed a disc less fiery than that he now presents, but of millions instead of hundreds of thousands of miles in diameter. The formation of the sun and moon, however, was simultaneous, according to the Hebrew poet, and had reference solely to the convenience of man. But the moon is some hundreds of thousands of years younger than the earth, and by æons older than the sun; and though man finds his advantage in the light and other attributes of these great bodies, they certainly took shape and had motions and qualities irrespectively of him, but in harmony with the laws which inhere in matter and bring about phenomena. The phases of the moon give man the *week*, and her period about the earth the *month*, as the course of the earth about the sun—of the sun about the earth in the olden belief—gives him the *seasons* and the *year*.

“Let the waters bring forth the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth.”

The waters were doubtless the womb in which the germs took shape that finally and in virtue of inherent powers eventuated not only in senseless vegetable forms, but in those gelatinous atoms with implanted sensibilities and aptitudes which by evolutionary efforts turned at length into radiates, molluscs, articulates, insects, fishes, amphibians, mammalians, and man. The absolutely *dry* is the absolutely barren; the *moist* is the source of life; hence the rise, in the heathen mythology, of Aphrodite, emblem of the generative power, from the sea.

“Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle and creeping thing, and beast of the earth.”

The Hebrew poet thought that the tenants of the dry land must have had their origin thereon, as he believed the tenants of the waters had theirs therein. Regarding the whale as a fish, he referred his birth to

the waters—and truly, in one respect, for his formation fits him for life in these alone ; but the whale and his congeners the porpoises are not fishes any more than their allied kinds the walruses, dugongs and seals ; for they all have warm blood, breathe by means of lungs, bring forth living young and suckle them precisely as do the mammalians that live on the land.

“And God said : Let us make men in our image, after our likeness. And God created man in his image, in the image of God created he him ; male and female created he them.” (Eng. Vers. and De Wette.)

Man, the Hebrew poet necessarily saw as the crown and consummation of the creative energy. But we may be permitted to regret that he should have imagined and should have said that man was made in the image of God ; for God as all-pervading Spirit or Force, Essence or Cause, is without parts or proportions, and so is without figure—a truth subsequently acknowledged in more than one part of the Hebrew Scriptures by other writers. God fills the universe, and is necessarily impersonal and unimaginable in any shape. It is the converse of the writer’s statement that is true : it is man who has fashioned God like himself. In harmony with the law of sexual distinction in all the higher classes of animals, man on his appearance on Earth is here fitly presented as cognate male and female, from the first.

And God gave the herb bearing seed, and the tree bearing fruit for meat, to the conscious creatures evolved, we venture to assume, in virtue of aptitudes inherent in certain of the inorganic natural elements, prime instruments of God, and possessed of powers which finally formed flesh and blood and nerve and brain, with the wonderful appanages of feeling, the moral sense, the religious sense, understanding and reason ; faculties by which man comes at length to conceive a Supreme Being to whom reverence and obedience are due, to arrogate rights for him-

self, and to own obligations to his fellow-men. It is to be regretted that the Hebrew writer should not have noted that God had also given the flesh of animals as well as vegetables for food to man and other creatures,—flesh to be supplied by the sacrifice of the weaker by the stronger and more highly organised among animals, man, as the most highly organised and most intelligent of any, sacrificing every other living thing that is fit for food to satisfy his appetite, and only attaining to the highest perfection of his powers where he diets on a mixture of vegetable and animal substances.

“Thus were finished the Heavens and the Earth and all the host of them.”

The writer gives his Elohim—God or Gods—much less time in which to complete the marvellous work than from its constitution and self-revealed history we now feel assured was necessarily employed. He had Eternity to draw on; but he has not used his privilege beyond the scanty measure of a few days. Any term, however, of any conceivable length he could have fixed on, would still have fallen short of that which God may have used in fashioning the vast assemblage of systems of which the Earth, in so far as mass is concerned, is so insignificant a part.

“And God rested the seventh day from all the work which he had made.”

The writer here obviously fancies Elohim like himself. . Weary with six days' work, he gladly rests on the seventh day, and so fancies that God must have done so too. But God never rests; for God is not to be thought of as prime or inceptive Cause only, but as persistent, ever-active Cause of all that is and of all that comes to pass. Were God to rest for an instant of time, the fair fabric of harmonious nature would be the Chaos out of which the Hebrew writer presumed it to have arisen.

Thus far we have a connected account of the

creation of heaven and the earth and its inhabitants—what is to be thought of the tale?

As of a simple, beautiful poem, the work of a man of thoughtful and imaginative mind, having the culture of the age in which he lived, and writing the language of his country in the highest state of purity to which it ever attained; a writer, therefore, of relatively recent times in the history of the Jewish people—one, moreover, who drew little or nothing from either oral or written tradition or legend, but gave shape in words to the ideas and fancies that spring up in minds of thoughtful and poetic mould. The account of Creation, as contained in the first chapter of Genesis, must be the work of a writer who lived during or immediately after the reign of Solomon, before the Hebrew tongue had begun to decline from its purity and become mixed with Aramaic words—one of the Isaiahs or Lyristis who penned the finest of the Psalms, the glory of the Hebrew literature, and that cannot be said to have their like in the letters of any other people.

The narrative of the first chapter of Genesis is not, however, the only account we have in the Hebrew Scriptures of the early history of the world, and more especially of the circumstances under which man began his career on earth?

There is a second account, commencing with the fourth verse of the second chapter of the Book of Genesis, which differs notably from the first, and begins abruptly in these words: "These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created."

It might almost be presumed that there was something wanting here?

So much of the document, seemingly, as gave the generations referred to. The verse, however, has every appearance of an interpolation, intended to connect the narrative that is to follow with that which has

gone before. But so little affinity have the two accounts, in fact, that a new hand is at once suspected by the critical reader, who soon finds his suspicion turned into certainty by the diversity of treatment he observes and the different name by which he finds the Deity now designated, the title in the first account being always Elohim—translated God in the English version, and in the second Jahveh or Jahveh-Elohim—translated Lord and Lord-God with us. Nor is this all. A multitude of minor differences in the style and kind of information given, meet the critical eye, which proclaim not *two* but *four* writers, who must have lived at times remote from one another, and had access to legendary and documentary matter that did not always agree in its terms. The first account we have, however, is characterised by biblical scholars and critics as being from the pen of one of the Hebrew writers called *Elohists*, the second from that of one or more of those entitled *Jehovists*, all of them apparently belonging to the priestly caste, but deriving their information from different and often discrepant sources.

What is the first particular we have from the new writer—the Jehovist—in his account of the early world?

Passing by all the particulars connected with the formation of the heavens and the earth as we have them from the Elohist, he begins by informing us that Jahveh-Elohim, the Lord-God, besides the heavens and the earth, had also created “every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb before it grew.” He appears to have imagined that trees and herbs were made by God much in the way that artificial flowers are made in the present day, and then planted in the ground, as he himself was wont to see husbandmen at work planting pot-herbs round Jerusalem.

What reason is assigned for God’s procedure in

thus making herbs and trees, instead of evoking them from the ground like the Elohist?

It is because "the Lord-God had not yet caused it to rain on the earth, and there was not a man to till the ground."

The writer of these words could not, it is obvious, have known of the Elohist's account of Creation, in which there was not only water enough and consequently rain, but herbs and trees growing and yielding their seed and fruit, and both man and woman to tend the plants and till the ground, supposing that to have been needful to the growth of vegetables in a state of nature, which it is not. The vast and vigorous growths that gave rise to the carboniferous strata of the earth all took place myriads of years before there was a man to till the ground, though there must have been rain enough and to spare, and carbonic acid in the air in such excess as was probably incompatible with the existence of any but the lower forms of animal life,—certain it is that none of the higher forms had as yet made their appearance when the mighty morasses spread and the forests grew that now lie buried in our coal measures.

Have we not evidence in geological records of rain having fallen on the earth not only before the appearance of man on its face, but even before that of any of the higher forms of animal life?

Yes, ample; on sand-stone slabs deposited during the tertiary period of the earth's existence we not only find pit-marks like those made on sand and mud by falling showers at the present day, but even learn the quarter whence the wind blew when the showers fell! More than this, we find the foot-prints of a frog or toad-like creature with a heavy tail, indicated by the trail or smoothed line obliterating the rain-pits in the wake of the footsteps! Yet more, and in strata much older than those to which the sand-stone slabs belong that preserve these interesting records,

we find abundance not only of vegetable, but of animal remains. So that we are enabled positively to say that plants grew, that animals lived on them, and on one another too, and that rain fell hundreds of thousands—it may be millions of years before there was a man to till the ground.

The Lord-God—Jahveh-Elohim—we are then informed, caused a mist to go up from the earth to water it, and make the plants he had fashioned to grow; further, that he made man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and he became a living creature (not *soul*, as in the English translation, the word *soul* leading to metaphysical conclusions not contemplated in the text); finally, that he planted a garden in Eden, and therein put the man whom he had made.

This is according to the text; but the physics of the writer are at fault, for if the earth had the water necessary to supply the mist which was to fall in rain, it had already the moisture needful to make plants grow. And then he makes his deity fashion the man as a statuary fashions his statue, and only put life into him at last by breathing into his nostrils; he knew nothing of the *law of evolution* which the science of our modern world discovers in nature's acts, which we are still to look on as the acts of God in his quality of Cause, and so of Creator.

The garden in Eden is carefully planted?

With every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food; the tree of life in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil; permission being given to the man freely to eat of the fruit of every tree in the garden save and except of that of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Of this tree he is not to eat; for in the day he does he is told that he shall surely die.

What is the next step in the proceedings of Jahveh-Elohim, according to the writer?

He is made to say, as if it were a discovery or afterthought, that it is not good for the man to be alone, and that he would therefore make a help-meet for him. Before proceeding with this kindly purpose, however, the writer makes Jahveh-Elohim turn off to form the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air, which he brings to the man, who is now named Adam, "to see what he would call them, and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof."

Adam's nomenclature has not reached us?

It has not, though it might as well have been preserved as many of the particulars given by the writer. It was probably simpler if less copious than that of his successors, the modern naturalists. Still, "for Adam," it is now said, and despairingly as it were, "there was not found an help-meet for him."

Jahveh-Elohim is made by the writer to proceed in a very roundabout way to supply the deficiency?

He causes a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, from whose side a rib is taken, out of which a woman is made and brought to the man, who styles her Isha, feminine of Ish, man.

This seems a poor conceit in face of the omnipotence of God and is in palpable contradiction with the statement in the Elohist account of Creation, according to which and in harmony with the great law of sexual distinction, God is said to have made man male and female from the first. May we not, therefore, without irreverence, say that if the Elohist's account be correct, that of the Jehovist cannot be true?

Surely it is a puerile contrivance as prelude and pretext for what the man is immediately made to say:—"This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man." But God took no rib from the side of man to form his counterpart, woman: "Man-like, but different sex," Isha needed not to be taken

in this childish and inconceivable way from the side of Ish to be of one flesh with him ; she was so by God's fiat when simultaneously with him she came into being, and long before he and she together had attained to the higher state of conscious life, worthy of their noble collective Aryan designation Man, from the reason (*manu skr.*) wherewith they were endowed.

Adam is charmed with his helpmate ?

Of course he is :—

“ So lovely fair was she,
That what seemed fair in all the world seemed now
Mean, or in her summed up, in her contained,
And in her looks. * *
Grace was in all her steps, heaven in her eye,
In every gesture dignity and love,”

according to the version of our own great king of song.

The man and the woman do not, however, according to the narrative, long enjoy the happy state of innocence and bliss in which they were placed at first ?

The serpent, says the story, was more subtil than any beast of the field, and said to the woman : “ Yea, hath God said ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden ? ”

And the woman ?

Said to the serpent : “ We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden ; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden God hath said : Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it lest ye die.”

The serpent answers ?

“ Ye shall not surely die ; for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.”

The serpent shows himself a subtil beast indeed,

apt in using as in understanding human speech, and excelling in persuasive power! The Elohist, in his account, gave man the dominion over the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air; but the Jehovist reverses the picture and makes man dominated by the reptile that creeps upon his belly, and, in popular belief, lives upon dust!

The woman yields to the suggestion of the insidiously friendly and familiar serpent?

She sees that the tree is good for food, pleasant to the eye, a tree to be desired to make one wise; and so she takes of the fruit and eats, and gives to her husband also, and he eats.

With the result?

That the eyes of both are opened—not, however, in any intellectual and moral sense, as might have been presumed, but in a sense purely physical, for they only now discover, it is said, that they are naked, and to hide their nakedness that they sew fig-leaves together to make them aprons—scanty covering enough, but which Jahveh-Elohim, according to the writer, improves on subsequently by making them “coats of skins.” The fig-leaves were at hand; but it has been made a question as to whence came the skins, and as to who it was who slew and flayed the animals that bore them, and shaped and sewed together the garments! And thus do men land themselves among the absurdities that crop up when they are guilty of the folly of anthropomorphosing the Infinite Supreme; and of giving a literal meaning to Eastern tales, the product of early and ignorant ages of the world!

The discovery of their nakedness was but a slight initiation for the man and woman into the knowledge of good and evil that was to follow on eating the forbidden fruit. Having senses, indeed, they needed not to have partaken of it to learn that they were naked. But is it in the nature of things, that aught

taken into the mouth could have given man first to know whether he were naked or clothed ?

It is not ; knowledge of the kind comes through the senses of sight and feeling, not of taste, and where these senses exist such knowledge is already possessed.

Or that fruit of any kind eaten should teach mankind the difference between good and evil ?

In so far as sweet, sour, bitter, and other savours are concerned, and as wholesome or unwholesome qualities are good and evil—Yes ; but as regards the moral good and evil implied though not expressed—No. God has connected the knowledge of what is good and evil from a moral point of view with certain parts of the brain, the functions of which are faculties of the mind, and it is by means of these that man knows and makes distinction between moral good and evil ; even as it is by the nerves of the tongue that he distinguishes between sweet, sour, and bitter, the sapid and insipid, &c., by those of touch and sight that he knows the difference between the rough and the smooth, the nude and the clothed, &c., and by those of the stomach and body at large that he is made aware of what is wholesome or deleterious.

The discovery of their nakedness by the man and the woman is sometimes interpreted otherwise than literally ?

But as it seems by a somewhat forced construction ; the effect of eating the forbidden fruit being said to have been to engender concupiscence, carnal desire,—as if that had been a sin ! But God had created man male and female, and put desire for one another into their minds ; blessed them, too ; said to them, Increase, multiply, and replenish the earth, and furnished them forth for the work. Neither, if we may trust our own Poet of Paradise, was Eve

“ Uninformed
Of nuptial sanctity and marriage rites ;

Nature herself wrought so in her that she,
Seeing her husband, turned,
And with obsequious majesty approved
His pleaded reason."

The feeling that leads man to cover certain parts of his body in lands where he has no need of clothing, may be said to be an element in his nature, almost as much his peculiar heritage as his religious sense, and must have made itself felt in the very prime of his emergence from mere brutality into properly human though still savage life. There seems, therefore, no occasion to see any recondite meaning as underlying Adam's discovery that he was naked. Such knowledge he certainly never had from eating any even such fruit as is said to have grown in the garden of Eden.

What interpretation is commonly put on the appearance and part played by the serpent ?

That it was the impersonation of Evil, designated Satan or Devil, who in guise of a serpent was the spokesman and tempter.

Is there any warrant in the text for such an assumption ?

There is none. The words are explicit : "The serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field."

Is there anything else against the vulgar interpretation ?

Yes ; the dualism implied in the recognition of a Principle of Evil apart or distinct from a Principle of Good—a recognition entirely foreign to the conception of Deity and the religious system of the Jewish people. If we constantly meet in the sacred writings of the Jews with Deity in the two aspects of Good and Evil, their God, whether called El or Jahveh, is still ONE only. Though no more than the greatest among the Gods, he is ever to them the Supreme, Lord of the Dark as of the Light, source himself of the

Evil as of the Good that befalls. "Shall there be evil in a city and I have not done it, sayeth Jehovah." Amos iii. 6. "I form the light and create darkness; I make peace and create evil; I the Lord do all these things." Isaiah xlv. 7. We say nothing here of the absurdity of Evil personified and called Satan or Devil; for that is one of the earliest errors of mankind, as it still continues among the unworthy superstitions of the present day.

The prominence given to the SERPENT and the TREE—the whole idea of the garden in Eden, indeed, appears foreign to the Jewish theocratic system?

Most obviously; and so must the idea have been derived by the writer from what he or his countrymen had learned through intercourse, commercial or otherwise at some earlier period, through exile in later times, with the Medes and Persians, in whose religious system the dualism of Deity is an essential element; the beneficent principle in nature, typified by Light, being called Ormuzd, and the adverse principle, symbolized by the serpent, named Ahriman. It is not unimportant to observe that nowhere else in the Hebrew Scriptures save in this early part of the Book of Genesis do the serpent and Satan appear as counteracting the benevolent purposes of Jehovah. On the contrary, the image of the reptile, as in the instance of the brazen serpent which Moses lifted up in the Wilderness, is rather assumed as the emblem of healing:—propitiated by worship and sacrifice the death-dealing principle in nature stays the pestilence; and Satan, once admitted into the celestial hierarchy of the Hebrews, is seen but as one among the other ministers or agents of Jehovah—tempting and trying the faith of mankind, it may be, but never appearing as the adversary of the Supreme (*Job passim*).

What, according to the narrative, follows on the discovery of their nakedness by the man and woman?

Hearing the voice of Jehovah-Elohim "walking in

the garden in the cool of the day !” they hide themselves among the trees. Jehovah-Elohim, not meeting them as usual, it might seem, calls Adam and says, “Where art thou ?”

Adam answers: “I heard thy voice in the garden and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.”

Adam does not, therefore, honestly and at once acknowledge his disobedience of the commandment he had received, but lays the fear he feels to face the Lord-God to the score of his nakedness.

So says the record; and Jahveh-Elohim, as if he needed the information, asks: “Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat?”

To which Adam, shifting the blame of disobedience from his own shoulders in a regrettable and somewhat cowardly way, makes answer: “The woman thou gavest to be with me gave me of the tree and I did eat.”

What next?

Turning to the woman, Jahveh-Elohim says: “What is this that thou hast done?” And on her meek reply, “The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat;” addressing the serpent, he proceeds: “Because thou hast done this thou art accursed above all cattle and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life.”

The serpent, as he had shown himself familiar with human speech, could scarcely be supposed to be ignorant of that which was divine, and so the writer felt himself at liberty to make his God inform the serpent of the penalty he was to pay for his interference.

But is the serpent really cursed above all other creatures, or does God truly curse any of his handiworks?

The serpent, like all other creatures, is fitted for his state in every particular. He never progressed save upon his belly, and is no more cursed than any creature else that, in the course of nature, has come into life. He is even more agile in his movements than many other animals much higher in the scale of organisation than himself, glancing through the herbage and striking his prey or throwing his deadly coil about it with the rapidity of lightning. Neither does he eat dust, but lives on animal food like other carnivorous creatures, which he also has the skill to secure alive for himself. Far from being cursed, indeed, the serpent, in many of his kinds, is favoured with such an instrument of destruction in his poison fangs as gives him superiority over every other creature, no matter how much larger, stronger, and more knowing than himself, man, the lord of creation himself, not excepted.

There is something said about especial enmity put between the woman and the serpent?

"I will put enmity between thee and the woman, says the story, "and between thy seed and her seed, it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise its heel."

What may be the meaning of this?

It must be allegorical, like so much else that has already been commented on; it certainly can have no such meaning as is usually put on it by theologians. A reasonable interpretation of the enigmatic words, however, may be found by a reference to certain ancient Indian sculptures, where the Sun-God, Krishna, source of life, is seen with one foot on the head of the snake, Kaliga, emblem or source of darkness and death; or to the modern planisphere, where the kneeling Hercules, one of the Sun-Gods, is represented with uplifted club treading on the head of the mighty snake that coils about the pole, emblem of winter and the surcease of life. The reference, therefore, is probably astrological, and the meaning of the

myth scarcely doubtful :—The sun, escaping from the inferior or wintry to the superior or summer signs of the zodiac at the vernal equinox, triumphs over winter, and awakens the earth from the sleep of death to renovated life. Feigned to have died and lain buried for a season, and mourned over as Osiris, Adonis, Tammuz, &c., he is hailed anon with acclamations and rejoicings as newly risen from the dead.

So much for the serpent. What is said to the woman ?

“I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception ; in sorrow shalt thou bring forth children, and thou shalt be subject to thy husband and he shall rule over thee.”

And to the man—?

“Because thou hast hearkened to the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree of which I commanded thee, saying, thou shalt not eat of it; cursed is the ground for thy sake ; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life ; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread till thou return unto the ground ; for out of it wast thou taken—dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.”

Can we conceive God multiplying sorrow on man as a penalty for yielding to such an impulse as the desire to know good from evil ; an impulse, moreover, implanted by himself ?

It were surely impious to think of anything of the kind in connection with the idea of God.

- Or of God inflicting pain on woman in particular, as a penalty for putting forth her hand and tasting of fruit within easy reach, fair to look on, pleasant to the taste, enlarging the scope of her mental vision, and not injurious to her body ?

It is absurd to speak of God as dealing in any such way with any of his creatures.

What were man, did he not know good from evil ?

He were then no better than the beasts—more helpless, indeed, than they; for in their finer senses of sight, touch, smell, and taste, they discriminate more nicely than man in many cases between the good and the bad, in so far as their bodily state is concerned.

The *desire to know* is even a primary impulse, one of the great gifts of God to man?

It is so, indeed; and is the one desire which man in his most advanced state sees it of the highest moment to cultivate; source, as it proves to be, of all the pleasures he has in his higher intellectual existence; of so much, therefore, that gives him his true title to be looked on as lord of the creation.

But man was threatened with death did he eat of the forbidden tree: "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," says the record. Yet not only did Adam not suffer bodily death at the time of his eating, but he may be said to have then awakened to his higher intellectual and responsible life.

Theologians cannot therefore be warranted in their assumption that man became obnoxious to death through disobeying the arbitrary commandment said to have been given him?

What follows immediately shows that the writer believed man to have been created mortal from the first: He is driven out of the garden in Eden lest he should take also of the tree of life, eat, and so like the Elohim—the Gods, live for ever. It is not true, therefore, according to the Hebrew tale itself, that death was brought into the world through man's infringement of an order not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Immortality was no item in the original charter either of man or any other creature or thing; and it is even impious to speak of the natural and inevitable surcease of life as a penalty: a *necessity* in the nature of things, it can be no penalty. It has been well and truly said that

the natural term of man's life is about three score and ten years. The few who reach extreme old age, between four score and four score and ten, mostly find the length of the way more than wearisome long before its end ; the load of years grows heavy to be borne, and there are few who are not well content to lay down the burthen at last.

Death being regarded as the greatest of evils that could befall mankind, and as a punishment for disobedience, by the Hebrew writer, can he be warranted in speaking of the pain connected with child-bearing as imposed on the woman by way of peculiar penalty for the active part she took in aspiring after other knowledge than that which she had through her mere senses ?

Pain under any circumstances is first and in the natural fitness of things an admonition to beware of influences injurious to the bodily state, and, in the case of the woman about to become a mother, of the great event in her life that is imminent, putting her on her guard and bidding her make provision for the safety of herself and the fruit of her womb. And then it would seem that the effort necessary to bring forth children cannot, in the nature of things as they are (and so as they could best be), be dissevered from more or less of suffering.

Might not the woman, however, have been so framed by the Mighty Workman as to have brought forth without suffering ?

No ; if pain be suffered in the process, we may feel assured that it was inseparable from it. Constituted as she is, we may be certain that she could have been advantageously constituted no otherwise than as she is. All things are precisely as they could be. The pain inevitably connected with child-bearing is brief, the joy of motherhood is for life.

Is the ground truly cursed because of the man's participation in the woman's desire to know and

become as one of the Gods; or, like a school-boy, for having eaten an apple fair to view and on proof made found savoury and not unwholesome, though forbidden to put forth his hand by the owner of the garden?

God curses nothing that by his fiat is or comes to pass in conformity with his laws. If the ground bears thorns and thistles it also yields spontaneously the herbage on which so many creatures live, and on the flesh of which in turn man and other carnivorous tribes subsist. It supports the luxuriant vegetation of the tropics unsolicited, and in the warmer latitudes yields with little care the cereals, roots and fruits that minister to man's most pressing wants; under less favourable aspects of clime and site, it still gratefully responds to forethought and ingenuity when brought to bear upon it:—Anticipating results and using means to ends in harmony with nature's laws, the barren heath under man's fostering care puts on a smile, and waving harvests look up to the sun where scarce a blade of grass had grown, and the harsh or sapless wilding is turned into the melting pulp of our summer fruits. To speak of the ground as cursed of God is to libel the Supreme—if that indeed were possible. At the price of labour man has all his most necessary wants supplied by the kindly ground. One of God's best gifts to man, indeed, has been said to be the necessity to work, by one who was himself among the busiest of workers whilst he lived, and who has done so much through the work he did to free the world from superstition and the base idea that idleness is a boon.

What can be said for the information Adam receives that he is dust and shall to dust return?

That the body of man is made up in but small measure of the dust of the ground; it is in fact much more the creature of water and the air than of any kind of earth. And as to the interpretation put on the text that instead of the eternal life intended for

him at first he is henceforth to have a merely temporary existence, this is readily disposed of by acknowledging God's purposes as they are from eternity so are they eternal ; and man, as he has a determined existence in time, to have been from the first precluded from the possibility of living for ever. That death came not into the world because of any transgression by man of a commandment of God is certain ; for that the earth was peopled by myriads of animals which lived and died æons before man appeared upon the scene is certified to us by the remains of these we find entombed in such profusion in the strata that compose the crust of the globe. The law of evolution, of birth and death, instituted as it undoubtedly was from the beginning of life on the earth, may without irreverence be spoken of as a necessity in the nature of things : were this not so, the law would not now exist ; for neither God nor the revelation he makes of himself in his laws suffers essential change.

Would immortality on earth be verily a boon ?

As it is not given, so the divine wisdom proclaims that it would not. In the Pagan mythology Heracles penetrates to the garden of the Hesperides, slays the dragon that guards the tree of life, gathers the fruit, and brings it forth for the use of man ; but Pallas Athene meets him on the way and takes the fruit from his hand, knowing that it were not good for man to eat of it and gain, like the Gods, immortal life. Progress were, indeed, impossible did not one generation of men succeed another. Succession is the law, which, as it now obtains, so did it ever obtain. Kinds, indeed, only continue to appear so long as the conditions necessary to their existence prevail ; when these cease the living things that depend on them—plants or animals—die out and are seen no more. Time was when man was not ; and the time may come—will in all likelihood necessarily come—when, with

change in the cosmical, telluric, atmospheric, and other conditions wherewith his life is bound up, he, like the mammoth and megatherium, will have disappeared from the face of the earth.

Man, however, to return to our text, had disobeyed the commandment said to have been given by God; but he was still in the garden in Eden, and could not be suffered to remain therein?

The Lord-God, according to the story, is made to say: "Behold the man is become as one of us to know good from evil; and now lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat and live for ever; therefore the Lord-God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, and placed cherubims and a flaming sword which turned every way to keep the tree of life."

The qualities of things eaten, we have seen, consist in such as affect the palate and the bodily health—how, then, conceive a tree bearing fruit possessed of the power to confer everlasting life?

How, indeed! Everlasting life belongs to God and the manifestation he makes of his Being in the Universe; to nothing else.

The tale must, therefore, be an allegory—a myth, an Idea clothed in words, possibly transmitted by legendary tradition through long ages before it reached the Hebrew writer who moulded it into the indifferent shape in which it meets us now. Several interpretations have been given of the allegory?

Several; among others one of an astronomical character. By turning to a celestial globe it will be seen that as Virgo (Eve) with the ears of corn or fruit-bearing bough in her hand, followed by Arcturus (Adam) sinks in the West, Perseus (the Cherub armed with the flaming sword) rises in the East and seems to drive the woman and the man from the sky. There are other interpretations, however, on legen-

dary grounds, that better consort perhaps with Hebrew history than this, which implies a knowledge of the constellations and of celestial phenomena of which we find few traces in the Book of Genesis.^b

The first account of Creation ended as we saw with God's resting from his labours and seeing that *all was very good*. The second has a less satisfactory conclusion ; for here, as we have just seen, we find God cursing the ground, inflicting pains and penalties for the transgression of an arbitrary commandment, and expelling the man and the woman from the garden of delight he had planted for their happy dwelling-place, thwarted in all his benevolent purposes by the serpent!

These two accounts differ so essentially that it seems impossible to conceive them as emanating from the same individual or delivered through inspiration, as said, from one source?

They differ so entirely and deal with such dissimilar elements that they must be held to have proceeded not only from different individuals of the same family of mankind, but even to have originated among different races of men. The first or Elohist account may be spoken of as purely Semitic; the second as essentially Aryan in its character. The Elohist narrative in its rhythmical and balanced proportions is obviously the product of a single mind, creating in conformity with the rules of Hebrew poetical composition:—it is a connected history of Creation by a Poet. The Jehovistic account cannot be seen from the same point of view. It has every character of a compilation from tradition and legend, and assimilates in many leading particulars with the myths and beliefs of the western branch of the great Aryan family of mankind which find expression in its Sacred Scriptures, the Zend-

^b See Dr Kalisch's learned Commentary on Genesis.

Avesta, as the views of the Eastern branch of the same race are comprised in the Vedas. The Elohist account might have originated among any of the ancient peoples somewhat advanced in civilisation and possessed of the leisure needful for speculation and literary labour. The Jehovistic account, on the contrary, without poetic verve or semblance of constructive talent, is a kind of chronicle of imaginary doings, it is the work of an archæologist or antiquary and cherisher of mythical and legendary lore,—a character we miss entirely in the Elohist, in whose brief and grand summary we note no reference either to myth or legend, and no *statement on which a single dogmatic conclusion could be hung*—no word that does not accord with a pure and simple sense of the power and goodness of God as Creator of the world. In the incoherent narrative of the Jehovist, on the contrary, we meet with nothing that cannot be referred to myth or legend, derived moreover, for the most part, from sources beyond the boundaries of Judea, pertaining to peoples other than the children of Israel, and *supplying foundations for the entire superstructure of Christian Dogma*. The Jehovistic account may even be said to sin in transferring essentials of the religious system of the Medo-Persian people to that of the children of Israel.

Which of these two accounts is believed to be the more ancient?

The Elohist; although this is questionable, for both accounts can be said with great certainty to date from relatively recent times—the Elohist being clearly enough shown, by the finished character of the work and the purity of the diction in the original, to be the product of an age not earlier nor yet much later than that of Solomon; the Jehovistic being as safely assignable to a time subsequent to the Babylonian captivity, when the Jews had been brought into contact with a people entertaining dualistic ideas

of Deity, and in their ritual addicted to Light or Fire, Tree and Serpent worship—Light or Fire, having Ormuzd, representative of the Good or Creative principle in nature, symbolised by the Sun and the Tree; Darkness, Destruction and Death, having Ahriman, in eternal antagonism to Ormuzd, with the serpent as his emblem.

This would account for the prominent places occupied in the Jehovist's story by the Tree and the Serpent?

The worship of the Tree and the Serpent was among the earliest and widest spread of all the ways in which man sought to show his sense of dependence on a something, a Power, beyond and stronger than himself. Unless it be the rising of the sun—"Great eye of God," no phenomenon in nature is so notable in temperate lands as the awakening of the vegetable world from death to life on the return of Spring; and save the lightning's flash, nothing is seen so deadly as the serpent's fang. No marvel, therefore, that the tree was chosen by man awakened to reflection as symbol of the Life-giving power, or the serpent selected as type of the death-dealing influence around him. These symbols personified and called by names became Brahma and Sciva, Ormuzd and Ahriman, Osiris and Typhon, Jehovah and Satan, God and the Devil. Detached from the Nature in which they inhere, and thought of as causes of the good and evil that befalls, they were then sought to be communed with in thankfulness or in fear, and, approached with praises, prayers, and offerings, all the elements of the religious ideas and ritual observances of mankind make their appearance.

The history of the garden in Eden, of the Tree of Life and the subtil serpent continue, we may presume, to occupy a prominent place in the religious annals of the Jewish people?

It is very notable, nevertheless, that the tale is not

even once referred to by any of the succeeding Old Testament writers; nor indeed until we pass the epoch of the Christian æra do we find it exerting the slightest influence on the religious opinions of the Jewish people. Neither Jesus of Nazareth nor his immediate friends and followers appear to have known anything of the garden of Eden, or

“ Of man’s first disobedience and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste
Brought death into the world and all our woe.”

It was not until Paul of Tarsus came upon the scene that the tale, taken in its most literal sense, began to bear fruit. Connecting the myth of man’s disobedience with the Messianic Idea, in the modified shape it had assumed in his day, with the moral and religious teaching, the beautiful life and cruel death of Jesus of Nazareth as they were orally related to him, Paul, the one man of culture, seemingly, among the dissidents of his day from the religion of his country, made it the foundation of the NEW DOGMATIC RELIGION he taught with such unwearied zeal, which has so long exerted so vast an influence in the world, and is only now beginning to lose its hold on the minds and imaginations of mankind.

Returning to our story, we find the man and the woman after their expulsion from Paradise knowing each other in the way ordained of God and bringing children into the world—Cain and Abel, according to the unhappy tale of the Jehovistic writer, earliest record of dissension between man and man, of the first murder done in time, of the parties to the difference Brothers, and its ground Religion!

True—according to the story:—Cain the husbandman’s offering of “the fruits of the earth” was not respected of Jehovah, whilst Abel the shepherd’s sacrifice of “the firstlings of his flock and the fat thereof” was accepted.

We might have imagined that the laborious husbandman's offering of the products of his industry and skill would have been at least as well received by Jehovah as the idle herdsman's lamb and kid ?

Certainly, and with good reason we might. But as Jehovah in the later Jewish ritual, of which alone we have the record somewhat complete, is only to be approached with blood-offerings, it would not have suited the modern priestly compiler of these mythical tales of early times to have had the fruits and flowers of the earth—God accursed, as said—as grateful to his God Jehovah as the blood or Life, and the fat and flesh, of his daily and periodical sacrifices.

Cain is described as dissatisfied with the rejection of his offering and the preference shown to that of his brother ?

So it is said—his countenance fell; and turning his anger against his brother, they had words,—they had a quarrel; and as they were in the field Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him. The blow therefore could not have been of malice prepense,—nor meant to be fatal, as unhappily it proved.

Cain is not informed why his offering of fruit and flowers was not respected ?

He is not; he is only told that "if he does well he will be accepted, and if not well that sin lies at the door;" but where he had done amiss, and so had his offering rejected, is not set forth in this enigmatical sentence. With the Jewish ritual as subsequently instituted before us, however, we are at no loss to interpret it. To the Hebrew mind there could be no remission of sins without the shedding of blood—the terrible idea that forms the foundation of the dominant Christian faith, though it certainly has no part in the religion of Jesus of Nazareth.

Jehovah is wroth with Cain for his foul deed, and tells the criminal that he is now cursed from the

earth ; that when he tills the ground it will not yield its strength, and that henceforth he should be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth.

Does not the writer here make physical results depend on moral conditions ?

He does ; but if Cain, with his hands all embrued in his brother's blood, tilled a fertile soil with the requisite skill and care, the land, by a prior fiat of God, would not fail to yield its increase ; and the most pious and moral man who settled on a desert, or who brought neither skill nor care to bear on his work even under circumstances favourable in themselves, would have failure for his portion. He who conforms to the laws of nature in their several domains, whatever his moral or religious character, will not fail of his return ; as he who does not so conform himself, no matter what his pious disposition, will necessarily go without reward.

Cain, however, is to be protected from violence ?

Jehovah, it is said, set a mark on him, lest any one meeting him should slay him.

Such a precaution would imply that there were other people in the earth besides Adam and Eve and their son Cain ?

It would so ; but the book is full of like inconsistencies, as in this place it is very notably, with the commandment elsewhere delivered, that he who knowingly took life should surely himself be put to death.

Cain and Abel are the first children of the first man, Adam, and his wife, Eve, according to the Jehovistic narrative. Does this agree with the Elohist ?

It does not. The Elohist's story, interrupted after the third verse of the second chapter of Genesis, is resumed at the first verse of the fifth chapter in these words : " This is the book of the generations of Adam ; " and Adam's first son is not Cain, neither is

the second Abel ; but the first and only son he has whose name is mentioned is Seth, and though Adam is reported to have lived hundreds of years afterwards and begotten sons and daughters, neither they nor their descendants are named. The genealogy of Seth alone is continued, he begetting Enos, Enos Cainan, Cainan Mahalaleel, and so on, till we come to Lamech, who begets Noah, the next personage who plays an important part in the mythical tale in the study of which we are engaged.

The terrible tale of the murder of Abel by his brother Cain may therefore be the work of one of the later Jehovistic writers ?

It has every appearance of being so ; and if we may imagine the writer thinking it desirable to have the earliest possible authority for the blood-stained altars of his day, we can divine his motive for inventing the story of the offerings and of the preference shown by Jehovah for the bloody over the bloodless sacrifice, inserting it where it stands, and adding the murder of the one brother by the other by way of giving colour and force to his picture. No man in his senses, freed from prejudice and possessed of the requisite information, can believe for a moment that the Jehovistic writer could have known that Cain killed Abel, or that the three sons of Noah were Shem, Ham, and Japhet.*

* Subsequently to the time when Nehemiah was Governor of Judea under Cyrus, says M. Albert Reville, the office of High-Priest, as conferring the chief authority in the country, became an object of ambition, not only between one priestly family and another, but between different members of the same family ; and in a certain instance in which two brothers were aspirants to the office, so high did the rivalry run, that the one killed the other. It were not presuming too far, perhaps, as all fiction has a foundation in fact, and as we are now so well assured of the relatively modern date of by far the greater portion of the Pentateuch, to find in this recent instance of fratricide the source of the story of the murder in

God, in calling men and women into the world, had endowed them, as well as all other conscious living creatures, with the wonderful faculty of producing their like, and continuing themselves in their kind?

He had virtually said, in the power bestowed, but not in words: "Increase and multiply and replenish the earth," a commandment they were no more loth to obey in times gone by than they are in the present day. But Jehovah, as it appears by the record, had been less careful than might have been expected in selecting the race by which the world was to be peopled; for, to say nothing of the murder of Abel by Cain, no more than ten generations of men had lived on the earth before their wickedness was found so great, the imaginations of their heart so continually evil, that, according to the record, it even "repented Jehovah that he had made men upon the earth."

This is extraordinary language in connection with the name of God?

With the idea of God, as we entertain it, certainly, but not with that of the Jehovah of the Hebrew Scriptures, who was but a powerful man of the early, jealous, revengeful, arbitrary, variable, and often savage type. The statement, nevertheless, stands part of the sacred writings of the Jews, still held inspired not only in their precepts and ordinances, but in every word and letter, and believed by more than they are denied among Christians to be the word of God to man.

Can we, however, presume that God ever repents of anything he has done, or changes his mind as to aught he had intended to do?

Man may repent and change; God cannot do so.

the olden time of Abel by his brother Cain.—(Comp. *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 1^{er} Mars, 1872.)

Is there any reason given for the great wickedness charged upon mankind ?

There is none.

Is not the disobedience in eating the forbidden fruit assigned as its cause ?

It is not once referred to ; and if it had been so, the disobedience as *consequence* of an untoward disposition could not be its *cause*.

Is there anything else in the text that may be held adequate to bring about the evil imaginations imputed ?

There is absolutely nothing. The sons of God, indeed, are said to have seen the daughters of men that they were fair, and to have taken them wives of all they chose ; and this incomprehensible statement has been laid hold of as a means of accounting for the prevailing wickedness. But the sons of God, whoever they were, must be presumed, from their title, to have been of higher nature than the daughters of earth, and to have improved, not deteriorated, the breed.

And this, indeed, in so far as we can judge by what is said, appears to have been the case ; for we learn that the children born to the sons of God cohabiting with the daughters of men became mighty men, which were of old men of renown ?

So runs the tale ; and the myth or legend helps to no solution of the matter. The wickedness of men, however, was great in the earth, and every imagination of man was evil continually, so that Jehovah said at length ; " I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast and creeping thing, and the fowls of the air ; for it repenteth me that I have made them."

The beasts and creeping things and fowls of the air had done nothing to deserve extermination ?

Nevertheless they were to share in the doom of man and be destroyed.

Certain reservations, however, are to be made to the general portentous resolution come to by Jehovah?

Addressing Noah, who is characterised as "a just man and perfect in his generations," Jehovah informs him that the end of all flesh had come before him, and that he had resolved to destroy them, and all wherein is the breath of life, by means of a flood of water which he will bring upon the earth. With Noah, however, he will establish his covenant. Him and his family, of all mankind, he will save alive by means of an ark, or great ship, which he is ordered to construct of certain materials, of certain dimensions, and in certain ways, in which he and his family, and two and two, male and female, of every living thing, are to be housed whilst the whole earth is laid under water.

Noah does all he is ordered?

He does, and with his wife, his sons and daughters, their sons and daughters, and the pairs to be saved alive, is safely housed in the ark. Then, it is said, are the foundations of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven opened, and rain falls for forty days and forty nights, and the waters prevail exceedingly, covering the higher hills fifteen cubits and upwards, so that all in whose nostrils was the breath of life are destroyed from the face of the earth, Noah alone and they that were with him in the ark remaining alive.

How long is the flood of waters said to have prevailed?

After increasing for a hundred and fifty days, the fountains of the deep, it is said, are stopped, and the rain from heaven is restrained. The waters then begin to assuage; but it is not until the first day of the tenth month that the tops of the highest lands are seen, when the ark grounds on the mountains of Ararat; and only after the lapse of a whole year of imprisonment that Noah, finding the ground dry,

takes off the covering of the ark and goes forth, he and his family, and all that had been saved alive, with the blessing of God upon him and them, and a renewed injunction to be fruitful and to multiply upon the earth.

Noah was ordered to take into the ark pairs of *every* living thing. Every living thing would include whales, seals, fishes, and the inhabitants of the waters generally—crustaceans, molluscs, radiates, &c.—yet we find no mention made of them.

There is none; but if they were to be saved, some provision was as necessary for them as for the other air-breathing land animals. With the obvious difficulty of providing in the ark for the inhabitants of the water, however, they are left to take their chance in the Tohu-Bohu of the flood. Every inhabitant of the water, nevertheless, has a definite sphere assigned it, for which it is fitted, and out of which it cannot live. Natives of the salt water cannot, for the most part, live in the fresh, nor can those of the fresh generally live in the salt. The whalebone and spermaceti whales, among many others, would have proved especially awkward occupants of the great ship!

There is provision made for feeding the host of living creatures there gathered together?

There is, but for the vegetable feeders only.

How, then, were the flesh feeders to be kept alive?

By accommodating themselves, say the apologists for every untenable statement within the lids of the Bible, to the dry fodder of the phytivorous kinds—by feeding *with*, not *on* them.

The lion, tiger, wolf, and weazel eat hay and straw like the ox and sheep?

So most of our authoritative exponents of the difficult Bible passages say. But the structure of the teeth and jaws of the carnivorous tribes incapacitates them from doing as our learned exegetists would have

them, for they can only cut and tear their food in pieces, not grind it into pulp like the ox and sheep. The structure of their stomach and intestines, moreover, is not of the kind that fits them to digest and assimilate vegetable food.

Was not some provision also necessary for saving the members of the vegetable world alive?

As indispensably necessary as it was in regard to those of the animal kingdom, yet none is made, probably because the writer had overlooked the fact that plants held under water for any length of time are as surely drowned as animals. Scarcely any land-growing plant can be kept for days, weeks, or months submerged without being killed; neither will the plants that live naturally in fresh water exist in salt water, nor will salt-water plants survive in fresh water. The pretty incident of the olive leaf with which the dove sent forth from the ark returned as a sign that the waters were abated, was an impossibility; after steeping in brine for twelve months all the olive trees must have been long dead and their leaves rotten.

And in what state could the Earth have been left after a flood that covered the highest mountains fifteen cubits and upwards?

What could it have been but a bank and shoal of desolation, bare of herbage of every kind; so that the vegetable feeders saved alive in the Ark must have died forthwith of hunger when released from their temporary shelter.

Had the flesh-feeders been thought of in the Ark, they too must now have starved like the phytivorous kinds when dispersed over the bare, stony, muddy, and depopulated flats?

They would but have been saved from sudden death by drowning to fall victims to a lingering death by starvation.

There are two accounts of the flood, as of so many

other incidents in the Hebrew Scriptures, one as usual by the Elohist, the other by the Jehovist ?

There are certainly two different accounts, much intermingled, indeed, yet separable for the most part by careful sifting from one another.

Do they agree ?

No ; they differ in several important particulars, especially in a distinction made by the Jehovist between what are called clean and unclean animals. Whilst two and two of the unclean are ordered to be taken into the Ark, the clean are to be received by sevens—three pairs and an odd one.

The odd one would have been of little use in helping out Jehovah's final admonition to the pairs on leaving the Ark ?

But was necessary to avoid breaking the sets and making the survivor of any pair useless ; for a victim must be available for the religious service which Noah is made to perform immediately on quitting his long imprisonment, his first act having been to build an altar to Jehovah and to offer burnt offerings thereon of every clean beast and clean fowl he had had with him in the Ark.

Jehovah is gratified by Noah's pious acknowledgment of the favour shown to him and his ?

Jehovah, it is said, smelled a sweet savour, and said in his heart : I will not again curse the ground for man's sake ; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth ; neither will I again smite every living thing as I have done.

This is surely very strange language to be set down as proceeding from his God by the writer !—But if the imaginations of the heart of man were seen in this way by Jehovah after the terrible catastrophe that had taken place, it is obvious that nothing had been done to better the Earth by drowning it ?

The almost despairing tones in which the narrative proceeds might fairly lead us to conclude that as little

had been done by the flood to amend matters in the past as to leave them with a chance of improvement in the future. But we are to be careful to assign the account given of what Jehovah said in his heart to its only possible author—the Hebrew writer; for it is very certain that he could know nothing of the purposes of the True God, and that the words ascribed to the Supreme are not his, but the man's.

Jehovah is now made by the writer to appear as though he were even sorry for what he had done, for he makes him go on to say: While the Earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and heat and cold, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease. And I will establish my covenant with you, and for a token I set my bow in the cloud; and it shall come to pass that when I bring a cloud over the earth that the bow shall be seen in the cloud, and I will remember my covenant which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh.

All this is purely human; meaningless in connection with the name of God; but the Hebrew writer had evidently no other conception of God than as a supernaturally powerful, irascible, revengeful, and yet upon occasion pitiful human being, thwarted continually in his kindly purposes by the waywardness and wickedness of the creature he had called into existence.

What is to be concluded in regard to the covenant which Jehovah is stated to have entered into with Noah, whereof the bow in the heavens is the token?

God's covenants were all made with man when he commenced his career on earth, their conditions implemented in the organisation of his body and its aptitudes, all co-ordinate with and in the most perfect possible harmony with the nature of things and the circumstances amid which he began, as he still continues, to be.

What are we to think of the writer's imagining

that God required a remembrancer of aught he meant to do or to leave undone ?

Whatever the writer may have imagined, we are to think that God, who is in and of all that is and that comes to pass, needs no remembrancer. The rainbow is a natural and necessary effect of the refraction or breaking up of the difform rays of which light is composed, by the globular drops of water that constitute rain, in virtue of laws inherent in and co-eternal with the nature of God and the qualities of matter. Rainbows *necessarily* spanned the sky countless ages before there was a Noah to observe them ; it may have been that one appeared when the several showers fell that have left their records in the sandstone slabs now preserved in our museums !

Looked somewhat closely into, therefore, with an eye couched of prejudice, the story of the Deluge (the Noachian Deluge as it is called to distinguish it from other deluges of which shadowy records are preserved in the legendary annals of several ancient nations) appears to be wanting in every particular that could give it the semblance not merely of probability but even of possibility ?

There can be no question of this. The motive assigned for its occurrence, in the first place, is absurd—utterly incompatible with the Idea of the God of reason and humanity. The saving instrument, the ark itself—speaking seriously of the matter for a moment,—was utterly incompetent to the end proposed,—it was not of half the tonnage of our Great Eastern steam-ship ! And how conceive all the animals that people the globe packed into any definite space, were it even ten or twenty times the area of the mighty ship ! How, again, conceive Noah and his three sons competent even in the course of their reputed long lives to have prepared and put together the materials of such a vessel as the one described. They were assisted by the wicked people about them,

it may be and has of course been said : true, and these were at the end to stand complacently by whilst Noah, his family, and selected pairs from either pole to the equator filed into the ark, and left them outside to drown !

Shut up in the ark pitched with pitch without and within, with a single window in the roof—and no more is mentioned, whatever apologists in face of the difficulty may say—a cubit each way in its dimensions, what must have been the inevitable fate of the included company ?

The door could scarcely have been closed, supposing the window to have been left open—and Jehovah himself is made to shut it, as shut it must needs be to keep out the rain—before the whole assembly would necessarily have been stifled. Man, the higher mammalia, and most birds, can live for hours, even for days, without food, but they cannot exist for five minutes deprived of air ; and the ark, with its window of a cubit, or eighteen inches, square in the roof, would have proved as inevitably fatal by stifling to the creatures within it intended to be saved, as the waters would be found deadly to those outside destined to be drowned.

So deadly an agent as vitiated air operating immediately would have made any further provision for the maintenance and comfort of the inhabitants of the ark unnecessary ; but supposing such a possibility as asphyxia not to have occurred—and it is obviously never contemplated by the narrator—how could Noah and his three sons have distributed their appropriate rations to the several pairs or sevens of all the animals that peopled the earth, now gathered together around them ; how have supplied them with the indispensable water, how have got rid of the inevitable excrements ?

How indeed !

Why, then, dwell on such childish, impossible, and

even impious tales as those in the Old Testament of the Jews concerning the flood and Noah's ark?

Because they still obtain currency and credence in the world, although they undoubtedly deserve all these epithets, and are in very truth not only childish, impious, and impossible, but misleading, and calculated to give false notions of the God of Nature's dealings with mankind and the world. The tale of the Deluge and the ark is never presented in its true light by the ministers of religion, though as men of culture their eyes must have been opened to its absurdity, and the most imperative of all their duties is surely to speak truth, and to show God's providence in acts harmonious with the great eternal changeless laws, elements in his own nature, whereby he rules the world.

The Deluge and the favour shown to Noah and his family are still advanced as illustrations not only of God's displeasure and justice in dealing with the wicked, but of his goodness and mercy also, and the special favour in which he has the exceptionally good and pious?

This is certainly the case. But God's displeasure and justice are shown by the punishment or reward which men bring on themselves through the violation or observance of his laws. Neither do his goodness and mercy appear any more in the lives saved from flood and tempest, than is his vengeance proclaimed in the lives that are lost. As we proceed in the narrative, indeed, suspicions arise that all the members of the family exceptionally saved were not so worthy of the favour shown them as it seems easy to imagine they might have been. The mythical tale of Noah and the Deluge, with all the unreason attached to it, is nevertheless made to enter as a prominent feature into the Christian system. The infant of parents belonging to several of its churches, and these the most influential of all, does not undergo the initiatory rite of baptism by sprinkling with water, without allusion being

made to Noah and his family, "whom God of his great mercy saved in the ark from perishing by water;" though the connection between a world drowned, with Noah saved, and the sprinkling of a little water on the face of an unconscious infant escapes both common sense and unsophisticated reason.

The tale of the Deluge is one of the incidents recorded in the Hebrew scriptures that rivets itself on the mind and imagination of the young, and, with the further reference made to it in connection with a solemn religious rite, scarcely fails to exercise an adverse influence on the judgment of men and women in riper years?

There can be little doubt of this. The ship-like ark with the nicely-formed figures of its multitudinous tenants, headed by Noah, his wife, and their sons, Ham, Shem, and Japhet, which is presented to almost every child among us when its intelligence begins to dawn, fixes the myth as a positive occurrence in the mind of the vast majority of children born into the world of Christian parents, and it is not every one who can free himself in after life from the absurd and indefensible conclusions to which it leads.

To refer to the goodness and mercy of God in connection with the world he has drowned, is surely beside the mark?

It appears so to the unprejudiced who venture to use the reason and moral sense which God has given them for their guidance, and to see things in consonance with the knowledge of their age. If the earth was filled with wickedness, as said, and it were conceded that wickedness deserved punishment, still drowning does not seem either the reasonable or merciful way of bringing about the amendment which we must presume to be the object of all castigation—the castigation of God in especial. And if Noah and

his family were worthy to be saved alive, they could not have been alone in their worthiness;—there were new-born babes, for instance, helpless infants, and young children, who could not have deserved drowning on the ground that their fathers and mothers were wicked. The hapless animals, also, which perished, had been guilty of none of the disobedience and wickedness alleged against the human kind, and could no more have merited their untimely fate through obeying their natural instincts, than the pairs saved could have merited the preference shown them through fulfilling theirs.

So much for the moral aspects, or some of the moral aspects, of the Noachian Deluge. Can the debacle referred to be comprehended and accounted for on simple physical grounds?

As an universal over-swimming of the earth within the period when man became its denizen, the Deluge of the Bible is incomprehensible; and had it even been possible, yet may we feel confident that it did never occur. The dry land of the earth, indeed, has in every part known to us been at different and generally far remote epochs oftener than once at the bottom of deep seas and vast fresh-water lakes. So much we know for certain; and we further feel assured that the bottoms of many of our present seas and lakes must once have been dry land. The islets that stud the vast Pacific Ocean rest for the most part on the peaks of lofty mountains now submerged. Upon and around these the coral insect, building its own habitation for ages, spreads itself abroad level with the wash of the sea, and furnishes man with resting places amid depths he tries in vain to fathom with the common plummet line. Arctic and Antarctic lands, again, now overlaid with thick-ribbed ice, thousands of feet in thickness, where lichens and mosses are the only vegetable productions sparsely seen, once possessed a luxuriant growth of the trees and shrubs of temperate

lands, and teemed with insect and higher animal life. The temperate regions, again, where nature now smiles for half the year at least, and the soil yields corn and wine and oil to the industry of man, were overlapped in former ages of the world by glaciers hundreds of feet in thickness, pouring down from northern heights, and putting an effectual end to the life that had been upon them as ever Noah's Deluge could have done; telling the tale of their source and leaving records of their course in the ponderous blocks or boulders they have carried and left among us, as well as by the groovings and abraded surfaces of our hills, on which the eye of science reads the history of another state of things than that which now prevails.

Are there any traces of the presence of man on the earth discoverable among the records of those early ages?

In so far as we yet know it is only in the latest drift—the gravel, sand, and clay of the quaternary period, and in the caves of limestone rocks, that we find evidences in his remains, of man's existence on the earth. Associated as these are with the teeth and bones of animals fitted to live in cold or temperate climates,—the cave bear, the hyæna, the hairy mammoth and woolly rhinoceros, we infer that man as man was present in these northern temperate latitudes in times not exceedingly remote, geologically speaking, from the last great glacial epoch in the earth's history, but still some hundreds of thousands of years ago—how many it is impossible to say.

There may have been—doubtless there *was*—some foundation in fact for the tale of the Noachian Deluge?

Many regions of the globe are still exposed to disastrous floods that sweep away the inhabitants and their cattle by thousands, and we are therefore warranted in saying that in the story of the Noachian

Deluge we have the legendary record of some great flood which occurred in far off times, when the high lands of Armenia and Mesopotamia, whence appear to have come the Hebrews and others of the cognate tribes that peopled Palestine, were other than they are at the present day, or than they were fifty, a hundred, a thousand, or ten hundred thousand years ago. In the earlier ages of the world there must have occurred floodings of extensive districts of country, attended with disastrous consequences to life and possessions, of which we have the shadowy records in the tales of the Noachian, Deucalian, and other deluges. In our own day, indeed, we know that floods as terrible, it may be, as any that ever occurred in pre-historic times, and probably even more destructive to human life, have happened in regions watered by such mighty rivers as the Indus and the Ganges. These, however, we now interpret as having come to pass through no repentant mood or revengeful purpose on the part of God to drown the hapless people for their sins, but in consonance with natural incidents and natural laws, such as the giving way of a mountain barrier that had penned up a mighty lake, disintegrated by frost, and sapped by long-continued rain; the melting of a glacier which stretched across a gorge in the hills, and held back an ocean behind it; excessive rainfalls, accompanied by gales of wind that heaped up the waters of great draining streams at their outlets to the ocean, &c.

So much for the flood; what is said of Noah's doings after it?

He became a husbandman, planted a vine, drank of the wine it produced, and was drunken.

Some years must have elapsed before Noah could have indulged in such an improper way; and whence he had the vines, after all the plants on the face of the earth had been drowned, like its animal inhabitants, does not appear.

What happened next?

Noah's son Ham happening to come into the tent, and seeing his father in an unseemly state of nakedness, and probably asleep after his debauch, was cursed in his posterity by his parent, whilst Shem and Japhet, who covered him over, are blessed. "Cursed be Canaan (one of Ham's sons), a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren," is the form of the malediction pronounced on the son by his father for having had the use of his eyes.

What may be the meaning of this?

Canaan, according to the mythical story, was ancestor of the tribe that peopled the country called after him, which the Jews ravaged with fire and sword, appropriating the territory, and reducing the inhabitants whom they did not slaughter to the state of slaves. The curse of the innocent son—cursing in the Hebrew scriptures not always going by demerit, any more than blessing by desert—may have been contrived as an excuse for the murder and robbery perpetrated in after years by the sept which had Shem for its progenitor.

What is the next remarkable incident recorded in these mythical tales of prehistoric times?

The building of a city on a plain in the land of Shinar, and of a tower in especial whose top was to reach to heaven, all the people being still of one language.

What follows?

"Jehovah," it is said, "*came down* (!) to see the city and the tower." Not approving of the builders' proceedings, apprehensive it might seem that, united by the bond of a common language, their work would be carried to a successful issue, and heaven, his own peculiar dwelling-place, be stormed, he is reported to say further: "Go to! let us go down and there confound the language of the people that they may not understand one another's speech." This being done

—Jehovah coming down and confounding their speech—the inhabitants of the city on the plain of Shinar left off their building, became scattered abroad over the face of the earth, and heaven was not assailed.

The purpose for which this childish story was devised is plain ?

It was doubtless contrived as a means of accounting for the diversities of language which the Jewish writer, even in his restricted intercourse with the rest of the world, could not fail to observe. As to God's "coming down to see," and "the tower whose top should reach to heaven," all this is mere childishness, though not unimportant, as enabling us to measure the conception of the nature of Deity entertained by the writer, whoever he was—one of Nebuchadnezzar's captives in all probability, who had had reluctant occasion to see the lofty temple of Babylon, on whose summit, as the metropolitan "High place," the rites of Baal and Mylitta were celebrated. †

Have we not two accounts of the Tower of Babel and the confusion of tongues, as of so many others of the mythical tales of the Old Testament ?

We have but one account of this particular incident, and that by the Jehovist. It is not even alluded to by the more sensible Elohist. Both writers, however, give genealogies of Noah's descendants; but these do not agree, the Jehovist stopping short at the name of a certain Joktan, not mentioned by the Elohist, who carries on the stock to Terah, the father of Abram, the next most important personage met with in the story of the Hebrew people.

Terah, we are informed, removes with his family from Ur of the Chaldees to Haran—what happens to Abram his son ?

† See Herodotus, *Clio*, 199, and Appendix B.

Commanded to leave his father's house and kindred, under a promise of being made a great nation, Abram departs and comes into the land of Canaan; but a famine prevailing, he goes on, still southward, and reaches Egypt, where he abides.

What particular orders did Abram give his wife Sarai as they neared the land of Egypt?

He ordered her to report falsely of their relationship—to say she was his sister, not his wife, lest the Egyptians, to obtain possession of her, should make away with him.

What came of this?

Sarai, being fair to look on, was taken into the Pharaoh's house—as a concubine, of course, and Abram was well entreated. But Jehovah, it is said, “plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife,” though, to our modern sense of fairness, the parties who most deserved plaguing were Abram and Sarai themselves, because of their untruthfulness. Brought by the plagues he suffered—what they were we are not informed—and led to suspect that he had been imposed on, Pharaoh now summons Abram to his presence, and reproaches him with his falsehood. Why saidst thou she is my sister, so that I took her to me as wife? Now, then, there is thy wife; take her and begone. So he sent Abram away with his wife and all that he had.

There is a repetition of this story in another part of these Old Testament writings still held sacred?

There is. Abiding at a later period in Gerar (in Phœnicia), and again “lest they should slay him for his wife's sake,” Abram himself reports Sarai his wife as his sister to Abimelech, king of the country, who, like the Egyptian Pharaoh, had taken her to himself. But Elohim (for the story in its present shape, if the title of his God is to guide us, is from the Elohist, as

in its first form it was from the pen of the Jehovist) now threatens Abimelech in a dream with death to himself and disaster to his kingdom,—not because of his concupiscence, however, but by reason of his relations with Sarai, into which he may be said to have been led by the lie that was told him.

To what shift is the writer now driven to save Sarai from dishonour and to help Abram out of the disgrace of telling a falsehood?

He appends a number of particulars to his tale, which may fairly be taken for what they are worth, and then speaks of a more intimate blood-relationship between Abram and Sarai than any that had been hinted at before. But to make Abram the husband of his own father's child—his sister, therefore,—seems on every moral mode of computation a sorry means of helping him out of his difficulty—better to have left him with the lie than laden him with incest. But criticism is thrown away upon the unreason and incongruity of the twentieth chapter of Genesis.

To make confusion worse confounded, is there not another story, the same in almost every particular, connected with the history of Isaac and Rebekah?

There is, and strangely enough, and to puzzle us the more, it is the same, or it may be another Abimelech, King of the Philistines, who now takes the place of the King of Gerar and the Pharaoh of Egypt. Abimelech, King of the Philistines, however, is neither plagued like the Pharaoh nor threatened like his namesake; for, happening to look out of a window "he saw and behold Isaac was sporting with Rebekah his wife." On this discovery, and inferring the true relationship between Isaac and Rebekah, he challenges the husband with having spoken falsely.

Is Abimelech, King of the Philistines, wroth with Isaac and Rebekah because of the falsehood they had told him?

By no means. On the contrary, he sends Isaac

away, with his wife; "having done him nothing but good." Sarai would seem to have been a singularly attractive person; for when the encounter with Abimelech took place she must have been not less than ninety years old! And this and other such unhallowed tales comprised in these old writings of the Jewish people are still paraded in this nineteenth century of the Christian era as parts of the inspired word of God given for the edification of mankind!

Resuming the history of Abram, who now returns from Egypt, in company with Lot his brother, to Beth-el in Palestine, where, on his southward journey, he had already built an altar to Jehovah,—what happens?

The herdsmen of the brothers having quarrelled, they agree to separate; and Lot, having the first choice, selects the plain of the Jordan, which was well watered "even as that Garden of Jehovah the land of Egypt," before the calamity that befel Sodom and Gomorrah; whilst Abram, for his part, resolves to abide in the land of Canaan, which is again formally promised to him and his posterity as a possession for ever; though it is now many centuries since it was lost to them, and won by the Saracen and Turk.

The history of the Patriarch is interrupted at this point?

By the ill-digested account we find of a great battle fought between four kings against five; of the capture of Lot by Chederlaomer, one of the kings engaged, and his confederates; of the rescue of Lot by Abram and his retainers, and the recovery of all the booty that had been carried off; of the appearance on the scene of a certain Melchizedek, King of Salem, who is also styled Priest of the most high God, who blesses Abram, and in return receives a tithe of all the spoil recovered.

Various interpretations, it is to be presumed, have been given of this episode?

Besides having been seen for that which in all likelihood it is—the legendary record of a raid by one party of petty chiefs against another—a more recondite meaning has been connected with it; the personages brought upon the scene having been referred to the figures still to be seen on our celestial globes, which have all been derived from planispheres of ancient Indian and Egyptian descent, whilst the particulars spoken of and the numbers given are held to be significant of an attempt to reform the calendar. This, owing to the true length of the year, 365 days six hours fifty-six minutes and as many seconds, not being known, was found in ancient times to require frequent adjustments in order to bring the seasons, or the solstitial and equinoctial points into conformity with astronomical data and the computations of the old astrologers.‡

“After these things,” says the text, “the word of Jehovah came unto Abram in a vision, saying: Fear not, Abram, I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward.” Does the Patriarch express himself grateful for this assurance of the Divine favour?

On the contrary, he complains that he is childless, and that the steward of his house is his heir. He is assured, however, that this shall not be so, but that his heir shall be a son who shall come out of his own bowels. Meantime he is bidden to look abroad on the stars of heaven and say if he can number them, and is further assured that so many should be his posterity.

What more?

Abram is now ordered to make a sacrifice of a heifer, a she-goat, a ram, a turtle dove, and a young pigeon. This he does; slaying the victims, he divides

‡ The reader who is curious will find the subject now hinted at discussed at length by Sir W. Drummond in his *Œdipus Judaicus*; and by a German writer of great erudition, Nork, in his *Biblische Mythologie*.

them in the middle and lays the halves one against another, but he does not proceed to consume them with fire as usual upon the altar which we must presume he had built. As the sun was going down a deep sleep fell upon Abram, in which he had a second vision, and was informed that his seed should be strangers in a land that was not theirs; that they should there be afflicted for four hundred years, but should afterwards come out with great substance and possess the land where he then was from the river of Egypt to the great river Euphrates.

What interpretation is to be put on the information thus and at this time delivered?

That it is all information given after the event, and assures us definitively that so much of the text at least as conveys it was written long after the Israelites had been settled in Palestine, and had subjugated the Amorites, Hittites, Kenites, Jebusites, &c. Further, and more particularly, as the Jebusites were only subdued and their city Jebus taken by King David, who changed its name to Jerusalem, we learn that the writer lived subsequently to the reign of that potentate.^h

By what extraordinary agency were the carcases prepared by Abram consumed?

“When the sun went down and it was dark, a smoking furnace and a burning lamp passed between the pieces.” But Jehovah, the titular God of the Jews, is repeatedly spoken of in the Hebrew scriptures as “a consuming fire;” the smoking furnace and burning lamp are therefore to be understood as figurative expressions for the fire which Abram made use of to sublimate the bodies of his victims and make them meet food for his God.

^h The Bishop of Natal has shown satisfactorily that this passage is by the writer of Deuteronomy,—a very late writer consequently.

Abram, we have seen, has been promised a son of his own; but Sarai his wife bore him no children. She, however, had a handmaid, an Egyptian, Hagar by name, whom she gave to Abram her husband as a second wife or concubine, saying to him: "Go in unto my maid, I pray thee, that I may obtain children by her."

This was a somewhat extraordinary and hazardous proceeding on the part of Sarai?

To modern notions, but not, it would seem, to such as prevailed among the ancient Hebrews. Sarai may, perhaps, have been curious to know whether the "effect defective" lay with her or with her husband.

Abram, however, consents to the proposal?

He is nothing loth; and Hagar conceives by him. But when Hagar knew that she was with child by Abram she despised and probably was insolent to her barren mistress Sarai, who complains to Abram of her handmaid's behaviour.

Abram interposes manfully, of course, between the barren Sarai and the fruitful Hagar, who has now his own child under her heart?

He does nothing of the kind. As he has already shown himself cowardly and untruthful in presence of Pharaoh and Abimelech, Abram now shows himself both unjust and without natural compassion for his concubine, for he says to the envious Sarai: "Behold thy maid is in thy hand; do with her as it pleaseth thee." In her spite, although all had come to be as it was through her own suggestion, Sarai, as said, "dealt hardly with Hagar;" who, terrified, flees from her face into the wilderness.

What befalls her there?

She is speedily reduced to extremity, of course, but is found by a well of water in the desert by the angel of Jehovah (who here, as in so many other places of the Old Testament, turns out to be Jehovah himself), and is admonished to return and submit herself to

her mistress. By way of inducement to do so (and persuaded, doubtless, also by the strait in which she found herself), she receives most liberal promises of an ample posterity through the son whom she is informed she will bear. She therefore returns, and in due season is delivered of a son, whom Abram calls Ishmael, the name which Hagar had received for him from the angel of Jehovah in the wilderness.

What is the next remarkable incident recorded in this extraordinary history ?

When Abram is ninety-nine years old, Jehovah appears to him and announces himself as El-Schaddai—the mighty El or God ; orders him to change his name from Abram to Abraham—father of many nations, and his wife's name Sarai to Sarah—Princess ; “for,” says the narrative, “I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee.”

The covenant already made with Abram is thus again, but with additions and more solemnly, renewed with Abraham ?

It is, and as its seal and testimony for ever the rite of circumcision is commanded : “Every male child among you,” says the text, “shall be circumcised ; he among you that is born in the house or is bought with money of the stranger, that is eight days old, shall be circumcised ; the uncircumcised man-child shall be cut off from his people—he hath broken my covenant.”

What may be the meaning of the rite of circumcision thus formally and forcibly announced ?

To think of it for a moment as ordered of God were absurd : God sends his work fit for its end into the world ; it needs no interference of man to make it so. Among the Semitic tribes, of whom the Hebrews were one, human sacrifices appear to have prevailed universally in early times : the first-born of man and beast—or as the Old Testament scriptures have it, all that opened the womb—belonged to

the God of the tribe, however named—El, Bel, Baal, or Molech—and through countless ages was undoubtedly sacrificed to him by fire. But as time ran on, as civilisation advanced and more humane ideas were engendered, the barbarous practice was seen in its true light, and a substitute for the sacrifice of the whole was sought for, and believed to have been found, in the sacrifice of a *part*.

The rite of circumcision has significance in another, though closely allied, direction?

It has. Besides its symbolical character of substitute, it is intimately connected with the worship paid to the reproductive principle in nature, of which the symbol was the Phallus. The Egyptian priests, priests of the gods of increase—Osiris, Isis—were necessarily circumcised, as the priests of the deities of decay among other peoples—Attys, Cybele, &c. were emasculated. In Egypt the priest appears to have been consecrated to his office by circumcision,—the commonalty of the country were not as a rule subjected to the rite. The Israelites, however, as a people holy to Jehovah, were as matter of course and necessity circumcised: on the eighth day instead of being presented as a burnt offering on the altar of his God, as in the olden time he would have been had he happened to be the first-born, every son of Israel in later days had, and still has, the foreskin of his private member solemnly resected by the priest and consumed in the fire, an offering, disguise it as they may, *alie* to the fire-king Melek or Moloch whom their fathers worshipped, and on whose altars they had been used to offer up the first-born of their sons and daughters, of their flocks and herds.

How does Abraham receive the intimation that a son will be born to him by his wife Sarah, that she shall yet be the mother of nations and that kings of peoples shall be of her?

Not so reverently as might have been expected.

He fell on his face, indeed, but he laughed incredulous, and said in his heart: Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old; and shall Sarah that is ninety years old bear! He therefore entreats God for his son Ishmael. But God says to him: "Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed, and thou shalt call his name Isaac, and with him and his seed after him will I establish my covenant everlastingly. And as for Ishmael, him I have blessed, and he shall be fruitful; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation; but my covenant will I establish with Isaac which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time of the year."

There is as usual a second account of this miraculous engendering of a son by persons respectively one hundred and ninety years old?

There is, and from the Jehovist, as that which precedes is in great part from the storehouse of the Elohist—in great part, we say, for interpolations in its course are readily detected by the attentive reader. In the second account "three men" appear to Abraham in the plains of Mamre, as he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day. Abraham addresses them as "My Lord," invites them into his tent, has water fetched to wash their feet, entertains them with the flesh of a calf "tender and good," with cakes baked on the hearth by Sarah, and with butter and milk—a sumptuous Arab shiek's repast, in short, and himself stands by them under the tree as they eat.

What say the three men thus hospitably entertained?

They ask after Sarah, and "he" (the singular now taking the place of the plural) informs Abraham that Sarah his wife shall bear him a son. Sarah, "old and well stricken in years, with whom it had ceased to be after the manner of women," hears the announcement and laughs at the notion of her and her "lord being old also" having a child between them.

Sarah's laugh and implied incredulousness does not pass unobserved ?

No. "Jehovah (the name now changed from Elohim) said unto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying : Shall I of a surety bear a child which am old ! Is anything too hard for Jehovah " ?

What answer makes Sarah when challenged with her incredulous laughter ?

Not being of a perfectly truthful disposition, as we know already, we are not surprised when we find her denying that she had laughed : " I laughed not," says she, " for she was afraid. But Jehovah said : Nay, but thou didst laugh."

What are we to think of such tales, and of such conceptions of the Deity as are implied in them ?

That the tales are the conceits of men with the minds of children, and the preservers of them, and above all the believers in them as records of veritable events, involving matter either interesting or edifying, are to be held as ignorant, credulous, superstitious, and incompetent persons.

To the query : Is anything too hard for Jehovah, what answer must be given ?

That God the Lord, Supreme Cause, Rule and Ruler of the Universe, never contravenes the laws which are his essence—cannot be in contradiction with himself. Having ordained that when it ceases with a woman to be after the manner of women she shall no longer bear children, we may safely and with all reverence say that God had verily made it too hard for him to have Sarah become a mother. But the Jews had no conception of a universe ruled by General, Invariable, Necessary Law, nor any other idea of Jehovah than as a sovereign prince and ruler, doing and undoing at his arbitrary will and pleasure, having the earth alone of all his works, and the children of Israel alone of all the people upon it, as objects of his fatherly care and consideration.

The narrative proceeds, informing us that the "men" (the plural again) rise up and look towards Sodom, Abraham going with them to bring them on their way. As they go, Jehovah (now it is the singular) is represented as deliberating with himself whether he ought not to impart to Abraham the purpose he had conceived of destroying Sodom and Gomorrah because of the wickedness of their inhabitants, and is here made by the writer to say: "Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great and their sin is very grievous, I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it which is come unto me; and if not I will know." The Jews evidently thought of their Jehovah as we think of a person in authority who needs to make inquiry as to the truth or falsehood of the reports that reach him: he came down to look after the builders of the Tower of Babel and confound their language, and he comes down again to take the measure of the sinners of Sodom and Gomorrah, and punish them according to their demerits.

The men turn their faces towards Sodom, but Abraham, it is said, "stood yet before Jehovah." The use now of the plural and then of the singular in this extraordinary narrative will give the candid reader a sufficient hint of the composite character of the Pentateuch. The narrator must have had more than one of the legendary tales that were still floating in his day before him when he wrote (and he could not have written until after the times of more than one of the Jewish kings), and has here, as in so many other places, performed his task of editor indifferently. Abraham left alone with Jehovah, what takes place between them?

The notable parley in which the man Abraham tries to turn his God Jehovah from his purpose of destroying Sodom and Gomorrah. "Wilt thou destroy the righteous with the wicked?" asks the Patriarch

of the Lord. "Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city; far be it from thee to slay the righteous with the wicked,—and shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" "If I find fifty righteous in Sodom, then will I spare all the place for their sake," replies Jehovah, according to the Hebrew scribe.

Abraham would make still better terms for the city, and continues perseveringly, saying:

"Peradventure there shall lack five—ten—twenty—forty of the fifty;" and Jehovah says: "I will not destroy it for ten's sake." "And Jehovah went his way as soon as he had left communing with Abraham."

What are we in the present day, with our ideas of the immanent ubiquity and necessarily impersonal nature of God, to think of such a tale as this, and of words bandied in such a way between man and the Deity?

The tale is doubtless another of the myths or legends transmitted orally from remote antiquity and preserved by an over-scrupulous editor from the oblivion it so well deserved, if by its means it were intended to convey any true or possible idea of God's procedure in his dealings with mankind and the world. Man does not bandy words with God; neither does he attempt to fix the Supreme on the horns of a dilemma by a series of Socratic questions, each reply to each succeeding query leaving the respondent more in the wrong than he had been before. God's acts are not in time, but from eternity; they are not consequences, whether in advance or in recall of antecedent purposes. God, moreover, does never in any human sense *punish*, neither by condoning misdeed does he ever *forgive* the guilty. [Are there ten guilty persons in a great city, they suffer for themselves, if their guiltiness be through violation of any of God's laws; and ten thousand guiltless persons, their fellow-citizens, would not save them from paying the

penalty of their sin. Unhappily the opposite does not hold; for one reckless and guilty person violating a natural law may cause the death of many,—a truth of which terrible illustrations are offered in the explosions that so frequently occur in coal mines and powder mills.

Proceeding with the tale as delivered, we now find “two angels,” two of the “three men” presumably who had been entertained by Abraham, going on to Sodom, where they are met and waited on by Lot much in the same way as they had been by his brother Abraham. What next befalls?

The narrator, as if to show how well the doomed city deserved its impending fate, presents us with such a picture of the state of morals and customs prevailing among its inhabitants as it seems impossible in these our days even to imagine; Lot and his family, the parties excepted from the ruin hanging over their homes, by their after-doings appearing in scarcely a more favourable light than their detestable fellow-townsmen.

Must not the nineteenth chapter of the Book of Genesis be regarded by us as a most extraordinary element in a volume said by ecclesiastics, and generally believed, to be given by God to the world for its edification in morals and furtherance in religious knowledge?

Looked at with the eye of reason, it can be seen in no other light. So gross and offensive are most of the particulars it contains, that they cannot here be mentioned openly. But to proceed: Lot and his family forewarned, escape from Sodom and flee to Zoar, and then, the sun being risen upon the earth, Jehovah rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from Jehovah out of heaven, and overthrew these cities, and the plain, and all their inhabitants, and all that grew upon the ground—the innocent with the guilty consequently—infants and young children,

as well as the grown men and women, all wicked alike, for among them, from what is said, there could not have been found ten that were innocent, else had the cities been saved. The destruction was indiscriminate, and the Jewish God Jehovah himself its agent! Lot, however, has escaped with his family to Zoar, where he did not long remain, but quitting the little town, he went and dwelt with his daughters in a cave—hard by, we may presume.

What happened there ?

That of which it shames us to speak. The daughters, as though the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah had been attended with effects as far reaching as the flood of Noah, are made to speak as if their father were the only man left alive in the world. To satisfy a brutal appetite, they are said in this book of the Jewish law, accepted by Christian men and women as inspired by God, to have made their father drunk with wine, and to have sought his bed in succession, the consequence of which is that they both conceive and bear sons, who respectively become in after years the progenitors of the Moabites and Ammonites.

What may be the possible meaning of this foul tale ?

The Moabites and Ammonites — cognate Semitic tribes, speaking the same, or dialects of the same, language as the Hebrews, were among the number of those whom the Israelites dispossessed of their lands and reduced to slavery, when they did not take their lives. A vile and unnatural origin had to be devised in after times by way of excuse for the ills which these unfortunate peoples were made to suffer in an age gone by. The daughters of Lot were little worthy of the favour shown them in their escape from Sodom reduced to ashes, but they were wanted by the writer as parts in the machinery of his story.

The wife of Lot escaped with her husband and daughters from the burning, but came to an extraordinary end nevertheless ?

She, according to the veracious historian, for having looked back upon the burning town, was turned into a pillar of salt upon the plain, where, if we may believe the traveller who has an eye for the marvellous, she is still to be seen! The transformation, inflicted for a natural and innocent impulse, was as severe as it was extraordinary, no parallel to which, we may believe, has since occurred; though men do still look fondly back upon the homes they are leaving, when sad necessity or prescriptive tyranny—worse than fire from heaven—devotes them to destruction. But the tale of Sodom and Gomorrah is a myth—an idea furnished with accessories and embodied in language. Were such towns ever in existence, as they may well have been, and destroyed in the manner described, it could only have happened by the eruption of a volcano now extinct, like those outbursts of Vesuvius which desolated Pompeii and Herculaneum in more recent times, and of other burning mountains which still bring desolation and loss of life over many parts of the earth's surface. But the Jews, as we have already had occasion to observe, ascribed every event in both natural and human history to the immediate agency of their God Jehovah, believing as they did that all the calamities which befel nations as well as individuals were punishments for acts displeasing to him. Assuming Sodom and Gomorrah to have been overwhelmed by a volcanic eruption in very remote times, *therefore*, was it said, must their inhabitants have been a wicked and abominable race; and further, as the lands of the Moabites and Ammonites were usurped by the children of Israel, so were the Moabites and Ammonites the spawn of the incestuous intercourse detailed.

We have additional evidence of this Jewish view of the special providential ordering of things by Jehovah, immediately after the story about Sodom and Gomorrah, and about Lot and his daughters, have we not?

It is now that we meet with the tale of Abraham's second denial of Sarah as his wife,—on this occasion to Abimelech, King of Gerar ; and we learn that Jehovah “ visited Sarah, as he had said, and did unto her as he had spoken,” Jehovah being thus made, as it were, the immediate agent in the matter, for now it was that Sarah “ conceived and bare a son to Abraham in his old age.”

Abraham was mindful of the terms of the covenant entered into with him by Jehovah ?

He was : when his son was eight days old he was duly circumcised and named Isaac by his father, on the day on which all that opened the womb according to more ancient custom were sacrificed on the altar of burnt offering. Seven days was the first-born, whether of man or beast, to be with the mother or dam ; on the eighth it must be given, as his due for the increase and as the price of future favours of the like kind, to the Reproductive Principle in Nature conceived as Deity.

Circumcision was not all that was required in the case of mankind in after times, when the religious system of the Israelites came to be formulated, and a priesthood established ?

Then had the first-born of man, besides parting with his foreskin, to be further redeemed by a certain price in money. The first-born of beasts might be sacrificed or redeemed at the option of those into whose herds or flocks they were born, with the single exception of the ass, which was on no account to be offered on the altar, but in case it was not redeemed, was to be put to death by having its neck broken,—that is, by being thrown from a height and killed.

The single exception of the ass as unavailable for sacrifice on the altar of the Hebrew God, and the peculiar mode in which it is ordered to be put to death, seem to require explanation ?

Which may be found in the fact that the ass, both

in Ancient Egypt and Palestine, was looked on in the light of an animal at once sacred and accursed. In Palestine he long supplied the place of the horse, and was in regular use for the saddle as well as beast of burthen; but in Egypt he was sacred to Typhon, the brother and enemy of Osiris, and was the victim especially devoted to him, the mode of his sacrifice being that which is commanded in the Hebrew Scriptures. Typhon himself, generally figured in Egyptian sculptures with the head of the swine, is sometimes also met with having the head of the ass; and among the Egyptian drawings there is a very singular one in which Horus has Typhon with the ass's head by the ear, and is belabouring him with the staff he has in his hand—*i.e.*, the early Spring or Summer Sun has vanquished his enemy Winter.¹

The system of redeeming by money instead of consuming by fire was certainly a mighty step in advance, and, once entered on, was likely to be vigorously enforced in view of the revenue it brought to the priesthood. But there must have been a certain reluctance on the part of Abraham's God to forego his ancient right to the first-born of the patriarch's posterity?

It would seem so by the record, at all events. Isaac had certainly a narrow escape from sublimation by fire, and being sent in the way of a sweet savour as food to the God of his father.

What says the tale?

After his departure from Abimelech of Gerar, Elohe, it is said, did tempt Abraham, saying: "Take now thy son, thine Only (*Jahid*, Hebrew, used as a noun), whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains which I shall tell thee of."

¹ See Movers: *Die Phœnizier*, B. I. See also a Paper by Herr Hirt in *Abhand. der Histor-Philolog. Klasse der Acad. d. Wissensch. zu Berlin aus den Jahren, 1820—21.* S. 165.

Does Abraham express surprise at this extraordinary command of his God Elohe ?

Not any; he rises up early in the morning, saddles his ass, cleaves wood for the burnt-offering, and sets out on the journey. After three days' travel he sees the place of the sacrifice afar off, bids the attendants he had with him remain with the ass where they were, whilst he and the lad should "go yonder and worship, and come again to them." Abraham then lays the wood for the burnt-offering on his son; takes fire in his hand and a knife, and they go on together.

Is Isaac passive whilst all this is done ?

Not entirely: he sees the fire and the wood and the knife, but not the lamb for the sacrifice. His father assures him, however, that Elohe will provide himself a lamb for the burnt-offering. Arrived at Mount Moriah, Abraham builds an altar, lays the wood in order upon it, binds his son Isaac, lays him on the pile, and raises the knife to complete the sacrifice. But the angel of Jehovah (it is no longer Elohe) calls to him out of heaven, and bids him not to lay his hand upon the lad; "for now," proceeds the angel, who, as in other instances, is seen to be Jehovah himself, "I know that thou fearest Elohe, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me." Lifting up his eyes, Abraham discovers a ram caught by the horns in a thicket behind him, which he takes, slays, and presents as a burnt-offering in the stead of his son.

This is an extraordinary story! Can we, as reasonable and passably pious men, believe that God ever tempts mankind,—ever commanded a father to make a burnt-offering of his son ?

God, in bestowing on man the wonderful power of paternity, has also put such feelings of tenderness into his heart as makes the entertainment of such an idea abhorrent to his nature. He who should now—and, it is not unfair to presume, in the day also when

the tale was written—imagine that he had received an order from God to slay and make a burnt-offering of his son would be treated as a madman, and mercifully taken care of by his friends. Possessed of our faculties and masters of ourselves, we are not mastered by distressing dreams and phantoms of the night.

Isaac, however, as we see, was not sacrificed, although Abraham had received the express commands of his God to make a burnt-offering of his son?

No; and this putting God in contradiction with himself, and the angel of Jehovah calling out of heaven, relegates the story of the Temptation of Abraham to its proper place among the myths and legends of hoar antiquity. Our advanced conceptions of the nature of Deity forbid us to think of God as tempting mankind, as commanding and countermanding in a breath, as calling out of heaven in any sense, or using human speech otherwise than mediately through the mouth of man.

What farther comment may be made on this tale?

Had child-sacrifice lain outside the sphere of Hebrew religious rites, as the modern Jews and bible-commentators all show themselves so eager to show that it did, in face of Jehovah's express order to sanctify to him all that opened the womb both of man and beast, such a commandment as that said to have been given by God to Abraham could never have been imagined. Had not human sacrifice been familiar to the Jewish mind, as it undoubtedly was up to the time of the Captivity, the Patriarch would have been depicted rejecting the order to slay his son as the commandment of a lying spirit.^k

May not the tale have been contrived in relatively modern times—after the Babylonian Captivity, for instance—to declare that God had ceased to require

^k *Vide* Vatke, *Biblische Theologie*, § 22, S. 276.

the human victims as burnt-offerings to which he had been so long accustomed, and that the will might henceforth without offence be substituted for the deed?

The story of the temptation of Abraham has many unquestionable marks of recent composition. It certainly does not date from the period to which the incidents among which it appears are referred; and could indeed only have been invented in times when the better spirits among the Jews had made the discovery that God delighted not in the blood of bulls and rams, and still less in that of human beings.

Much has been made by modern theologians, in connection with the Christian system, of the accredited command of God to Abraham to make a sacrifice of his son?

Very much. But God, as we have said, never commands his creatures to do aught that is not for their own good, or the good of others; and the dogma (entirely foreign to the spirit of the theistic morality taught by Jesus of Nazareth) which makes of this holy personage a sacrifice to satisfy Divine Justice, assimilates the great God of Nature, the father of all flesh, with the Phœnician El-Saturnus, Chronos, or Molech, who was said himself actually to have sacrificed Jeud his only son—Jeud or Jehud—another form of Jahid, Only.

Returning to the family affairs of the Patriarch, we do not find that Sarah, blessed with a son of her own, shows herself any way better disposed towards Hagar, her handmaid, than she had been when she was barren and childless?

It is Sarah's turn now to mock Hagar, the Egyptian. "Cast out this bond-woman and her son," she says to Abraham, "for her son shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac."

Abraham does not surely yield to this cruel suggestion of the spiteful and ungrateful woman?

Although the thing, as said, was very grievous in his sight, because of the lad, and because of the bond-woman, nevertheless, and as the story goes, having God's sanction for what he did, he yields to Sarah; and charging Hagar with some bread and a bottle of water, he turns her and her son—his own son, too—Ishmael, out into the wilderness to perish, as he must have known, and where, but for the discovery of a well of water when she and her child were reduced to extremity, she must inevitably have died.

Hagar, however, is again succoured in time, although how or by whom—unless it were by the mythical angel of Jehovah as before, we are not informed. But Ishmael and his mother, after this, disappear from the scene, and the whole interest is concentrated on the Patriarch of the Hebrew people and his son Isaac. There is an incident now mentioned, which enables us, with the lights we possess, to see Abraham as no more the exclusive worshipper of the God El or El-schaddai of his forefathers than he is of the more recently introduced Jehovah?

He plants a tree by the well Beer-sheba, and there calls on the name of Jehovah.

What may be the meaning of this?

The word usually translated Grove in our English version of the Hebrew Scriptures mostly signifies a tree or a pillar of wood, when it does not mean the divinity of whom the tree or pillar was the symbol—the Aschera, Astarte, or Ashtaroth of Phœnicia, the Mylitta of Babylonia, the Aphrodite of Greece, the Venus of Rome, the Syria Dea of Lucan, personification of the passive element in the reproductive principle of nature, usually associated with Baal the Sun-God or active generative principle and object of adoration with all the peoples of the ancient world. Abraham, in planting a tree by the well of Beer-sheba, the well itself significant of fertility, made an offering to the God of Increase; and meets us here, as he must

have been in fact, if not wholly mythical, as the Arab Shiek, the worshipper of the Gods of his Fathers, not of the Jehovah of post-Davidic times, when the Thora or Code of Law ascribed to Moses had been compiled, and the Temple of Jerusalem declared the only shrine at which offerings acceptable to the Deity could be brought.

Sarah dies when she is a hundred and twenty-seven years old, according to the record; and Abraham buys of Ephron the son of Zohar, one of the sons of Heth, the cave of Machpelah as a burying place in the land of Canaan where he is sojourning. Well stricken in years himself, Abraham is now anxious to see his son Isaac settled with a wife; but, unwilling to have a daughter of the land of Canaan advanced to this honour, he despatches a trusty servant, whom he binds by an oath, to Mesopotamia, his native country, there, from among the number of his own kindred, to find a helpmate for his son. The servant departs with a handsome retinue of camels and attendants. He entreats Jehovah-Elohim, the God of his master Abraham, for good speed in his mission, and asks him to let it come to pass that the one among the maidens who comes to draw water from the well, outside the city of Nahor, by which he might halt, and to whom he should say: "Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink," and who should reply: "Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also," should be she whom he—Jahveh-Elohim—had appointed for his servant Isaac, "and thereby," adds the envoy, "shall I know that thou hast showed kindness to my master." What happens?

Among others who come out to draw from the well is Rebekah, daughter of Bethuel, son of Milcah, Abraham's brother Nahor's wife, blood relation of Isaac, consequently twice removed; and on Rebekah it is that the choice falls; for, asked for a draught from her pitcher, she immediately repeats the words

which the envoy had resolved should be a sign from Jehovah of his approval,—the Jews imagining that their God interested himself even in the selection of their wives!

The messenger enquires of Rebekah whose daughter she is, and if there were room in her father's house where he and his troop might be lodged. Being informed that she is the daughter of Bethuel, and assured that there was straw and provender and lodging-room in her father's house, he presents her with the mystical gold ring, prototype of the gold ring of the marriage ceremony among ourselves, and having a significance then which it has no longer; and beside the ring, he also presents her with bracelets of price for her arms. What does Rebekah, on the unexpected address of the stranger and the presents she receives?

She hastens home, informs the family of what has passed, shows the ring and the bracelets, and despatches her brother Laban to bid the stranger welcome, and lead him to the house. In short, the parties speedily come to an understanding, and matters are forthwith satisfactorily arranged, as though they had been subject of anxious discussion long time before. Rebekah by and by departs with the messenger as bride elect of Isaac, who meets her as with her escort she draws near his father Abraham's tents, brings her to his late mother's tent, where he instals her; makes her his wife, loves her, and is comforted after his mother Sarah's death. What information have we now that seems to remove Abraham out of the category of possible historical personages?

He is said to have taken a second wife, *Keturah* by name, and by her to have had a family of five sons—of daughters, who may have been as many, no mention is made—and only to have given up the ghost when he was a hundred and seventy-five years old!

Is this credible?

If we acknowledge the laws of nature, which are the unimpeachable ordinances of God, to be changeless as their author, we answer without misgiving: No, it is not possible, and so is not credible.

What may be said of the extreme ages to which men are said to have attained in these prehistoric times—in these long by-gone ages of the world?

That the tales which transmit them are myths which never had any foundation out of the imagination of their inventors. Instead of getting shorter and shorter as we come down the stream of time, it is certain that human life has become longer and longer. Savages and barbarous tribes are surrounded by numberless conditions and circumstances adverse to life that are mitigated in almost every instance, and in many entirely removed, as progress is made in civilisation and as appliances are discovered that minister to the comfort and security of existence. There is not only no *prima facie* likelihood that primæval and prehistoric man lived longer than the men of the present day, but every presumption that life in by-gone ages of the world was much shorter on the whole than it is now.

Have not certain recent scientific enquiries of unquestionable weight, resting on no fond imaginations of poets, but on physiological grounds, definitively settled the question, not only of the age that may *possibly be attained*, but of the age that *has ever been attained*, by man?

We can now speak positively and say that, whilst the life of man may possibly extend in rare and exceptional instances to a hundred years, and even to one, two, or three years beyond that term, the few of all the millions born into the world who attain to what all now agree in calling *extreme old age*, finish their career between the limits of three-score and ten and four-score and ten years.

So much for the men and women of the present

age, but what of those who lived in ages gone by?

Neither are we without reliable records of the ages at which they who flourished in these finished their course on earth. The skulls of individuals taken from the tombs of Sakara in Egypt, who died and were buried some sixteen centuries before the date assigned to the Deluge, or about the time when, according to the Jewish accounts, the world was created, show the same conditions of bone-structure and dentition as the skulls of the men and women who die at ages familiar to us at the present time. The sutures of these old Egyptian crania are found to approach obliteration in different degrees and to present other marks of age in exact conformity with what is seen in the crania of persons who are known to have died at certain ages among ourselves:—in the younger heads the sutures are distinct, in the older they are obliterated more or less completely, and in the very old they are effaced. In the younger heads, again, the teeth are more or less perfect, in the older they are decayed or gone, precisely as among ourselves in persons who die at every age between childhood and seventy, eighty, or ninety years.

Have we not authentic information on this subject, of even much higher antiquity than any imparted by Egyptian tombs, though their mummified occupants lived so long ago as the second Dynasty of the Pharaohs, or some centuries before the flood?

We have; in the skulls that have of late years been recovered from the drift, and dug out of caves from under loads of stalagmite and breccia, whose owners trapped and contended with the woolly rhinoceros and mammoth, and disputed possession of their sorry dwelling places with the cave bear and hyæna—all extinct at the present time. Carefully examined and compared with recent crania, these skulls of individuals who lived during the quaternary and towards

the close of the last great glacial period in the earth's history, so marvellously preserved through so many thousands or hundreds of thousands of years, present the same essential characters as those of the men and women who die at the usual ages in the present day ; and assure us that if they lived as long, they certainly lived no longer than their descendants, the miners and iron-workers of Belgium, who now people the soil which once they trod.¹

Returning to our story,—what comes of the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah ?

As many of the incidents in the sacred writings of the Hebrews are so commonly repeated in connection with each new personage who comes upon the scene, we might almost have anticipated that Rebekah, like Sarah, would prove barren at first, but fruitful afterwards ; and so it falls out. Isaac, it is said, “ entreated the Lord for his wife Rebekah,” so that she conceived at last, and in due season brought forth twins—Esau and Jacob.

What is there notable about these ?

Esau, the first born, it is said, was “ a red and hairy man and became a cunning hunter ;” Jacob, again, was “ a plain man, a dweller in tents, or living much at home ;” and whilst Esau was loved of his father, because of the venison he found him in the chase, Jacob was loved of his mother.

What came of this unlike disposition in the youths and different likings of their parents ?

Returning faint and weary from hunting on a certain occasion, Esau begged some of the pottage of lentils which Jacob had sod and now got ready. But the selfish Jacob, instead of sharing with his brother and ministering to his wants, will only part with his mess in return for Esau's birthright as the elder born. “ Behold,” says Esau, “ I am at the point to die, and

¹ See Professor Owen's admirable essay on Longevity in *Fraser's Magazine* for February, 1872.

what profit shall this birthright do to me." So he bartered his birthright to Jacob for the lentil broth.

It was surely neither kind nor brotherly in Jacob to profit by his brother's state, faint for want, and weary from the field?

It certainly was not, but was of a piece with the rest of Jacob's character and procedure, as we shall see.

What happens next?

Isaac, grown old and his eyesight dim, calls his eldest son Esau and bids him go into the field and take him some venison, that he may have savoury meat once more and find fitting occasion to give him his blessing before he dies.

Whilst he is gone on this filial errand, what does Rebekah, and to what iniquity does Jacob lend himself?

Rebekah conspires with her favourite Jacob to cheat the blind old man, her husband, and to rob Esau, her first-born, of his father's blessing. "Go now to the flock," says Rebekah to her son Jacob, "and fetch me two good kids of the goats, and I will make them savoury meat for thy father, such as he loveth; and thou shall bring it to thy father that he may eat and that he may bless thee before his death."

Does Jacob consent to this unfair suggestion of his mother, or does he not rather object?

He makes no objection, and is only fearful that the plot may miscarry: "Behold," says he, "Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I a smooth man; my father peradventure will feel me, and I shall seem to him as a deceiver, and I shall bring a curse upon me and not a blessing."

What answer makes Rebekah to this?

She says: "Upon me be the curse, my son, only obey my voice and fetch me the kids." This he does forthwith, and she makes the savoury mess of the

kid's meat such as old Isaac loved. She then takes the goodly raiment of her elder son Esau and puts it on Jacob, covers his hands and the exposed part of his neck with the skins of the kids, and gives the mess of meat and the bread she had prepared into his hand. Thus disguised and furnished forth, Jacob comes to his father and says : " My father ! " and he says : " Here am I, who art thou, my son ? "

Jacob, conscience-stricken because of the unworthy part he is playing, must surely answer truly now, and say he is Jacob his father's youngest son ?

No such thing. On the contrary, he lies egregiously, and says : " I am Esau, thy first-born ; I have done according as thou badest me. Arise, I pray thee ; sit and eat of my venison that thy soul may bless me. "

What answer makes Isaac ?

How is it, he asks, that thou hast found it so quickly, my son ?

Jacob, for very shame, must needs now own the imposition so far carried on successfully ?

By no means ; he plays the hypocrite now, as he is playing the deceiver and has already proved himself the liar, and answers his father's question in these solemn words : " Jehovah, thy God, brought it to me. "

This is shocking ! Old blind Isaac, nevertheless, seems to have had some misgivings about the party who is addressing him, for he says : " Come near me, that I may feel thee, my son, whether thou be my very son Esau or not. And Jacob went near to his father, and he felt him and said : The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau ; and he discerned him not, and so he blessed him. "

In spite of having gone so far, Isaac cannot yet have been altogether satisfied of the identity of the son before him ?

No ; for he asks again : " Art thou my very son Esau ? " and he (Jacob) said, " I am. "

This reiteration of the lie seems to satisfy all the

misgivings of the old man, for he now eats of the mess prepared for him, and drinks of the wine set before him, does he not?

He does; and bidding his son come near, he blesses him saying: "God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fulness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine; and let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee; be Lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee; cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he who blesseth thee."

How fares it with Isaac when Esau returns from the chase, brings his savory mess of venison to his father, bids him arise and eat, and asks for his blessing?

Isaac, it is said, trembled with a great trembling and said: "Who is he that hath taken venison, and brought it to me, and I have eaten of all before thou camest, and have blessed him?"

And Esau?

When he heard the words of his father he cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry, and said—"Bless me, even me also, O my father!"

Isaac yields to this passionate and natural appeal?

Nay, indeed! Blessing in the olden time seems to have been restricted to one; for the old man replies: "Thy brother came with subtilty, and hath taken away thy blessing."

Is Esau content?

How should he! he says: "Hast thou but one blessing, my father? bless me, even me, O my father, and he lifted up his voice and wept."

Esau was surely unfairly and cruelly dealt with in all this?

According to modern moral notions he was cheated of his right; and common sense and justice alike would now have required the thief to restore what he had stolen. What motive can we imagine for

the story as it is told? A mythological meaning, as with many other parts of the Old Testament, has been connected with the repeated supercession we encounter of the elder by the younger born. As Night, esteemed the eldest born of things, gave place to Day, so it has been surmised is Cain superseded in his sacrifice by Abel, Esau by Jacob in his birthright and blessing, Ephraim by Manasseh, Aaron by Moses in command, &c.

But Esau is said further to have been the progenitor of the Edomites, a cognate tribe, and enemies of long standing of the Jews; the poet or fabulist therefore makes Esau sell his birthright for the mess of pottage when he was hungry as a prelude to letting him of his father's blessing, in order that it might fall on Jacob, from whom the Israelites themselves were reputed to have sprung. The preliminary barter of the birthright was doubtless held by the narrator, as it has since been held by apologists for all the right and wrong, the good and evil, that lie within the lids of the Bible, as adequate to cover the subsequent villanous artifices by which the blessing is filched away; for it seems impossible, on simple moral apart from prescriptive religious grounds, to conceive the most consummate impersonation, whether of Jewish, Christian, or Pagan selfishness and dishonesty, approving the act of Jacob, or condoning the means by which his object was accomplished.

The Jews would seem to have held that something of a preternatural character pertained to a blessing, which was not nullified by the means, however dishonest, employed to obtain it?

It appears so. Old Isaac himself, when he discovers that he has been imposed on, speaks not of recalling his blessing, but says: "I have blessed him (Jacob), yea, and he shall be blessed." But the Jews believed, as we have already had occasion to observe, that their God took a particular interest,

not only in them as a people at large, but in every individual, and in the acts of every notable individual more especially, among them. They did nothing, never entered on any undertaking, or came to any conclusion, without "asking Jehovah," *i.e.*, without drawing lots, consulting the Ephod or Teraphim—domestic idols of which every household appears to have had one or more, and receiving an answer in approval. On the most solemn occasions of all they seem to have referred the case to the High Priest, who then had recourse to the Urim and Thummim he carried on his breast, and to the Seven-branched Candlestick which was so important a part of the furniture of the Altar, and in constant requisition in casting nativities and other kinds of divination.

Is not he who deceives his blind old father and filches his brother's birthright and blessing a villain, deserving of present punishment and failure in his after enterprises, rather than worthy of God's peculiar favour, of man's approval, and of success in all he purposes or puts his hand to ?

Morally judged he is so undoubtedly, but men judge mostly by the success or failure that follows action ; and God is not truly, as he is commonly thought to be, a kind of celestial potentate or chief magistrate, with powers of prison and gibbet at command. Jacob himself puts the legitimacy of the conspiracy in which he engages with his mother on the sole footing of its success, "Peradventure," says he, "my father will feel me, and I shall seem to him a deceiver, and I shall bring a curse upon me and not a blessing." But he who acquires or gains his end, no matter what it is, does so by conforming to the natural law of acquisition, which has no bearing on moral principles. The accumulator may be the most heartless and unprincipled of mortals ; but if he steadily pursue his selfish ends and his purpose of

gathering to himself regardless of others, God will not only not interfere to hinder him of success, but, it may be said, will assuredly favour him in his object; neither will his fellow-men say aught against him if he but grow rich and keep on the safe side of the statute law; nay, they will not only say nothing against, but will even fawn on and flatter him; perchance even speak of raising a statue to him.

The Jews, far from seeing anything dishonourable in the conduct of Jacob, even vaunt themselves on their descent from the unbrotherly, untruthful, and deceitful man?

They do; and making God a party to their approval, they have always spoken of their tutelary Deity Jehovah as the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob; so that successful selfishness and untruth have sanctified to them the unrighteous means by which the headship of the family was obtained.

Esau, wroth with his brother, hates him in his heart, and old Isaac having now been gathered to his people, he says: "When the days of mourning for my father are over, I will slay my brother Jacob." Does he take any steps to make good his threat?

We have no information of any. But Rebekah has overheard the rash words, and sends her darling Jacob to Padan-Aram out of the way, until the easy Esau's anger should be abated, and he had forgotten, or shall we say forgiven, the wrong that had been done him.

What befalls Jacob on his way to Padan-Aram?

He has a wonderful dream.

About his unbrotherly and unfilial conduct, doubtless; and the bad part he has played being brought home to him, he resolves to make amends and restitution to the extent in his power?

Nothing of the kind! The sun having set, and the night coming on, he makes a pillow of one of the stones where he is, and lays him down to sleep. And he dreams that he sees a ladder set on the earth

with its top reaching to heaven, up and down which the angels of Elohim come and go, Jehovah himself standing above and over all.

What then ?

Jehovah speaks and informs the dreaming man that he is Jehovah, the God of Abraham and of Isaac his father ; that he will give the land on which he lies to him and to his seed, which should be as the dust of the earth, and prove a blessing to all the families of the earth ; “ and,” continues the narrative, “ I am with thee and will keep thee in all the places whither thou goest, and I will bring thee again into this land, and will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.”

Jacob awakes ?

And says : “ Surely Jehovah is in this place and I knew it not. This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.” He then sets up the stone on which he had pillowed his head as a pillar, pours oil on its top by way of consecrating it and calls the spot Beth-El—House of God, the name of the place having at first been Luz (Lux, Light).

What may be the meaning of Jacob’s act ?

Stones, as enduring things, appear to have been almost universally objects of reverence and worship with men in the long-continued infancy of the human mind. As pillars they had a special significance, and were then looked on as typical of the instrument efficient in the wonderful faculty possessed by living creatures of reproducing their kind. The stone column or token set up by Jacob was neither more nor less than the Phallic emblem, before which he and his forefathers were wont to prostrate themselves.^m And the oil he poured on its top was a further offer-

^m Et verisimiliter semen eorum Numini sub symbolo phallico culto proferre, sicut mos adhuc hodie est apud indigenos Terrarum Bengalensium.—Conf. Levit. xviii. 21, and xx. 2.

ing to the divine power it represented for fertility and increase.

Has this respect or reverence for the stone pillar as symbol of the reproductive principle in nature yet died out from among men?

By no means. The Jews through the whole of their history, even to the time when the Temple of Solomon was built, erected pillars of wood and stone to the gods they worshipped—to Baal and Aschēra in especial, before which they presented their sacrifices, and at the feet of whose altars they poured the blood of their victims and their drink offerings. Nor can it be said that the sacred stone, disguised as column, obelisk, or steeple, has yet gone out of date, though its meaning is no longer understood. The obelisk in front of St Peter's at Rome and the spires of our churches are emblematic of the same thing as the stone which Jacob set up, as the columns erected on the "high places" to Baal and Aschēra, and as those that stood before Solomon's Temple. In certain districts of India—the country that gave birth to so many of the religious ideas and to all the philosophy of the world—at the present time every village has its SACRED STONE usually set up under the shade of a TREE, upon which newly-married and barren women come and seat themselves after pouring a libation of ghee or oil on its top. Neither was the sacred stone left out of the reckoning by our own forefathers in the olden time. The King was not held as duly installed in his office unless he were seated on a stone, hence our *Saxon King's-stone* still to be seen railed about in the town of Kingston-on-Thames; the *Scotch King's-stone* carried away from Scone by Edward III., and now preserved in Westminster Abbey under the rude chair which served for a throne; *London-stone* still notable in Cannon Street; and, to go farther afield, the *black stone of the Caaba* of Mecca, to prostrate themselves before which come the thousands of Moslems annually

from their distant homes, there to have the seal affixed as it were to their title-deed to heaven. Nor is the anointing in many instances omitted; the consecration of the king and priest is not held complete without the application of the *chrism* or holy oil; and the poorest adherent of the Church of Rome has extreme *unction* at last by way of passport for the journey from which there is no returning. These are all plainly lingering remnants of a symbolical worship that was once universal in the world, and of which the meaningless traces might now, as it seems, advantageously disappear from among us.

Having set up and consecrated his token, Jacob vows a vow ?

Saying : "If Elohe will be with me, and keep me in the way I go, and give me bread and raiment so that I come again to my father's house, then shall Jehovah be my God, and this stone which I have set up for a token shall be God's house." Jacob's God, we are therefore to conclude, had heretofore been El, Elohe or El-shaddai; but, were his prayer granted, he would then take Jehovah in his stead. Here it is impossible to overlook the hand of the late Jehovistic writer. Jehovah was the peculiar Deity of the post-exilic reforming party among the Jews, and it could not but be of the highest moment to him and to them to exhibit their chief patriarch as a worshipper of their God. But Jacob, if there ever really lived such a personage, could never have heard of the Jewish Jehovah; El, El-Shaddai, or some other of the El compounds was the name of the God he worshipped.

Jacob, in fact, bargains with the Supreme Being as he had bargained with Esau for the mess of pottage in lieu of the birthright ?

He is made to do so, at all events. If God will do so and so, then will he, Jacob, on his part do so and so in return. To conciliate Jehovah, the God of the writer, Jacob is presented to us as ready to give up

his own old familiar God or Gods, El or Elohim. Jacob always meets us as a dealer or bargain-maker; but shows himself ready in the present instance to give an equivalent, or what he seems to have thought was an equivalent, for the benefits he expected himself to receive. "Of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee," is the concluding item in the compact he enters into with his God—a clause added, we cannot doubt, by a still later hand, one of a brotherhood who never lose sight of their own interest.

The terms do not seem over liberal?

As regards God the giver of *All* they have no meaning; as regards the priesthood, who here stand for the Thou and the Thee, they are even more than liberal.

Do tithes, of which so much has since been made, appear to have been originally bestowed for the peculiar benefit of the priesthood, or the church they represented?

By no means. The tithe of the corn and oil and wine which the land produced, and of the flocks and herds of the year, was to be solemnly eaten by the people themselves in the holy place, that they might learn to fear Jehovah. Tithe was, in fact, to be dedicated to rejoicing and merry-making. Were the place too far off which Jehovah should choose for the festive occasion, the tithe of all was then to be turned into money, and the money spent "on whatsoever their souls lusted after." (Deut. xiv. 22, et seq.) The widow, the fatherless, and the stranger also were to share, and the Levite, as having no possessions, was not to be forgotten. But none of the tithe was to be expended on occasions of mourning, nor was aught of it to be given for the dead (Deut. xxvi. 14); *i.e.*, it was not to be spent on the articles of meat and drink with which the dead among so many peoples in the olden time were provided for the journey to the dis-

tant land, the place of disembodied spirits. Taking the last quoted text for a guide, the clergy of the Church of Rome might possibly see the impropriety of levying contributions on their flocks for masses and prayers for the dead.

Jacob proceeds on his journey and comes to Haran, where he makes acquaintance with his kinsfolk on the mother's side, having halted by a well, precisely as Isaac's messenger had done. As with Rebekah, so now with Rachel, the younger of Laban's two daughters, who comes to the well to water her father's sheep. Jacob is smitten with the damsel, falls in love with her as matter of course, is presented to Laban her father, and agrees (another bargain) to serve seven years with him for Rachel as his wife. This he does fairly and truly, but he is deceived by Laban at the end of the term, he substituting his elder daughter Leah for Rachel the younger, the betrothed, on the bridal night. What happens when Jacob discovers that he has been imposed on?

He complains to Laban of the trick that has been played him, and says: "Did not I serve with thee for Rachel; wherefore then hast thou beguiled me?"

What says Laban to this?

He replies that the younger must not be given in marriage before the first-born; but he adds: "Fulfil her (Leah's) week and we will give thee this (Rachel) for the service which thou shalt serve with me for yet seven years."

Jacob accepts the terms?

He does; fulfils his week manfully with Leah, and Laban then gives him his second daughter to wife also.

The Jews of old must have been less fastidious in such matters than folks of the present day; where in all civilised communities a man may not only not have two wives, and still less two sisters as wives, living with him at the same time—which the Jews them-

selves in later days did not allow,—conditions all of them reasonable enough; but a man may not now marry the sister of a deceased wife,—a prohibition altogether unreasonable; for not only is there no consanguinity between the man and the woman here which might prove a legitimate bar to their union, but there is the strong and natural tie between the living sister and the children—if children there be—of her who has prematurely passed away. What is the upshot of the double marriage?

Leah, who has been imposed on Jacob, naturally enough is not loved by him as he loves Rachel; but “when Jehovah,” according to the text, “saw that Leah was hated, he (in requital) opened her womb;” but Rachel, like Sarah, the mother of Isaac, and Jacob’s mother Rebekah, is barren at first—for there is incessant iteration of like incidents in these mythical and legendary tales—and only, like the remarkable women referred to, fruitful at length.

Rachel, barren herself for a time, and envious of her fruitful sister, in imitation of Sarah with Hagar, doubtless, gives her handmaid Bilhah to her husband as a concubine or third wife, and she conceives and bears Jacob two sons in succession.

There is more of this, is there not?

Plenty; Leah having ceased bearing, as she imagined, after having given Jacob four sons, follows her sister’s example, and gives her handmaid Zilpah as a second concubine or fourth wife to her husband; and she too, like Bilhah, presents the Patriarch with two sons one after the other.

What farther?

It were neither edifying nor seemly to proceed with particulars; for the tale is now of Jacob cohabiting with one and then with another of his wives or concubines, and next of Leah—fruitful again through eating *mandrakes*, it is said, found for her in the wheat-field by her son Reuben, so that she adds a

fifth and a sixth son and a daughter to the four she had already presented to her lord.

And Rachel?

All in good time! As Jehovah by our text had seen that Leah was hated and had opened her womb by way of return, so does he now remember Rachel in her yearnings for offspring: "Give me children or else I die," she had said to Jacob in her passion; and though Jacob's anger is kindled against her, and he has said: "Am I in God's stead who hath withheld from thee the fruit of thy womb?" he continues to cohabit with her, and she, having partaken of her sister's mandrakes, becomes a mother at last, bears a son whom she calls Joseph, and exclaims in her joy: "God hath taken away my reproach;" for the Jews held barrenness in woman to be a sign of imperfection and incapacity, if not even of the divine displeasure.

What is the *mandrake* which Reuben found for his mother Leah, and to which such virtue is ascribed?

The Hebrew word translated mandrake in our version, is rendered "Mele mandragora" by the Greeks, and is commonly said to be the love apple or tomato; but this is probably a mistake. The mandrake was a tap-root plant of some sort; and the name is still given by our unlettered herbalists to the root of the white bryony—a drastic purgative, however, not calculated, as it might seem, to provoke appetite or aid conception, as the Jews believed.

Jacob having now secured his wives and concubines, and with a numerous offspring rising about him, grows weary of his servitude to Laban and notifies his desire to be gone—what says Laban to this?

Laban would have him tarry, and bids him name his own terms if he will consent to do so.

What says Jacob to the offer?

He boasts of the advantage his service has already proved to Laban: "It was little thou hadst when I came, and now it is increased into a multitude," is the

prelude to his proposition for payment not in money but in kind : those among the goats that were already or that should be born ring-streaked, speckled or spotted, and those among the sheep that were brown, were to be for his hire.

Laban consents ?

✓ He does : the flocks are shed and Jacob's parti-coloured lots are driven off under the care of his sons, three days' journey from Laban's white or self-coloured cattle.

What device does the artful Jacob practise now ?

He peels him white streaks in green rods of poplar, hazel and chesnut, which he sets up in the watering-troughs of the sheep and goats ; and so arranges matters that the females shall only conceive when they come to drink, the consequence of which is, as said, that the young produced are mostly ring-streaked, spotted and speckled.

Jacob, the wily, does yet more than this ?

He does ; and always with an especial eye to his own advantage and something like his father-in-law Laban's disadvantage : he only puts his peeled rods in the watering-troughs when the strongest of the cattle are about to become pregnant ; "when the cattle were feeble he put them not in," says the text, which continues : "and so the feebler were Laban's, and the stronger Jacob's."

This does not seem over and above honest in Jacob ?

It is everything but honest ; it is shamefully and barefacedly dishonest. It may be condoned, indeed, by referring to the old Jewish law of an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, for Laban had unquestionably imposed on Jacob, and Jacob may be said to have but paid him back in his own coin : "If my father cheat me, I shall cheat my father," said, or is said to have said, a distinguished member of the Jewish community among ourselves, dealing largely in foreign securities, in days not long gone by.

There is another version of this notable story, as of so many more in the Hebrew Scriptures ?

There is, and with different circumstances; for Jacob is now absolved of any need to have recourse to craft or to play the part of dishonest herdsman. Here Jacob complains to his wives Leah and Rachel, the sisters, that their father Laban had withdrawn his countenance from him, had changed his wages ten times, saying now that the speckled, and then that the ring-streaked cattle should be his portion; "but the God of my father," he proceeds, "has been with me, and suffered him not to hurt me; for if he said: the speckled shall be thy wages, then all the cattle bare speckled; and if he said thus: the ring-streaked shall be thy share, then bare all the cattle ring-streaked; and thus God hath taken away the cattle of your father and given them to me."

This is surely making too familiar a use of God's presumed interference in the affairs of men ?

It is in strict conformity, however, with antique Jewish notions that God took immediate part in even the most minute and intimate relations of their lives; and, farther, that the Supreme had favourites, irrespective of merit, among the children of men. The old Jewish writers had no conception of a world, and of man as one of its elements, ruled by great universal, eternal, and necessary laws, expression to the cultivated mind of to-day of the power and true providence of God.

Jacob has a dream besides, that may have put him on the natural way of securing ring-streaked and speckled cattle for himself without having recourse to the questionable procedure of the peeled rods ?

The angel of Jehovah, he tells his sister-wives, spake with him in a dream, saying: "Jacob! and I said: Here am I. And he said: See, all the rams which leap the cattle are ring-streaked, speckled and griseled, and I have seen all that Laban doeth unto

thee ; I am the God of Beth-El, where thou anointedst the pillar and vowedst a vow unto me. Now, arise ; get thee out from this land, and return into the land of thy kindred."

Have we any fact that might help to explain the myth of the peeled rods used by Jacob in securing the increase of his part among the flocks ?

It is not uninteresting to observe that the figure of the man who holds the scales with one hand in the sign of *Libra* on some of the oldest of the Zodiacs has a *streaked rod* or rule in the other. Now, September, the month in which the sun entered *Libra* in former times, is that also in which the ewes begin to conceive ; whence it has been conjectured that the Hebrew writer was taking hints from the pictorial calendar for the composition of his story.

What say the wives to the communication of Jehovah, which may, nevertheless, very well reflect Jacob's own waking thoughts and aspirations ?

Seeing, as they say, that they " have no longer any portion or inheritance in their father's house and are counted of him as strangers, for he hath sold us and quite devoured also our money ; for all the riches which God hath taken from our father is ours and our children's ; therefore whatsoever God hath said unto thee, do."

Laban certainly has not shown himself a strictly honest man in his dealings with the husband of his daughters ; but they in turn seem to show little of the love and devotion naturally to be looked for in children to their parent ?

This is true : they forget the long years through which their father fed and housed and clothed them. In conformity with the notions of their age, however, they are made to ascribe the increasing poverty of their father to the displeasure, and the growing wealth of their husband to the favour of their God.

The device of the rods, were God like the impar-

tial judge we look for among ourselves, would have brought punishment on Jacob, not yielded him reward?

Premeditated and deliberate dishonesty is the worst of dishonesties, and selfishness is a mean and sorry vice; but the punishment and the reward are with man, not with God, save as he is represented by man.

Jacob hearkens to the counsel of his wives?

He does forthwith: setting his family on camels and stealing away without a word to his father-in-law Laban, who has gone sheep-shearing and hears nothing of the flight for several days, he turns his face towards Gilead with all he has, and there arrived he pitches his tents.

Beside what might be called her own, has not Rachel taken some things that did not rightfully belong to her?

She has "stolen the Images that were her father's."

Images in the possession of Laban, descendant in the direct line from Nahor Abraham's brother, father of Leah and Rachel the wives of Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham! This is unlooked for information. The man must have been an Idolater?

The story seems plainly to say as much. But were ever the Hebrews, either then or for centuries afterwards, anything but Fetish worshippers?

They declared emphatically in later times that they were the chosen people of Jehovah, their God; and their descendants, exiles from the land that was promised to them as an inheritance for ever, and scattered over the face of the habitable globe, still believe themselves to be so. This is wonderful enough, all things considered; but still more wonderful is the fact, that the European communities have continued so long to take them at their word, and to look on them as worshippers of the One God.

Laban, absent from home, hears nothing of the flight of Jacob and his wives for three days ; but informed of it at length, and missing his property and his household gods, he sets out in pursuit seven days' journey, intending recovery doubtless of the things abstracted, if not more serious reprisals. Before coming up with the fugitives on Mount Gilead, however, he has a communication from Elohim—God.

God, it is said, visited Laban the Aramæan in a dream by night, and admonished him to speak neither good nor bad to Jacob, so that when he overtook him at length, he only ventured to reproach him with having stolen away with his daughters as captives taken with the sword, and adds : Though thou wouldst be gone, because thou sore longedst for thy father's house, yet wherefore hast thou stolen my gods ?

Jacob, unaware of this particular theft, denies it : "With whomsoever thou findest thy gods," he says, "let him not live." So Laban searches for his gods throughout the encampment, but in vain ; for Rachel, the thief, has secreted them in the camels' furniture and sat down upon them ; and as she excuses herself from rising because of a certain natural visitation—the nature of which she is not so delicate as not to explain—the gods cannot be found.

This gives Jacob an opportunity to turn round on Laban, and to be wroth with him ?

An opportunity he is not slow to improve : "What is my trespass," says he, "what is my sin that thou hast so hotly pursued after me." Boasting of his long and faithful service, he says roundly to his father-in-law : "Except the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the fear of Isaac had been with me, thou hadst surely sent me now empty away. God hath seen my affliction and the labour of my hands, and rebuked thee yester-night."

How could Jacob know this ?

There is no difficulty, the familiar terms considered

upon which the Patriarchs were with their God, who may have informed him!

Laban is appeased, and says to Jacob: Now therefore, let us make a covenant, I and thou, and let it be for a witness between me and thee. What does Jacob?

He takes a stone and sets it up for a pillar, and the two parties, heaping stones about it, call it Galeed and Mizpah, for it is to be at once a witness and a landmark between them, Laban stipulating for good treatment for his daughters, and that no other wives should be taken by Jacob to afflict them, and both agreeing that neither he nor Jacob should pass beyond the heap to do each other harm. Laban then kisses his sons and his daughters, blesses them, and returns to his place, whilst Jacob offers sacrifice upon the mount where he is encamped.

What is the next interesting incident in the history of the patriarch Jacob?

Proceeding on his way and meeting "the angels of God" in a place he calls Mahanaim, he thence dispatches messengers to his brother Esau whom he had so grievously wronged, then dwelling in Seir in the land of Edom, and bids them say "unto my Lord Esau" that "his servant Jacob" is in his territory and hopes to find grace in his sight.

Well?

The messengers return to Jacob and report to him that his brother Esau, informed of his coming, is on his way to meet him with a great retinue of men, four hundred in number.

And Jacob?

Conscience-stricken and fearing his brother's anger, when he hears of the great attendance, he divides his people and his flocks into two; lest Esau coming with hostile purpose smite the one company, then the other should escape.

What more?

He prays to his God, as men mostly do in straits and difficulties ; reminds him of the promises already made and of the order to return into his own country now in course of being obeyed, and owns himself unworthy of all the favour shown him. " With my staff," says he, " I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands ; deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother Esau, for I fear him, lest he come and smite me and the mother with the children. And thou saidst I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea which cannot be numbered for multitude."

Jacob must needs think that his God required to be reminded of his promises ?

It plainly enough appears so ; but Jacob's idea of God was very different from that of the enlightened of the present day ; although not very different perhaps from that still entertained by the vulgar and uninformed.

To conciliate his brother Esau, Jacob makes ready a handsome present in conformity with oriental usage ?

A very handsome present, indeed, which he sends on before, he himself following at the head of the train with the handmaids and their children in the van, Leah and her children next, Rachel and Joseph last of all—the least cherished therefore in front, the dearest in the rear, lest Esau should prove hostile.

How does Jacob comport himself in presence of his brother ?

Lifting up his eyes and seeing Esau coming on with his numerous escort, he advances and " bows himself seven times to the ground as he draws near his brother."

And Esau ?

" Esau ran to meet his brother Jacob" who had bargained away from him his birthright and stolen

from him his father's blessing, "and embraced him, and fell upon his neck and kissed him, and they wept."

Esau must have been of a kindly and forgiving nature?

Surely he was so, or he is made to appear so by the writer who tells the tale; generous too, was Esau, and open and honourable. "Who are all these belonging to thee," he inquires of his brother; and his brother answers: "The children which God hath graciously given thy servant;" and they all bowed themselves; and after came Rachel and Joseph, and they bowed themselves. And he inquired further: "What meanest thou by all this drove which I met?" And Jacob answered: "These are to find grace in the sight of my lord."

And Esau, to the cringing and fair-faced show of his brother?

Answers: "I have enough, my brother, keep that thou hast unto thyself."

To which Jacob?

Replies: "Nay, I pray thee; if now I have found grace in thy sight then receive my present at my hand; for I have seen thy face as though I had seen the face of God, and thou wast pleased with me—take, I pray thee my present (not *blessing* as in our English version) that is brought to thee; God hath dealt graciously with me, and I have all things. And he urged him, and he took it."

Jacob belords his brother still further, does he not?

After putting his brother on a level with his God there was little room for further flattery, yet he uses such phrases as these: "My lord knoweth;" "Let my lord, I pray;" "Let me find grace in the sight of my lord."

The brothers part good friends and reconciled?

They do; Esau returns to Seir; and Jacob wending on his way comes to Shalem in the land of Canaan,

where he buys part of a field and erects a Pillar which he calls El-Elohe-Israel—a compound of the names by which the God of the primitive Semitic tribes possessing Palestine was known.

There is a notable and most extraordinary incident met with in the middle of the narrative of the meeting between Jacob and Esau, but connected with the name of Israel, which we have just seen applied to the pillar erected by Jacob?

A very notable and to modern apprehension extraordinary incident indeed. As Jacob is journeying towards Seir to meet his brother, he is “left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day; and when the man saw that he prevailed not against Jacob, he touched the hollow of his thigh, so that the hollow of Jacob’s thigh was out of joint as he wrestled with him; and he said: Let me go, for the day breaketh! And Jacob said: I will not let thee go unless thou bless me. And the man said: What is thy name; and he said Jacob. And the man said: Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel (Prince of God), for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.”

Does not Jacob also question his opponent as to who or what he is?

Jacob says: “Tell me, I pray thee, thy name,” and his adversary answers: “Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name?” But Jacob’s question was most pertinent; for in days when there were believed to be many gods it was very necessary to know who the One was with whom intercourse was had; and this could best be done through the name and title of the individual.

Jacob’s opponent does not tell his name nor say who he is?

He does not; but owning himself in some sort worsted in the encounter, only escaping from Jacob’s

grip indeed by touching a tender part of his body, he blesses Jacob, who calls the place where the encounter happened Peniel (the face of God); for says he: "I have seen God face to face and my life is preserved." Jacob's opponent would, therefore, seem to have been no *man*, as said in the text, but El, Elohe, or God himself in person.

What interpretation can be put upon this strange and obviously mythical tale?

More than one has been attempted; but its sense has mostly remained to orthodox expositors as dark as the darkest of the night in which the wrestling match is said to have occurred. From the narrative, Jacob evidently supposes that it was his God El with whom he had been striving, though to our modern notions the idea of man struggling with God in flesh and blood seems even too extravagant to have been possibly entertained. Jacob, however, does say that he had seen God face to face; so that on this point there can be no question. It is then to be noted that the opponent desires to be let go when "the day begins to break;" and that "the sun rises" on Jacob as he passes over Peniel halting, yet with a blessing from the encounter. These particulars, aided by a small amount of mythological knowledge, give a key to the mystery involved in the tale: It is allegorical of the struggle between Light and Darkness, *i.e.*, between the beneficent and the adverse aspects of Nature, combined in the Hebrew conception of the Deity. The tale is probably a fragment of a larger document, dis severed from the rest of the record which told of the Light or Sun, Moon and Planet worship followed by the far-off forefathers of the Hebrew race, before they had swarmed away from the hills and valleys of the high lands of Armenia and Mesopotamia. It has no connection, save by inference, with anything that has gone before, nor with anything that comes after in the Hebrew Scriptures—not even with

the change of Jacob's name, for that had been mentioned already.

The hollow of Jacob's thigh is said to have been put out of joint in one part of the narrative (xxxii. 25); in another (v. 32) it is a sinew which is said to have shrunk—"the sinew which is upon the hollow of the thigh; therefore," it is added, "the children of Israel eat not of the sinew which shrank unto this day."

The meaning of this, too, must be allegorical?

No doubt of it. The part which the children of Israel "eat not unto this day" is neither the great sciatic nerve, as is sometimes said, nor any tendon connected with a muscle.

Have we not a story akin to this in what is called the Pagan Mythology?

We have—in the myth of the wrestling bout that takes place between the Tyrian Heracles and Zeus, in which Heracles, like Jacob, comes off halting with a dislocation of the thigh. But why the story here should be characterised as pagan and called mythological and incredible, whilst the Hebrew tale is looked on as sacred and held worthy of belief, is not so obvious. The two myths have doubtless a common origin. The Tyrian hero, the god in his favourable aspect, contends with the Father of gods and men in his adverse aspect, precisely as Jacob—Israel the wrestler, assumed as symbolical of light, contends with Elohe in his quality of darkness, or the night. But Phœnicians, Tyrians, Canaanites, Israelites, &c., were all alike children of the same Semitic stock, spoke closely allied dialects of the same language, and in their religious ideas, rites and ceremonies were at one.

There is another version of the wrestling match between Hercules and an adversary, which throws additional light on the Hebrew fragment?

It is that in which Hercules contends with Antæus.

The sun—Hercules, wrapt in the lion's skin, had his domicile in the zodiacal sign Leo; Antæus had his in that of Aquarius. But Leo is the sign in which the sun is supreme, and summer is in the ascendant; Aquarius the sign in which the sun is at the lowest point of his annual course, and winter rules the year. Hercules' adversary is aptly named Antæus, Opponent,—his opposite or other self, in ceaseless contention with whom he is alternately the victor and the vanquished, the light now getting the better of the dark, the dark in turn becoming superior to the light, but each destined ere long again and in endless succession to yield to the other.

What happens after the brothers Jacob and Esau have taken their several ways?

Dinah, the daughter of Jacob by Leah, is violated by Shechem, son of Hamor the Hivite, who, however, inconsistently as it seems, then makes suit through his father to Jacob to have the damsel to wife.

Does Jacob agree to the proposal?

We have no account of his objecting, but his sons are wroth with Shechem when they hear of the wrong he has done to Dinah their sister. Nevertheless, to the proposals made for reparation by marriage, they answer deceitfully, and say they cannot give their sister to one that is uncircumcised, but if every male of the Hivites will consent to circumcision, then say they we will give our daughters to you, and we will take your daughters to us, and we will dwell with you and become one people.

The Hivites agree to the terms; do Jacob and his sons keep faith with them?

Far from it; there is small account of good faith between man and man in the legendary and mythical accounts we have of these early times. On the third day, when the circumcised Hivites are sore from the operation, Simeon and Levi, two of Jacob's sons, "take each man his sword and come upon the city

boldly and slay the 'males,' despoiling and carrying off all it contained in the shape of cattle and other wealth, and leading the women and their little ones into captivity.

Deception and cruelty seem to have been very much at home with Jacob and his family?

So it plainly appears. Jacob, however, is not altogether satisfied with the daring act of his sons. But it is not with their faithlessness and barbarity that he quarrels; it is because by what they have done they have made him "to stink" among the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites and Perizzites; and "I, being few in number (he says), they will gather themselves together against me and slay me and my house."

There is happily an air of improbability about this story which seems to take it out of the sphere of history, is there not?

There is, and not only of improbability, but of impossibility. Two men, even with every advantage of arms, could scarcely enter the smallest hamlet, slay all the males, load themselves with the spoil, drive off the flocks and herds, and carry away the women and children with impunity. There are two accounts, moreover, of this business in the same chapter of Genesis, one of which may be read complete without a word of the slaughter and spoil which figure in the other; and, as that seems to be the older record, let us also trust that it is the more truthful of the two.¹¹

What incidents worth noting occur in Jacob's onward journey?

Ordered by his God to go up to Beth-el and there to erect a pillar, he commands his household and all who are with him to put away the strange gods that are among them.

¹¹ See Bernstein's *Origin of the Legends of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob* for a new and probably correct explanation of this fable.

This is an extraordinary order! How should Jacob, the familiar of his God and father of the Israelites, have suffered strange gods in his family? But they obey?

They give Jacob all the strange gods that were in their hand, and their rings also, and he buries them under the Oak that was by Shechem?

Jacob and his family would seem from this to have been, like Laban and his daughters, idolaters?

That they were and did long continue to be so there can be no doubt. The strange gods were, of course, household images of small size, such as Rachel had stolen from her father Laban.

But the rings were not gods?

No; but rings of all kinds—ear-rings, nose-rings, finger-rings, bracelets, anklets—were amulets or fetiches, emblematic of the Yoni or female element in the reproductive power of nature—of which the cosmical snake—the symbol of eternity—with its tail in its mouth, was the prototype. The Egyptian divinities are always represented with what is called the Key of the Nile in one hand—a circle or loop with a cross below—the circle, sign of eternity, the cross significant of the four great epochs in the flight of time, or of the moments when the sun, in his annual round, crossed the equator at the vernal and autumnal equinoxes, and attained his highest summer and lowest winter meridian altitudes.

The place where the strange gods and the rings are buried has also its significance, has it not?

No doubt it has; they were buried under the Oak as a propitiatory offering to the life-giving principle in nature, universally typified among the earlier races of mankind by trees.

Jacob comes to Padan Aram, and there God, as it is said, appears to him again, informs him that he is El-Schaddai—God the mighty; tells him that his name shall not any more be Jacob, but Israel; bids

him be fruitful and multiply ; says that a nation and a company of nations should be of him, and that kings should come out of his loins, whilst the land that had been promised to Abraham and Isaac should be confirmed to him and to his progeny for ever. "And then," continues the narrative, "God went up from him in the place where he talked with him."

Have we not had much of this story already, with certain strange accessories ?

Certainly ; where we had the account of the wrestling match that took place in the night season, and only ended with the dawning of the day ; when Jacob's name was changed to Israel, &c.

Can man, reasonable and cultivated man, really and truly accept such tales as inspired revelations from God, or as guides to piety and purity of life ?

They are, undoubtedly, accepted as revelations, and still believed in as actual occurrences, though the end to be served by them in the direction indicated is not so obvious. To the emancipated from superstitious beliefs, however, it is inconceivable how they should still pass current in the world, or be received as supplying examples that are not rather to be shunned than followed. Had not men determined beforehand that they had come from sacred and inspired sources, their details and tendencies would assuredly never have led to the conclusion that they had had any such hallowed origin as that ascribed to them.

Reading the Hebrew Scriptures as thus, with unsealed eyes, and by the light of collateral knowledge, mythological and other, are we not forced on conclusions as to the origin, worth, and real significance of these ancient writings, very different from such as are generally entertained ?

So much follows of necessity ; and we are then left at liberty, from the book of nature and our own minds, to form nobler and more worthy conceptions of God and his Providential rule of the world than

any that are to be gathered from Hebrew sources ; and, further, to think that better books than the Bible may be found to aid in the education of the young.

Journeying from Beth-el, what happens ?

Rachel is taken in labour, and dies in giving birth to her son Benjamin ; then there is a foul tale of Reuben in connection with Bilhah, one of his father's wives or concubines ; lastly, Jacob visits his father Isaac in Hebron, where the old man dies at an incredible age, and is buried by his sons Jacob and Esau. Jacob then continues to dwell in the land of Canaan, in which his father was a stranger, and Joseph, his son by Rachel, now seventeen years old, tends the flocks of his father along with his brothers, the sons of Leah, Bilhah and Zilpah.

Joseph is not liked by his brothers ?

No ; Joseph as the elder-born of Rachel, Jacob's first love, and because he was the child of his old age, "was more loved by Israel than all his children." This naturally begat jealousy and dislike among the others ; and then, as we are told that Joseph "brought to their father evil reports of his brothers," this assuredly would not make them love him any the more.

Joseph has a dream besides that still further inflames the dislike of his brothers ?

He dreams that as he and his brothers were binding sheaves in the field, his sheaf stood upright, and all his brothers' sheaves stood round about and made obeisance to his sheaf.

Has he not yet another dream ?

He dreams further that the sun, moon, and eleven stars made obeisance to him ; and when he tells this dream to his father he is rebuked by his parent, who says, identifying himself, Rebekah, and his eleven sons with the sun, moon, and stars of the dream : "What is this dream that thou hast dreamed ? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow

down ourselves to thee?" Jacob, nevertheless, "observes the saying," and Joseph is naturally hated more than ever by the other members of the family.

The Jews of old thought more of dreams than do men of culture in the present day?

Than men of culture, certainly, though dreams still puzzle and terrify the ignorant and superstitious vulgar. The Jews of old thought that "dreams were from God;" they generally interpreted them literally, though sometimes also allegorically; and the great bulk of their presumed communications from God appear to have been received in dreams and visions of the night, a mode of communication little trusted at the present time, wherein men rely more and more advantageously on knowledge and waking thoughts than on sleeping fancies.

The further account, leading to the catastrophe that is in preparation, informs us that Israel sends Joseph to Shechem as a spy upon his other sons: "Go, I pray thee," says Jacob, "see whether it is well with thy brothers, and well with the flocks, and bring me word again." A delegate of the kind would not be apt to be over well received?

Hardly; and the brothers, when they saw him afar off, even before he came near them, conspired against him to slay him. "Here cometh this man of dreams," say they; "and now let us slay him and cast him into one of the pits, and we will say some evil beast hath devoured him, and we shall see what will become of his dreams."

Reuben, however, interposes, and bids the rest "shed no blood, but cast him into a pit," intending thus, it would seem, to save his life and restore him to his father?

According to a second account it is Judah who interferes: "What profit," says he, "will it be if we slay our brother and conceal his blood; come let us sell him to the Ishmaelites (a troop of whom,

going towards Egypt, have come in sight); let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother."

There appear to be two accounts of this bad business, drawn from different documents, and jumbled together, as in so many other parts of the Jewish sacred writings. In one it is Reuben who saves Joseph alive; in another it is Judah. Here it is Judah and the brethren who sell Joseph to Ishmaelites, there it is Midianitish merchants who draw him out of the pit and sell him to Ishmaelites, who carry him to Egypt; and again it is Midianites who sell him in Egypt to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh; and yet again it is Ishmaelites who effect the sale.

What inference may be drawn from such diversity of statement?

That the idea of supernatural inspiration in connection with the Jewish Scriptures ought to be abandoned, and the matter seen as it must needs be in fact—viz.: that the compiler or editor is here, as elsewhere, drawing now from one document or tradition, and then from another, and that with the superstitious respect for the letter which characterised the Jews of old, and without a show of critical discrimination, he mixes up the several accounts into what he intended should be a continuous and consistent narrative.

Reuben, who is not made a party to the sale of his brother, returns to the pit, and "behold, Joseph was not there! and he rent his clothes and came to his brethren and said: The child is not, and I, whither shall I go!" The brothers take little heed of his wailing, but proceed as they had purposed?

They take Joseph's coat of many colours, and having killed a kid, they dipped the coat in the blood, and brought it to their father, who knows it, and in his grief exclaims: "It is my son's coat; an evil beast hath devoured him!" So he rends his clothes, puts sackcloth on his loins, mourns for his son many

days, and refusing to be comforted, says : " I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning." A true and beautiful picture of natural affection sorely tried, and doubtless from the hand of one among the earliest of the true poets whose writings have come down to us !

We have several particulars now related, not always of the most delicate and moral kind when viewed in the light of the more advanced ideas of delicacy and morality of the present day ?

Particulars which, nevertheless, are interesting from an antiquarian and ethnological point of view, and important as marking intervals of time, and showing how little faith is to be attached to many of the narratives in the Hebrew Bible as embracing historical truths.

What are these ?

Joseph is seventeen years old when he is sold into Egypt ; and as Leah bears Issachar and Zebulon between the birth of Judah and that of Joseph, Judah must have been about twenty-four years of age at this time. Judah now takes Shuah to himself as wife, and she bears first one son, Er, then another, Onan, and yet a third, Shelah. Er, Judah's first-born, is old enough to have a wife given him—Tamar ; Er dies (he is said to have been " wicked in the sight of the Lord, and so the Lord slew him"). Judah desires his second son Onan to take his late brother's wife to himself, in conformity with the usage of the country, and raise up seed to his brother. But Onan does not like the match ; and though he obeys his father in so far as the union went, he resolves, and so acts, as to raise no seed to his brother. This, it is said, " displeased the Lord, and he slew him also." Tamar, for the second time a widow, ought now to have been given in marriage to Shelah, Judah's third son ; but she had proved so disastrous a bargain to Er and Onan, that Judah must have hesitated to ven-

ture on her with his sole remaining son. Tamar was dissatisfied when she sees that Shelah, though grown to man's estate, is not given to her as her husband; and she, the widow of two of his sons, resolves to seduce Judah himself. With this view she casts off her widow's weeds, veils herself, shows herself in an open place as an harlot, and is addressed by Judah. "What wilt thou give me?" says Tamar to Judah when solicited by him. "I will give thee a kid from the flock," he replies. "Give me a pledge till thou send it." "What pledge shall I give thee?" "Thy signet and thy bracelets, and the staff that is in thine hand." And he gave her all. Immediately after her incestuous intercourse with Judah, Tamar resumes her weeds, and when Judah sends the kid by his messenger desiring to have back the pledges he had left with her, she is nowhere to be found.

What does Judah?

He desires the kid to be disposed of, or given away, nevertheless, "lest," as he says, "he should be shamed."

What next in this edifying story?

Judah is by and by informed that Tamar has played the harlot, and is with child; and he says: "Bring her forth and let her be burnt."

What does Tamar?

When brought forth she shows the pledges she had had, and says: "By the man whose these are am I with child; discern, I pray thee, whose are these—the signet, the bracelets, the staff."

And Judah?

Acknowledging the pledge, he declares that she has been "more righteous than himself, because that he had not given her to wife to Shelah his son."

Can we as moral beings conceive accounts of proceedings such as these to have been written under the inspiration of God for the instruction and improvement of mankind?

It is impossible.

Or that God has in especial favour the men who are guilty of doings such as these, and the race who think them not unworthy of a place among their sacred annals as a people?

This, too, even on the vulgar showing, is impossible.

Or that we do well in putting the book which contains such foul tales into the hands of our children as a means of furthering them in a knowledge of that wherein virtue and propriety of conduct consist?

It is only brutal ignorance, blind bigotry, and gross superstition that can say it is well to do so. God has no favourites among his creatures, or, if he has, they are such alone as conform themselves to his laws—physical and moral. Through the understanding and higher moral nature wherewith man is endowed, God proclaims his condemnation of acts that are only worthy of the beasts of the field. But these tales are from the traditions of ages barbarous and long gone by, and only committed to writing in much more modern times,—traditions descending, it may be, from the *Stone Age* of the world, when men had no better tools than such as were poorly supplied by chipped flints, when they ate one another, and grilled and split the long bones of their sires for the marrow they contained.

Joseph is brought to Egypt by the merchants or slave dealers, and sold to an officer of the Pharaoh, Potiphar by name, whose favourable opinion he forthwith secures by his good conduct and intelligence. Attempted to be seduced, and in her anger falsely accused by Potiphar's wife, however, he falls into disgrace and is thrown into prison. Here, again, the propriety of his demeanour wins him the notice and confidence of the keeper of the prison; and having successfully interpreted the dreams of two of Pharaoh's servants who had been put in ward for some offence,

he is brought under the notice of Pharaoh as a seer, Pharaoh himself having dreamed a two-fold dream, which none of the magicians or wise men of Egypt could interpret. Summoned to the presence, the Pharaoh tells his dream to Joseph, and he, from its tenor, interprets it as a notice from God of the coming on of seven years of plenty, to be followed by seven years of dearth. Joseph is careful to take no credit to himself for his dream-interpreting powers; in conformity with Jewish ideas, he says he had but given "the answer of peace which he himself had received from God."

The Pharaoh accepts Joseph's interpretation of his dream?

He does, and is so much pleased with the interpreter, that he takes him into his counsels; appoints him as head over his house; takes the ring from his own finger, and puts it upon Joseph's; arrays him in fine linen; hangs a gold chain about his neck; gives him to wife Asenath, daughter of the Priest of On, and makes him ruler over all the land of Egypt. "Only in the throne will I be greater than thou," adds the confiding sovereign ruler of the land.

This is a great and sudden rise?

A great and sudden rise, indeed; and all on the faith of the still untested truth of the interpretation of a dream! Needful, however, as an introduction to the narrative that follows, viz.: The arrival of Israel and his family in Egypt, in consequence of the famine that conveniently prevailed at this time in the land of Canaan; the touching incidents of the meeting of Joseph with his unnatural brethren, and the retributive justice which the writer would show to wait on evil, and the reward that follows well-doing.

The years of plenty, succeeded by the years of famine, as predicted by Joseph from the Pharaoh's dream, follow, of course?

Of course they do; and Joseph gathers store of

corn, as the sand of the sea, into all the granaries of Egypt; so that, when the years of famine arrive, though dearth prevails in all the neighbouring lands, there is bread in Egypt. When the famine begins to be felt, Joseph unlocks his stores, and is liberal enough to sell, not only to the natives of the country, but, in aid of the story, to strangers also. Hearing that there is corn in Egypt, Jacob says to his sons, "Why look ye one upon another? Behold, I have heard that there is corn in the land of Egypt; get ye down thither, and buy for us from thence that we may live and not die."

The sons depart?

Ten of them; for Jacob will not part with Benjamin, his youngest son, "lest, peradventure, mischief befall him." They arrive in Egypt; and Joseph "knew his brethren, but they knew not him." They bow themselves with their faces to the earth before the great Governor of Egypt; and Joseph, remembering his dreams, when he sees them in this position, and, doubtless, not entirely forgetting the cruel usage he had had at their hands, then speaks roughly to them, asks them whence they came, and says to them, "Ye are spies; to see the nakedness of the land are ye come."

They excuse themselves?

"Thy servants are no spies," say they, "but twelve brethren, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; and, behold, the youngest is this day with our father, and one is not."

"By the life of Pharaoh," answers Joseph, "ye shall not go hence, except your youngest brother come hither. Send one of you," according to one version of the tale. (for here we have two as usual—"let one of you be bound in prison," says the other version), "whilst the rest carry corn for the famine of their houses, but bring your youngest brother to me, so shall your words be verified, and ye shall not die."

Then come the compunctious visitings upon the brethren for what they had done to Joseph ; and still, in the presence of the Governor, and speaking in their own tongue, they accuse one another of their hard-heartedness, not witting that Joseph understood them, "for he spake to them by an interpreter."

Simeon is bound as hostage, and the rest depart with provision for the way, their sacks full of corn, and the money of each returned, tied up in the mouth of his sack. They reach home, and narrate to their father all that has befallen them ?

And communicate the conditions on which Simeon is to be released ; but Jacob refuses absolutely to part with Benjamin : "My son shall not go down with you ; for his brother is dead, and he is left alone ; if mischief befall him by the way, then shall ye bring down my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave." But, the famine continuing, when they had eaten up the corn they had brought out of Egypt, Jacob bids them go again and buy a little food.

The sons consent to go ?

Only on condition that Benjamin is suffered to go with them : "Slay my two sons," says Reuben to his father, "if I bring him not to thee again." "Send the lad with me," says Judah, "and we will arise and go ; that we may live and not die, both we and thou and our little ones ; I will be surety for him ; of my hand shalt thou require him."

Jacob yields to their entreaties, and to sore necessity ?

"If it must be so now," says the old man, "do this : take of the best fruits in the land, and carry down the man a present,—a little balm, and a little honey, spices and myrrh, nuts and almonds ; and take double money in your hand ; the money that was brought again in the mouth of your sacks carry again in your hand ; peradventure it was an oversight ; take also your brother, and arise, go again unto the man, and

God Almighty give you mercy before him, that he may send away your other brother and Benjamin : if I am bereaved of my children, I *am* bereaved ! ”

They depart, and stand a second time before Joseph. When he sees Benjamin among them, he orders the ruler of his house to bring his brethren home, and to slay and make ready ; for these men, says he, shall dine with me at noon ?

Brought into Joseph's house, they are much afraid, because of the money they had found returned in their sacks ; they excuse themselves to the steward ; inform him of the money they had found, and show both this and that which they had now brought to buy more corn.

The steward consoles them ?

Saying : “ Peace be to you ; fear not ; your God and the God of your father hath given you treasure in your sacks. I had your money ; and he brought Simeon out unto them. ”

They make ready the present they had provided for Joseph, and bow themselves to the earth before him, when he comes home. Joseph asks kindly after their welfare, and says : “ Is your father well, the old man of whom ye spake, is he yet alive ? ” “ Thy servant our father is yet alive, he is in good health. ” And lifting up his eyes, and seeing Benjamin, his mother's son, he asks : “ Is this your younger brother of whom ye spake ? And he said, God be gracious unto thee, my son ! And he made haste, for his bowels yearned upon his brother ; and he sought where to weep ; and he entered into his chamber and wept there. And he washed his face and went out and refrained himself. ”

Prosperity and his wonderful rise in the world had not hardened Joseph's heart, as so often happens ?

Joseph is an impersonation of goodness and forgiveness, drawn by a master's hand in simple and beautiful words. But it is a tale such as belongs not

to the age of the world with which the name of Joseph, the son of Jacob, is connected. It is the conception of an Isaiah or a Micah, or of a mind more delicate and refined than either of these—a beautiful and touching story, unsurpassed in its treatment and its pathos; a story over which our eyes were wont to fill while we were children, as they fill now, after seventy years and more, perhaps, have passed over the heads of the men!

Joseph would seem to have taken some little pleasure in frightening his naughty brothers; for he bids his steward put their money into the sacks of all as before, and his own silver drinking-cup, beside the money, into the sack of the youngest, so as to make it appear that the cup had been stolen. Dismissed on their way homewards, and outside the city gates, Joseph says to his steward: Up, follow after the men; and when thou dost overtake them, say unto them: Wherefore have ye rewarded evil for good? Is not this the cup in which my lord drinketh, and whereby indeed he divineth?

Joseph, it would therefore seem, was not only an interpreter of dreams, but a diviner in other ways?

Fortune-telling from the cup is still practised—more, perhaps, in jest than in earnest—among ourselves. It is no golden jewelled goblet, however, such as we must presume Joseph's to have been, with beads and rivulets of precious liquor stealing down its sides, that is now in use by our gossips. It is the homely tea-cup and the grounds adhering to the bottom and sides which are the hieroglyphics that prompt the Pythia in her responses.

Accused of having purloined the cup, the men, in conscious innocence, rebut the charge; but are confounded when, on the sacks being undone, the cup of my lord the Governor of Egypt is found in the sack of Benjamin. They rend their clothes, relate their asses, and return into the city. Joseph would then

detain his brother Benjamin beside him, whilst the rest returned to their home; but Judah pleads touchingly against the Governor's purpose: "Oh, my lord," says he, "let thy servant, I pray thee, speak a word in my lord's ears. My lord asked his servants, saying: 'Have ye a father or a brother?' and we said unto my lord, 'We have a father, an old man, and a brother, a child of his old age; and his brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother, and his father loveth him. Now, therefore, when I come to thy servant, my father, seeing that his life is bound up in the lad's life, it shall come to pass, when he seeth that the lad is not with us, that he will die, and thy servants shall bring down the grey hairs of thy servant, our father, with sorrow to the grave; for thy servant became surety for the lad unto my father, saying, 'If I bring him not unto thee, then I shall bear the blame unto my father for ever.' Now, therefore, I pray thee, let thy servant abide instead of the lad, a bondsman to my lord, and let the lad go up with his brethren."

Joseph can hold out no longer: "Cause every man to go out from me," he exclaims; and, turning to his brethren, he says: "I am Joseph; come near me, I pray you; I am Joseph your brother whom ye sold into Egypt. And doth my father yet live? Now, therefore, be not grieved nor be angry with yourselves that ye sold me thither, for God did send me before you to preserve life. Haste ye then and go to my father, and say unto him: Thus sayeth thy son Joseph: God hath made me Lord of all Egypt; come down to me, tarry not. And ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and ye shall haste and bring down my father hither. And he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck and wept, and he kissed all his brethren and wept upon them." The good Joseph! and the sweet poetic mind that still makes our hearts to throb in sympathy with its own as it wove the

tale, though it has been stilled so many hundred years!

The brothers return home and tell the wondrous story to their father, whose heart faints within him at first, for he scarce believes them. But seeing the presents with which they are loaded his spirit revives, and he says: "It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive; I will go and see him before I die." He takes his journey accordingly with all belonging to him?

With his sons and daughters and his son's sons and daughters, their cattle and all the gear they had gotten in the land of Canaan, they move away, three score and six in all, making up with Joseph, his wife Asenath and the two sons she had borne him, the three score and ten persons—the mystical number seventy—connected with Jacob who come out of the land of Canaan into Egypt.

The wealth, in cattle especially, said to have been possessed by Jacob and his sons in the land of Canaan might seem to make removal to Egypt on account of famine unnecessary?

So we might suppose; with their flocks and herds they could have been in no want of animal food; and if the land was in a state to produce "balm and honey, nuts and almonds, spices and myrrh" as presents for the Governor of Egypt, it was also in a condition to yield corn for Jacob and his sons, and herbage for their cattle?

So we might fairly suppose. But continued peaceful settlement in the land of Canaan would not have enabled the Jewish scribes to exhibit their people in any peculiar or very striking way as the special favourites of their God Jehovah. Neither would he have had the occasion required to show the many strange signs and wonders they describe in proof of his almighty power and his superiority over the gods of Pharaoh and the Egyptians. Neither indeed would such a course have left any excuse for the cruelties so

wantonly committed against the Egyptians, or the invasion of Palestine and the indiscriminate slaughter of its inhabitants, accounts of which are laid up in the Hebrew annals as acts approved—nay commanded by God, meritorious in themselves and worthy of imitation by posterity.

But the famine, as foretold by Joseph to the Pharaoh; and, presumed to have extended to Palestine, is the cause which led immediately to Jacob's removal with his family from the land of Canaan to Egypt?

The famine, too, must be a myth—part of the machinery brought into play by the writer. Occasional droughts with consequent dearths have, doubtless, at all times prevailed in Palestine, as in other lands within the variable latitudes, but the geographical position of the country and all we know of its climate forbid us to believe that drought and dearth for seven successive years are within the sphere of possibility. Egypt, again, not depending on its local rainfall for the productiveness of its soil, but on the waters of the Nile, whose source is more than a thousand miles away, is as necessarily inundated once a year and fertilised, as winter and summer come alternately over the northern and southern halves of the globe. *Total* failure of the crops in Egypt, even for *one* year, may be said not to be possible. The rise of the river in one year being more than in another, and the acreage effectually irrigated and cultivated being in consequence less or more, there may in different years be relative abundance or dearth, but never entire failure of the land's increase, never even scarcity for such a period as seven years in succession.

Jacob and his son's wealth consisting in cattle of different kinds, the land of Egypt, so wholly agricultural, would not seem the most advantageous conceivable for the location of neat-herds and sheep-herds?

This difficulty is got over by Jacob and his family

being settled by Joseph, with the Pharaoh's approval, in the land of Goshen, a district on the northern borders of Egypt adapted to grazing, but which will be looked for in vain upon the map of such extent as might suffice to support the population that is said finally to have possessed it.

There was a special objection, moreover, to the settlement of Jacob and his kindred in the land of Egypt proper?

Besides the first and most obvious objection that presented itself to the writer's mind—the impossibility of having herds and flocks among the polders and canalated fields of the great valley of the Nile, shepherds are said to have been an abomination to the Egyptians.

What may be the meaning of this?

An obscure epoch in the history of Egypt is probably referred to, when the country was invaded and for a time dominated by a barbarous people called Hyksos or Shepherds, of whom little that is not conjectural is known—a wild Arabian tribe in all probability of the same Semitic stock as the Hebrews—who broke in upon peaceful Egypt out of the neighbouring desert and made themselves masters of the country for a season—how long it is impossible to say—but who were finally either absorbed into the general population, or, as the ruling class, were got the better of and exterminated or expelled.

Jacob however takes his journey with all he has, and as in his other significant moves does not fail to have a fresh vision and communication from the God of his father Isaac?

God, says the text, speaks unto Israel (Jacob) in a vision of the night, and announces himself as the God of his father, bids him not fear to go down into Egypt; for, adds his interlocutor: "I will go down with thee, and will bring thee up again and make of thee a great nation."

A long time elapsed, however, as we learn from another page of these scriptures, before God redeemed the repeated pledges he is said to have made to the Patriarchs?

Four hundred and thirty years, according to one of the accounts, between the promise now made to Jacob and the Exodus from Egypt, when the first steps may be said to have been taken which, after forty years more of wandering in the desert, were to lead to fulfilment of his engagements. But it is man who makes promises and enters into covenants; God makes and enters into none, save in the eternal, changeless laws which are his essence, and these are not in time but from eternity.

And, then, were the Jews ever a great nation; numerous as the stars of heaven or the sands of the sea shore?

Never. They did not even at any time obtain entire possession of the land they believed had been promised to them, and were alternately tributaries to the Moabites, Philistines, Phœnicians, Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Greeks, and Romans, by all of whom they were at different times conquered, amerced as tributaries, or led into captivity as slaves.

The promises made them, therefore, can only have been in their own imaginations?

They certainly cannot have been from God, for they were never kept.

But to return—Jacob on his arrival in Egypt is dutifully met by Joseph in his chariot, and by him is presented to the Pharaoh. Inquired of by the sovereign how old he is, what answer makes he?

“That he is an hundred and thirty years old;” and rather ungratefully and untruly, as it seems, from all we know of his history, he adds: “Few and evil have been the days of the years of my life.”

Can we fancy the successful superseder of his elder brother and filcher of his father’s blessing, the un-

vanquished wrestler with Elohe himself, and the prosperous possessor of herds and flocks, and a numerous progeny, to have given such an answer?

Not if he were speaking in sober seriousness. His own life had been prosperous; the evil in it had all fallen upon others.

The famine continuing in the land of Egypt, how does Joseph proceed?

Warily and with a view to aggrandise the ruler, harshly and so as to impoverish and break the people; for he first gathers into his own hand all the money in the country by the sale of his hoarded corn; then he says, "Give me of your cattle if money fail;" and the year coming to an end with no abatement of the scarcity, he finally buys up all the land, every man selling his field for bread, and removes the people into the cities from one end of Egypt to the other.

Does he not make one exception in this getting possession of the soil?

He does: "The land of the priests bought he not," a piece of information which enables us surely to divine what he was who tells the story.

A priest?

Undoubtedly. Nor was Joseph yet at an end with his hard conditions to the people. In return for the seed they received to sow their fields, he made it a law over the land of Egypt unto this day that Pharaoh should have the fifth part of the produce, except of the land of the priests, which became not Pharaoh's.

Another exception in the same line, and with the phrase "unto this day," assuring us not only of the probable calling of the narrator, but of the comparatively late period when he lived and wrote?

It does so assure us, very certainly. The children of Israel, however, prosper in the land of Goshen, having no hard conditions imposed on them by the

Governor ; and Jacob, we are told, lived for seventeen years thereafter among his children.

The longest life, however, comes to an end at last, and we have more than one account of the incidents attending Jacob's death ?

It appears so. In the first that meets us he calls Joseph to his side and engages him by the oath held most sacred among the Jews to dispose of his body in the way he desires : " Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh (admove manum tuam testibus meis) and deal kindly and truly with me ; bury me not in Egypt. but I will lie with my fathers, and thou shalt carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burying-place." In the second account given of the patriarch's end Joseph is *told* of his father's sickness, and taking his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, in his hand, he visits his parent, who on his part is *told* of his son's arrival, when he " strengthens himself and sits upon the bed." Seeing Joseph's sons he asks who they are, for his eyesight is dim. Being informed, he says, " Bring them, I pray thee, unto me, and I will bless them."

He blesses them ?

He does ; but imitates his own father Isaac in so far that, though he blesses both of the lads, he gives for no imaginable reason the preferential blessing with the right hand to the younger son. In this second account he says nothing about desiring to be buried out of Egypt, but having blessed Joseph he adds, " I die, but God will bring you again into *the land of your fathers.*"

Jacob, therefore, speaks of the land of Canaan as his own country and the country of his fathers ?

He does so ; and when we read of the ample possessions of Abraham and of Jacob and of Esau, called Duke of Seir, it is impossible not to see that the land of Canaan had already been given by God to the Patriarchs and their seed ; for they could not have be-

come proprietors of hundreds of camels, of thousands of oxen, and of hundreds of thousands of sheep and goats, had they not also been lords of the soil.

Such considerations as these might lead us to infer that the first coming of the Israelites into Egypt was due to another cause than the famine at home, the one assigned?

It seems more likely, from the context and other parts of the imperfect history we possess, to have been owing to the fortune of war,—the truth in all likelihood being that a body of them was carried to the land of the Pharaohs as captives at some period unnamed in their history, they having been deported, in conformity with ancient usage, from their own homes to those of their conquerors, and by them treated as slaves. The Hebrew Scriptures indeed are silent as to any Egyptian captivity similar to the captivities of Assyria and Babylon; but when we discover the Jewish physiognomy among the trains of captives depicted in the temples, we are authorised to conclude that the position of the children of Israel in Egypt was never anything other than that of slavery. This would better account for the hard usage they are said to have suffered at the hands of their masters in after-times, which led to revolt and flight, than the reason assigned in the record. The posterity of Jacob, after a peaceful residence for centuries in Goshen, could not have been looked on as intruders and to be feared, nor treated with harshness, more than any of the other inhabitants of the land of Egypt.^o

^o Movers refers to a curious passage in 'The Birds' of Aristophanes, to show that the Israelites in early times must have been slaves in Phœnicia as well as in Egypt. The Cucku arrived in Phœnicia at the time of the wheat and barley harvest, and his call interpreted by the Greek comic writer is to this effect: Circumcised to the field! The Israelites must therefore have been the bondmen, field labourers to their more civilised and powerful neighbours.—('Die Phœnizier,' ii. 314.)

Jacob distinguishes Joseph from his other sons ?

He does by the legacy he leaves him. After giving him his blessing, he adds : "Moreover I have given to thee one portion above thy brethren which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow." In no part of the Scriptures, however, is there any mention made of early feuds between the descendants of Abraham settled in Canaan and their neighbours, nor of any feat of arms performed by Jacob against the Amorites in particular. Jacob, on the contrary, is characterised at the outset of his history as a plain or peaceful man, so that the verse here may be an after-thought of the writer for the greater exaltation of Joseph, although Jacob's boast may lead us to suspect that we have by no means the history of the Hebrew people complete.

Jacob blesses or addresses some words of farewell to his other sons before he dies ?

He does ; but what he says can be less interpreted as blessing than as prophecy : "Gather yourselves together (he says) that I may tell you what will befall you in times to come ; gather yourselves together and hearken, ye sons of Jacob, hearken to Israel your father !"

He then addresses each in succession, saying first to Reuben as his eldest—

"Reuben, thou art my first-born, my 'might, the beginning of my strength ! * * * * Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel ; because thou wentest up to thy father's bed, then defiledst thou it."

We have had the story of Reuben's transgression already, which seems so unnatural and abominable that an allegorical interpretation has been sought not only for it, but for the whole of the 49th chapter of Genesis, to which our survey has now brought us. What may be the nature of this interpretation ?

We have already seen Jacob assuming that he, his wife, and his other sons were the sun, moon, and

eleven stars of Joseph's dream, and there can be little doubt of the twelve tribes of Israel having been constituted as representatives of the twelve signs of the zodiac through which the sun passes in his annual circuit round the earth, as understood by all the nations of antiquity. Antiquarian writers of the highest authority are further agreed in concluding that the several tribes (in much later times than the age of Jacob, however) carried banners with devices distinctive of each upon them, these being, in fact, no other than the figures of animals, men or things to be found, with little variety, on the planispheres or zodiacs of the Indians, Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, and ourselves.

What is the interpretation given to the Patriarch's address to Reuben in conformity with this, which may properly be spoken of as the enigmatical and astrological meaning that underlies the language of this as of so many other parts of the Hebrew Scriptures?

The tribe of Reuben is believed to have carried the sign of Aquarius on its banner. Now the sign of Aquarius is typified by a human figure with a pitcher or urn out of which water is flowing: hence Reuben is unstable as water; he defiles his father's bed when he cohabits with the Patriarch's concubine Bilhah, and so forfeits his birthright as eldest born, which is given to Joseph. And oriental astronomers designate one of the asterisms in the sign of Aquarius by the name of *Bulha*, which rises when the sun is yet in Capricornus,—the house of Saturn, the star of Israel,—and sets at the precise time when Aquarius also dips under the horizon head foremost, and by reversing his urn was held by the ancients to cause the overflow of the Nile.

This is certainly curious and is not usually adverted to by commentators on the Hebrew Scriptures, although it has great semblance of probability for its truth. What says the Patriarch further?

“Simeon and Levi are brethren ; instruments of cruelty are in their habitations ; in their anger they slew a man,” &c. Now the sign allotted to them was PISCES, the fishes, a sign held of specially malignant influence by the old astrologers ; for whilst the sun is in Pisces all the constellations that were considered adverse are seen above the horizon ; and with his setting in this sign the disasters of the reign of Typhon, *i.e.* of winter, begin ; for then it is that Orion sets and is feigned to die from the sting of the venomous-scorpion who rises, and that Osiris is entrapped and slain by Typhon. In their self-will these brethren are further said to dig down a *wall*—the Hebrew, more correctly translated, meaning to maim, or it may be to emasculate a bull ; and in the Mithriac monuments in particular, when the sun in Pisces sets, the scorpion is represented gnawing the genitals of the vernal bull—*i.e.*, the reproductive power of nature falls into abeyance, and the destructive principle asserts its power.

What is said to Judah ?

“Judah is a lion's whelp ; his hand is in the neck of his enemies, and his father's children bow down before him.”

The interpretation of which is ?

That the sun having in the olden time attained his highest northern meridian altitude in Leo, the cognisance of the tribe of Judah, all the other constellations are beneath or may be said to have become subject to him ; hence, the hand in the neck of enemies, and the father's children bowing down before him.

The sceptre it is said shall not depart from Judah nor the ruler's rod (not *lawgiver* as in the English version) until he come to Shiloh and the people obey him. How may this be interpreted ?

The constellation Cepheus, as King of Ethiopia, is still seen on our celestial spheres with a crown on his

head and a sceptre in his hand. This constellation rises towards the end of July under Leo, as it were, and continues the paranatellon or concomitant asterism of Leo until the sun enters Scorpio. Cepheus, the King, sets about the time Scorpio rises, and then ceases as it seems to attend upon Leo; the brighter of two of the most conspicuous stars in Scorpio, called *Shuleh* by Arabian astronomers, then making its appearance on the visible horizon.

What may be the meaning of the sentence where Judah is said to bind his ass's colt to the vine and to wash his garments in wine?

It probably alludes to the influence of the sun in bringing to maturity the fruits of the earth, those of the vine in especial, whose noble product, wine, gladdens the heart of man.

Zebulon, says the Patriarch in continuation, shall dwell at the haven of the sea, and shall be for a haven for ships. How may this be interpreted?

The standard of Zebulon was Capricornus; and on turning to a celestial globe we observe that the ship Argo, with the most brilliant star in the southern heavens—Canopus—visible in Egypt, by us unseen, sets as Capricornus rises.

ISSACHAR is the next in order?

Issachar is a strong Ass couching between two burthens; and Issachar bore on his banner the sign of *Cancer*, in which are the stars called the Asses. Had the sun had the turning point in his course as now in Cancer, instead of Leo as at the time the zodiac was designed which the writer of Jacob's death-song must have had before him, we should find no difficulty in interpreting the couching as between the burthen of the past and the burthen of the future. But the translation of the Hebrew by the English word *burthens*, seems to be erroneous, the proper rendering being *partitions* (Drummond), *Viehhürden*—*cattle hurdles* (De Wette). Issachar saw that rest

was good, yet bowed his shoulder to bear—he couched at the turning point of the summer half of the year.

DAN it is said shall judge his people as one of the tribes of Israel. Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path, that biteth the horse's heels so that his rider shall fall back ?

A sentence which finds its ready interpretation in the fact that the tribe of Dan bore the sign of Scorpio on its banner. This was one of the accursed signs according to the ancient astrologers; for with the entrance of the sun into Scorpio commenced the reign of Typhon, the death of Orion, and the emasculation of the vernal bull. Close to Scorpio we see the serpent Ophiucus,—the adder that bites the horse's heels,—the head of this serpent ascending along with the feet of the Centaur, or Hippocentaur, to obtain the element of the horse, the heels of which are said to be bitten by the reptile. It is not without interest to note that in the record of the doings of the tribe of Dan elsewhere recorded (Joshua, ch. xix.), we read of their taking the city of Leshem and giving it the name of their chief or father, Dan. Now, the bright star in Scorpio which we call Antares was called Leshat by the Chaldeans and Lesos by the Greeks, so that the astrological significance of what is said of Dan is not doubtful.

Of GAD it is said a troop shall overcome him, but he shall overcome at the last ?

In Capricornus there is a cluster of stars called variously Gadia and Gadi by the Chaldeans and Syrians, Giedi by the Arabians. It might be presumed at first sight, therefore, that Gad must have had Capricornus for its cognisance. But the cognisance of Gad was *Aries*, the Ram, in which sign the sun crossed the equator in the olden time, as in times still older he made the passage in Taurus, and from the inferior mounted triumphantly, victorious as it were, over the inferior signs, in the lowest of which,

Capricornus, comprising the cluster or troop of stars called Gadia, he was feigned to have been born at the winter solstice: pressed on symbolically by a troop at one time, the sun advancing in his course prevails over it at last.

Out of ASHER the bread shall be fat, and he shall give the dainties of the King (De Wette).

Libra was the sign carried on the banner of Asher, and when the sun had reached this sign the happy season of the year had come, with skies still mild and the earth burthened with the load of ripened and ripening fruits which under the fostering influence of the God of Day it had produced. Hence the allusion to the big loaf and the dainties for a King.

NAPHTHALI is a hind let loose; he giveth goodly words.

Tradition allots Virgo to Naphthali. The word translated *hind* had probably a different signification in the original, and what is implied by the goodly words he gave it is not easy to conjecture.

JOSEPH is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well, whose branches run over a wall.

The writer compares Ephraim, who assumed the standard of his father Joseph, to a young bull, and tradition assigns TAURUS to the tribe of Ephraim—Taurus, the sign in which the vernal equinox occurred in very ancient times, and when the vegetable world was starting into life. Hence the allusion to the fruitful bough, spreading abroad in its luxuriant growth. "The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him and hated him; but his bow abode in strength, pliant the power of his hands, made strong by the hand of the mighty Jacob" (De Wette), continues the text. Now it happens that immediately after the sun has passed into Sagittarius, the head of Taurus begins to set, whence we can easily conclude as to the archer who shoots at him in hate. But the whole of the matter here can only be satisfactorily

explained by referring to the Mithriac monuments, delineations of several of which are given by Hyde in his classical work, 'Veterum Persarum et Medorum Religionis Historia.' In these, Mithras the sun in Taurus is represented on the back of a Bull, whose side he pierces with a dagger, and its blood, the symbol of life, flows down to vivify and fertilise the earth, whilst a flying arrow is seen directed against the breast of the animal, and the scorpion is observed gnawing his genital organs.

"BENJAMIN shall ravin as a wolf; in the morning he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil."

This tribe bore the wolf on its banner, and one of the ancient eastern symbols of the sign Gemini is the wolf. Further, Gemini was the sign in which the god with the dog or wolf's head, Anubis, had his station, who, besides announcing the rise of the Nile, was also the planet Mercury, which changes alternately and so rapidly from an evening to a morning and from a morning to an evening star, whence the possible allusion to the prey and the spoil in connection with the night and the morning.^p

In concluding his death song, Jacob commands his sons assembled around him, precisely as he had commanded Joseph individually in the first account we had of the death-bed scene, not to bury him in Egypt, but with his fathers in the cave that is in the field of Machpelah, which Abraham bought with the field of Ephron the Hittite for a burying-place. Having made an end of commanding his sons, he brought his feet together on the bed and departed, and was gathered to his people.

^p The writer mainly followed in the above astrological exposition is Sir W. Drummond, in his 'Edipus Judaicus;' with some hints from Nork's 'Biblische Mythologie.' Where the Scripture texts given differ from the accredited English version, De Wette's unrivalled translation of the Bible has been followed.

What is the conclusion now come to by the abler and better informed of the critical exponents of the Hebrew Scriptures in regard to the prophetic death song of Jacob?

That it is a poetical *prophecy after the event*, largely interlarded with allegorical and astrological matter, and not composed, in all probability, until after the epoch of the Kings of Judah. Dr Davidson agrees with those critics who think it may have been written by Nathan (*vide* 'Introduction to Old Testament,' i., p. 198). "The Deity," says this ripe scholar, able critic, and liberal theologian, "did not see fit, so far as we can judge, to impart to any man like Jacob the knowledge of future and distant events. Had he done so, he would not have left him to speak on his death-bed like an Arab chief of no higher blessings to his sons than rapine and plunder, and without the least reference to another and better state of existence on which he believed he should enter, and on which he might counsel his sons to act continually." That the death song is allegorical is obvious enough to us, and if it have the astrological meaning assigned to it by such scholars and thinkers as Kircher, Jablonski, Dupuis, Drummond, and Nork, it seems as if it could only have been produced after the Babylonian captivity, when the Jews had received a lesson in the astrological lore of the Chaldeans; they themselves up to the time of the exile appearing to have been profoundly ignorant of all beyond the fact that there were lights in the sky—sun, moon, planets, and fixed stars, which influenced them as they fancied in their estates, and were set in heaven, moreover, for their peculiar advantage.

Joseph and his brethren, now reconciled, like dutiful sons, carry out their father's injunctions in regard to the burial?

Joseph commands his servants the physicians to embalm the body of his father Jacob, and having the

Pharaoh's leave of absence he sets out with all the adult members of his father's house for the land of Canaan, where, after a grievous mourning, characterised in the text as "the mourning of the Egyptians," he buries his father. He then returns to Egypt with his brethren, who fearing that Joseph would now hate them, their father being dead, and requite them for the evil they had done him, send a messenger to him and entreat forgiveness for their trespass and their sin.

Joseph, as we know him, does not deny them ?

"Fear not," he says; "for stand I not under God? Ye thought evil against me, but God turned it to good, to bring it to pass as it is this day, to save many people alive. Now therefore fear ye not; I will care for you and for your children. And he comforted them and spake kindly to them." (Eng. vers. and De Wette.)

Joseph lives long in Egypt, and sees the children of the third generation of Ephraim his son; the children also of Machir, the son of Manasseh his own son, were brought up on his knees—this implies a long life ?

Joseph, according to the text, lives a hundred and ten years and then dies. Before being gathered to his fathers, however—and we might say as matter of course and in emulation of his father Jacob—he says to his brethren: "God will surely visit you and bring you out of this land unto the land which he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob." He also takes an oath of his kinsmen binding them to carry his bones from Egypt to the ancestral burying-place in the land of Canaan. His life at an end, his body is embalmed and put into a coffin in Egypt.

APPENDIX.

(A.) GENESIS OF THE EARTH.

The elements and their compounds probably existed at first in states far different from those in which they now present themselves: water as oxygen and hydrogen; the saline, earthy, and metallic oxides, carbonates, chlorides, &c., in the form of their constituent elements. A vast amount of heat must also have been set free whilst the atmosphere and crust of the earth were undergoing condensation and consolidation from the gaseous and vaporous into the liquid and solid states in which they now exist, which could not all have been dissipated in space, and so lost to the earth. Concentrated into mighty flashes of lightning—electric sparks of portentous power,—it was probably used in bringing into play the elective affinities of the elements or simple substances, and so producing the compounds in which we now meet with them, the heat itself from sensible becoming latent in these.

(B.) THE CONFUSION OF LANGUAGES.

Can any reasonable explanation be given of the myth of the Tower of Babel?

From its geographical position on the Euphrates—now a sedge-grown stream creeping sluggishly along among sand-banks and over shallows, but in former ages rolling a much mightier tide to the sea—Babylon

lay in the direct line of communication between the East and the West. This naturally brought men of different tongues together, and after the wars of Nebuchadnezzar and his deportations from the conquered countries it became a kind of centre in which numerous different races of the human family were made to congregate. Hence, such the diversity of language said to have prevailed that the inhabitants of one quarter of the great city did not understand the tongue of those of another. The inventor of the mythical tale may have been one of the deported Israelites, and well acquainted with the confusion of tongues *that prevailed in Babylon.*

(C.) TEMPTATION OF ABRAHAM.

Have we not parallels in the old mythologies of like intended but interrupted sacrifices of children by their fathers?

We have already referred to one at least where the sacrifice is said to have been completed: Kronos, arrayed in his royal robes, to stay a pestilence, offered up his son Jehud to his father Uranos. But Athamas, King of Iolchos, about to sacrifice his son to Jupiter Laphystius, in fulfilment of the terms on which he held his kingdom, like Abraham, was prevented, the god considerably substituting a golden-fleeced ram for the son; Iphigenia, about to bleed on the altar of Diana, was replaced by a hind, &c.



THE BOOK OF EXODUS.

MOSES—THE FLIGHT FROM EGYPT—THE WILDERNESS—LEGISLATION.

THE descendants of Jacob, surnamed Israel, called Israelites and children of Israel, increased amazingly, according to the text, "multiplying and waxing exceeding mighty, so that the land was filled with them," the effect of which is said to have been—?

That the jealousy of the Egyptians their masters was roused, and the Pharaoh, or king, fearing that, in case of war with a neighbour, they might join the enemy, fight against him, and so "get him out of the land," therefore were taskmasters set over them to afflict them, and make their lives bitter with hard bondage in brick and mortar and service in the fields; the straw held needful in brick-making, among other things, being finally withheld, whilst the tale of bricks made was required to be the same as before.

Bricks and mortar, we may presume, from their being particularly mentioned, were the materials employed by the Egyptians in their buildings?

The great structures of Egypt, nevertheless, appear to have been invariably built of stone without mortar. The temples and palaces of Babylon and Nineveh, however, were uniformly built of brick and mortar. In the hard bondage in brick and mortar of the text we have, therefore, one of the many traits to be had, when they are looked for, of the age and authorship

of the Pentateuch ; the compiler of which was neither Moses nor any contemporary of his, but one who must have lived after the Babylonian Captivity, and had had, as it seems, occasion to learn something of the art and mystery both of brick-making and brick-laying—arts little practised either in alluvial Egypt or rocky Palestine, but pursued as a principal industry around Babylon and Nineveh on the clay bottoms of the Euphrates and Tigris.

The Pharaoh of Egypt is said to have fallen on what seems an extraordinary device to keep down the numbers of the now obnoxious Israelites?

He speaks to the Hebrew midwives—Shiphrah and Puah—the names of these women, strange to say, having survived the wreck of ages! and orders them, when they do their office by the Hebrew women, to kill all the male children, but to save the females alive.

A most unkingly command ; no less unkingly than unlikely ever to have been given. In a despotic country like Egypt, however, the midwives would have nothing for it but to obey?

So we should have thought ; but they, according to the text, set the king's order at defiance: "They feared God," it is said, and spared the lives of both the male and female Hebrew children.

Pharaoh would punish the midwives, as matter of course, for their contempt of his royal commands?

So might we also fairly have supposed that he would ; but the midwives plead in excuse that "the Hebrew women are lively, and are delivered ere the midwife can come in to them."

This needed not to have hindered them from carrying out the Pharaoh's orders?

Certainly not ; for the new-born child must have come immediately into their hands—the first moment under any circumstances at which they could have obeyed the ruler. But, as if the tale were made to

bear witness to its own absurdity, we learn that not only did Pharaoh not punish the contumacious midwives, Shiphrah and Puah, but even rewarded them by building houses for them!

Failing to enlist the two midwives—two midwives for the service of a people who must have been *millions* in number, if every part of the narrative be true—what is said to have been the Pharaoh's next move against his obnoxious slave-subjects, the children of Israel?

He charges them, saying: "Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive;" transferring his orders, set at nought by the midwives, to the parents of the children themselves.

Such an order is surely as little likely as the one that goes before it, either to have been given by a king to any section of his subjects as it was to be obeyed by them?

No command of the kind is recorded in the annals of any other politic or even semi-savage community. More than this, the Nile was a sacred stream, furnishing the sole water-supply of the country; and the signal progress the Egyptians had made in civilisation, even at the early date to which the records we are discussing refer, assures us that all pollution of the river by dead bodies and the like must have been forbidden. The dead were not even buried in the soil of the cultivated lands of Egypt, but, being embalmed, were stowed away beyond the reach of the inundation.

Looking at the Hebrew scriptures in the way we do, as ordinary literary compositions, what might we say was the writer's object in the narrative before us?

That it is contrived, all unartistic as it is, by way of prologue to the story of the wonderful manner in which the life of the male child Moses was preserved. The future leader and legislator of the chosen people

could not be left with the uneventful entrance into the world that is the lot of ordinary men. His life must be in danger from his birth, and miraculously guarded; he must be the nursling and adopted son of a queen or of a king's daughter at the least. And so it all falls out. Born of parents of the house of Levi, as it is said, the mother of the future leader conceals his birth for three months, and then exposes him in an ark or cradle of bulrushes which she lays among the flags by the river's brink. The daughter of Pharaoh comes down "to wash herself at the river," and, seeing the cradle, she sends her maid to fetch it. There she finds the infant; presumes that it is one of the Hebrews' children, and, instead of ordering it to be thrown into the river, as a dutiful daughter would have done, in obedience to her royal father's orders, she procures a nurse for it, who turns out to be its own mother, and gives it the name of Moses—the saved from the stream—because, as she says, "I drew him out of the water."

With such a nurse the child was likely to do well?

He thrived, grew up, and became as a son to Pharaoh's daughter—no inquiry being made, we must presume, by the princess's father or mother how she came by such a treasure!

The first incident recorded in the independent life of Moses grown to man's estate is of a somewhat compromising nature?

Seeing an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew, one of his brethren, and looking this way and that, to make sure that he himself was seen of none, he slew the Egyptian and hid his body in the sand.

This was surely murder, against the laws of God and man?

It was no less; but it is not so characterised, and is not meant to be so considered, in the narrative, nor has it wanted apologists among modern writers. Murder, however, as the saying is, will out, and the

deed must have got wind ; for, seeing two of his own people contending on the very next day, and saying to him who began the fray : Why smitest thou thy fellow ? he is met by the counter question : Intendest thou to kill me as thou killedst the Egyptian ? Learning by this that what he had done was known, he had to seek safety in flight from the justice of the country. He flies, therefore, and comes to the land of Midian, where he abides, as shepherd, apparently, with Reuel, the priest of the country, one of whose daughters, Zipporah by name, he by-and-by receives to wife.

The next incident in the life of Moses that is recorded is a very remarkable one ?

Whilst keeping the flock of his father-in-law (now called Jethro) in the desert by Horeb, the mountain of God, the angel of Jehovah appears to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush, which burned yet was not consumed. Astonished at the appearance of a bush on fire yet not consumed, he turns "aside to see the great sight why the bush was not burnt," and is then addressed by a voice calling to him out of the midst of the bush, saying : Moses ! Moses ! and Moses answers, "Here am I." Ordered to put off his shoes from his feet, for the ground on which he stood was holy ground, he is then informed by the speaker that he is the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob ; that he had seen the affliction of his people in Egypt, and was come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, to bring them into a land flowing with milk and honey, and to settle them there in place of the Canaanites, Horites, Hittites, Amorites, and others already in possession of the country. "Come, now, therefore," proceeds the narrative, "I will send thee unto Pharaoh that thou mayest bring my people the children of Israel out of Egypt."

To this extraordinary intimation, so delivered, Moses makes answer— ?

“Who am I,” says he, “that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt? When I say to them that the God of their fathers had sent me to them and they ask me his name, what shall I say?”

“Thou shalt say I AM THAT AM hath sent me. Moreover, thus shalt thou say: Jehovah, the God of your fathers, appeared unto me, saying: I have considered you and what is done to you in Egypt; and I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt unto a land flowing with milk and honey; and they shall hearken to thy voice; and thou shalt come, thou and the elders of Israel, unto the King of Egypt, and ye shall say unto him: Jehovah Elohim, the God of the Hebrews, hath met us; and now let us go, we beseech thee, three days’ journey into the wilderness that we may sacrifice to Jehovah our God.”

How can we, with the views of our age, conceive God addressing man in human speech, or imagine Moses asking God for his name, and God answering first in abstract terms, and then more definitely, as if he were but one among a number of gods, and the particular God of the Hebrew people? How, indeed, think of Moses—scion, as said, of the house of Levi—not knowing by what name the God of his kindred and country was called? The designation, I AM THAT AM, would scarcely have got him credit with his people; and the name Jehovah now imparted to him, far from helping, would only have earned him mistrust; for El, Elohe, Chiun, or Baal, in so far as we know, appear to have been the names by which God or the gods were known to the times in which Moses is reputed to have lived; neither he nor they who for ages came after him having ever heard of Jehovah. How, further, imagine God dealing deceitfully with Pharaoh and ordering his messenger to sue for leave to go a three days’ journey into the wilderness to offer sacrifice, when it was his purpose that the

people should escape from Egypt altogether? How, still further, and to go back, bring our minds to contemplate the Supersensuous Infinite Cause we call God as limited in space and hidden in a bush that burned yet was not consumed? How, in fine, believe that God bade Moses put off his shoes from his feet, for the ground he stood on was holy, as if any one foot-breadth of earth were holier than another?

How, indeed! But so stands it written in the text.

Something, however, may be said for the bush that burned yet was not consumed?

In so far as we know that Light and Fire were the symbols of Deity to the whole of the ancient policied world, and the Hebrews were scions of the Semitic stock, the Light and Star worshippers of Chaldea and Mesopotamia.

Determining to deliver his people, Jehovah would, of course, smooth the way for their going by disposing the heart of Pharaoh favourably towards them?

So might we reasonably have expected; on the contrary, however, he is made to say that he is sure the King of Egypt will not let them go.

This seems strange to modern conceptions of God's providential dealings with the world. What may have been the writer's motive in ascribing such words to God?

To give him an opportunity, doubtless, of showing his God, in conformity with the notions of unenlightened men, setting at nought the laws we now recognise as constituting the very essence of the Godhead, "smiting Egypt with the wonders he would do in their midst, getting him honour on the Egyptians, and giving them to know that he was the Lord."

God get him honour by smiting the Egyptians! Do we read aright?

So says the text as well here as in several other places yet to be considered.

God is also made by the scribe to give particular instructions as to what the people are to do when at length they find themselves at liberty to depart?

They are not to go empty, but are to borrow of their neighbours jewels of silver and jewels of gold and raiment, which they are to put upon their sons and their daughters, and so spoil the Egyptians!

This is an extraordinary injunction made to come from God?

It is no less; and the writer must have believed that Jehovah had no more respect for the *meum* and *tuum* than he could have had himself when he put such an order into the mouth of his Deity.

What happens when Moses, not taking the word of his God of the burning bush as sufficient credentials to his countrymen, suggests that they will not believe him, and will say that Jehovah had not really appeared to him?

Jehovah asks: What is that in thy hand? And he said, a rod. Cast it on the ground, says Jehovah; and he cast it on the ground and it became a serpent, to his horror, for he fled from it; but being commanded to take it by the tail, it forthwith became a rod as before.

And this was to satisfy the people that the God of their fathers had appeared to him, Moses, and given him his commission to them! What would be thought nowadays of the man who should say that God had personally appeared to him, given him an important commission, and as guarantee for the truth of his statement performed a feat of the kind before an assembly of people?

He would be regarded either as a madman or a juggling impostor, most certainly as no ambassador from God.

There is more of this preliminary miraculous, or rather—and not to speak it irreverently—conjuring matter?

Much : Moses is bidden in addition, and as a further assurance to himself that it is Jehovah-God who speaks with him, to put his hand into his bosom, and when he takes it out again it is "leprous as snow;" but returning it to his bosom and then withdrawing it, "it is as his other flesh."

Do any of the diseases known to us by the name of leprosy come and go in such sudden fashion?

Several diseases now pass under this name, but they are all alike of slow growth and generally of difficult cure when they are not altogether incurable.

These signs, however, Moses is to exhibit to the people in case of their proving incredulous of his mission to them; and when he returns to Egypt, should they not be convinced by such signs and induced to hearken to his voice, he is then to take water from the river and pour it on the land when it should become blood. Furthermore, being slow of speech himself, he is to prompt Aaron his brother, "who can speak well," and make of him his mouth-piece in his efforts to have Pharaoh grant their petition. "But I will harden his heart" says Jehovah, "that he shall not let the people go;" and so all must necessarily prove in vain.

Moses from the above showing would seem to have been of a somewhat sceptical temper, hard of belief, not easily satisfied?

As every reasonable man ought to be when extraordinary courses are prescribed to him, and contraventions of the common course of nature are adduced as evidence of a divine commission or command. But God is far more indulgent to the doubts of Moses than men in after times have commonly shown themselves to the misgivings and questionings of their brothers.

Pharaoh's heart being hardened by Jehovah so that he must refuse to let the people go, Moses is next to say to him—?

“Israel is my son, my first-born; let my son go; and if thou refuse to let him go I will slay thy son, even thy first-born.”

What! in spite of the hardening the man's heart has undergone at the hands of Jehovah, which must needs make him incapable of yielding? And is it possible to think of God threatening retaliation in any event—retaliation above all for non-compliance with an order which he himself has made it impossible should be obeyed, and upon the unoffending first-born of the land because of its ruler's obstinacy?

To the simple moral sense of intelligent man it is indeed impossible to form such incongruous and unworthy ideas of God and his dealings with the world. The tale as it stands is no less irreverent than absurd. It is not God who hardens the heart of man, but man who is faithless to his better self when he yields the sway to his animal appetites and passions, and turns a deaf ear to the suggestions of his reason and higher moral nature. Neither does God, like a spiteful man, retaliate in any human sense for non-compliance with his behests. Pharaoh by the usage of his age and in virtue of ordinances propounded in these ancient writings as from Jehovah himself was entitled to exact all he required of his slave-subjects the Israelites.—But to proceed, we have now to note an extraordinary interruption of the narrative at this place by the interpolation of a few verses, the significance of which has sorely tried the ingenuity of bible-expositors. “By the way, in the Inn,” it is said, “Jehovah came upon him (Moses) and sought to kill him; and Zipporah took a knife and cut off the foreskin of her son and cast it at his feet, and said: A bloody bridegroom art thou to me! And he let him go. She said: blood-bridegroom, because of the circumcision.” (De Wette.)

What meaning can we possibly attach to this piece of information. What is to be thought of Jehovah coming upon Moses and seeking to kill him?

In any literal sense it is impossible to say,—the words have no meaning: had God sought to kill Moses, he would not assuredly have failed of his purpose.

And what farther of Zipporah circumcising her son, casting the foreskin at “his” feet, and calling him a blood or bloody bridegroom to her?

Also impossible to say; for the reason given: “she called him a bloody bridegroom because of the circumcision,” does not help to any solution of the difficulty.

What yet farther of the phrase: “So he let him go”?

Still beyond our power to conjecture; unless it were said that Jehovah, propitiated by Zipporah’s act, abandoned his purpose of killing Moses.

Has any other explanation of this episode in the life of Moses been suggested?

A learned writer conceives that Jehovah’s seeking to kill Moses may be significant of a serious illness that befel him at a certain time; and farther that his recovery was only wrung from his God by the sacrifice of more than the foreskin of his son; whence the passionate exclamation of Zipporah.*

Such an interpretation seems scarcely warranted by anything in the text as it stands?

It is not; but the text of the old mythical tale is obviously imperfect; made so, it may be, by its modern editor, who, finding matter in it offensive to the ideas of the times in which he lived and wrote, has substituted circumcision for sacrifice. The interpretation of the German writer is fully borne out by the whole of the blood-stained ritual of the Hebrew religious system, the sacrifice of the first-born of man and beast which so long formed one of its most essential

* See ‘Ghillanij Ueber den Menschen Opfer der alten Hæbræer: On the Human Sacrifices of the Ancient Hebrews,’ p. 683.

features, and the conclusion now generally come to in regard to the rite of circumcision as signifying a sacrifice to the reproductive principle in nature of a small but significant part in lieu of the holocaust of former days. The epithet bridegroom used by Zipporah may find its explanation in a custom said to have prevailed among Jewish mothers in a later age, whilst stilling their newly circumcised sons, of speaking to them as their little bridegrooms.*

. So improper and unprofitable a tale as that of God seeking to kill a man and failing in his purpose, and of a woman performing a painful and needless operation on her child and then rating her husband and calling him or her son her bridegroom, cannot surely be presumed to come by the inspiration of God for the guidance of mankind in morals and religion?

Most assuredly it cannot. And so we may fancy that the tale of Moses threatened to be slain is given as a pendant to the one in which Jacob is said to have been met in the dark by a man, who turns out to be Jehovah himself, with whom he has a wrestling bout; for each succeeding hero in the early Hebrew records is more or less a copy of one who has gone before. But it is more difficult in the present instance to find a satisfactory interpretation of the story than it was to elicit a meaning in conformity with known mythological ideas for the other.

Moses and his brother Aaron, now associated with him and fully instructed, proceed from Midian to Egypt on their mission to the Pharaoh, with whom they have an interview?

They inform him that they have met with the God of the Hebrews and petition for leave to "go three days' journey into the wilderness to sacrifice to their God, lest he should fall on them with pestilence or the sword."

* See Dozy, 'Die Israeliten zu Mekka.' S. 99.

But their God had not threatened anything of the kind ?

He had not ; but the pretext is notable as the first instance on record in which Religion is made the cloak to cover an ulterior design.

Pharaoh's heart being hardened by Jehovah, he of course refuses the suit ?

As matter of course, and it may be said of necessity. "Who is Jehovah," asks Pharaoh, "that I should obey his voice and let the people go ? I know not Jehovah ; neither will I let Israel go."

Pharaoh indeed could not have known anything of Jehovah ?

No more than Moses himself, according to the tale ; for it is only whilst receiving his commission that he learns from the speaker of the burning bush that it was he who had appeared to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as El-Schaddai, God the mighty, but by his name Jahveh was he not known to them. Neither indeed could Pharaoh have spoken of his Hebrew slave-subjects as a *people* and by the name of *Israel*, the title being of much more modern date than the period referred to : Pharaoh's Hebrew subjects were his *slaves*.

Pharaoh, reasonably enough, therefore does not credit the envoys, and in pursuance of the gist of the story proceeds to impose yet heavier tasks on the Israelites. What does Moses on the Pharaoh's refusal of his petition ?

He returns into the land of Midian, we must presume, for the Hebrew God was not ubiquitous, and reproaches him with having sent him on an useless errand : "Lord," says he, very irreverently as it seems, "why hast thou so evil entreated this people ? why is it that thou hast sent me ? for since I came to Pharaoh to speak in thy name, he hath done evil to this people ; neither hast thou delivered them at all."

Does not Jehovah take Moses to task for this disrespectful and reproachful address?

By no means; he merely says to him: "Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh. Through strength of hand shall he let them go, and by strength of hand shall he drive them out of his land; return ye therefore to Pharaoh, and when he asks for a sign saying: Show a miracle for you, then thou shalt say unto Aaron: Take thy rod and cast it before Pharaoh, and it shall become a serpent."

Returning to Egypt and doing as directed, the sign ordered by Jehovah will, we may presume, have a notable effect on Pharaoh?

Strange to say, however, it has none. He calls the magicians of Egypt, his own wise men, and they with their enchantments do as much as the delegates of Jehovah; they do more, in fact, for they every one cast down their rods, and each rod turns into a serpent!

But the serpent of Jehovah's men proves itself superior to the serpents of Pharaoh's conjurers?

By swallowing the whole of them!

And details of such jugglery as this are presented to us in evidence of God's power and purpose, through the minds of inspired men, to guide and inform us?

The writer, no doubt, believed in magic and conjuring, and so makes his God a magician and conjurer. The serpent-feat of Moses and Aaron, however, paralleled by the court magicians, is not striking enough to induce Pharaoh to let the Israelites go; and, indeed, how should it? His heart is hardened by Jehovah, and he cannot yield; neither is it intended that he should. Moses is therefore to address him again; and, as it is foreseen that he will still hold out, the envoy is to turn the water of the Nile into blood by striking it with his magic wand, the effect of which will be that the river shall stink, the fish die, and the water become unfit for the people to drink.

So formidable a visitation, unless immediately redressed, must have proved universally destructive, and not to the fishes only in the stream, but to the whole of the living creatures on its banks—to man and beast, oppressors and oppressed alike, and must needs have forced the Pharaoh instantly to relent?

We learn, nevertheless, that it does not; neither do we discover that the water of the country turned into blood, stinking and destructive to the fishes, has any ill effect on the people or their cattle, as if fishes alone of living things must have water! The Pharaoh persists in his refusal—a course in which he is encouraged by his magicians, who with their enchantment do again precisely what Moses and Aaron are said to have done; for they, too, says the narrative, turned all the water of the country into blood;—whence the water came on which they practised we are not informed.

The inhabitants and animals of a country cannot, however, live without water; and the dilemma into which the writer has fallen by cutting off the supply from the river being seen by him, he makes the people dig wells to meet their wants. But could they have found water by their digging?

They could not; for the river being the sole source whence the water of Egypt is derived, if it were turned into blood the wells which it fed must have furnished blood also.

Can water be turned by any process, natural or magical, into blood?

We throw the magic overboard, and say that God, by his eternal laws, has declared that it cannot. Water is a simple binary compound of the two chemical elements, oxygen and hydrogen; blood a complex quaternary compound of oxygen, hydrogen, carbon, and azote—the elements, moreover, here existing in a peculiar state of molecular arrangement not seen in the inorganic realm of nature. But art is incom-

petent to create chemical elements, or to force such as exist into combinations out of conformity with natural law. Water is water in virtue of one of the great all-pervading laws of the inorganic world, and blood only makes its appearance when the organising force inherent in nature comes into play and living, sentient, self-conscious creatures rise into existence.

The turning of the waters of Egypt into blood must therefore be an impossibility?

It is no less, in virtue of laws consentient with the existence and definite properties of matter.

The next move made by Moses and Aaron will surely induce Pharaoh, in spite of the hardening of heart he has received at the hands of Jehovah, to relent?

Although the river has been turned into blood, has become stinking, so that all the fishes have died, and the people cannot drink of it, he still persists in his obstinacy. Moses is then commanded by Jehovah to say to Aaron: Stretch forth thine hand with thy rod over the streams, the rivers, and the ponds, and cause frogs to come up over the land of Egypt.

The writer would seem here to be drawing after what he saw in Palestine, his native country, where there are the Jordan and numerous smaller streams and rivulets; in Egypt there is one great river, but no secondary streams, though, doubtless, there were then as now innumerable ditches for irrigation and ponds for supply. The frogs, however, come up in spite of the circumstances that must have made it as impossible for them as for the fishes to live; for the river has been turned into blood, and we have not had it restored to its natural condition.

They come up and cover the land of Egypt, making their way into the houses, the beds, the kneading troughs, and even the ovens!

The feat of the frogs would surely be found to exceed the powers of the magicians to imitate?

It is said not; they too brought up frogs over the land—small thanks to them!—for by so doing they could only have made matters worse, if worse may be imagined.

So formidable a nuisance so increased must have brought Pharaoh to his senses and induced him to relent?

For a while it seems to have had this effect; but only for a while. "Intreat Jehovah," says he beseechingly to Moses and Aaron, "that he may take away the frogs from me and my people, and I will let the people go, that they may sacrifice to Jehovah."

Moses improves the occasion with this show of relenting on the part of Pharaoh?

He is not slow to do so, and says: Resolve me when I shall intreat for thee and for thy people the removal of the frogs—in the river only shall they stay. To which Pharaoh meekly and oddly enough replies: "To-morrow," instead of to-day! "Be it according to thy word," rejoins the envoy, "that thou mayest know that there is no God like unto Jehovah our God."

Moses is made to speak here as if he acknowledged the existence of other gods besides Jehovah?

He is made to speak as, doubtless, the writer believed the fact to be: Jehovah, to Moses and the early Hebrews, was no more than one, albeit the greatest, among the gods. He is the God of Miracle also, opposed to the God of Law, and so assuredly not the true God.

Intreated by Moses, Jehovah causes the frogs to die out of the houses and fields, and they are gathered into heaps, so that the land stank. Pharaoh, we may presume, will now keep his word and suffer the people to depart?

The respite he obtains makes him give signs of yielding; but the wonder-working powers of Jehovah through his agents not being yet sufficiently shown

forth, he is made by the writer to relapse into his hardness of heart. The dust of the ground, consequently, is now smitten, and is turned into lice (*kinnim*, properly gnats), which crawl over man and beast, and now only is it that the Egyptian conjurors are found wanting. They cannot imitate the Hebrew wonder-workers: they did with their enchantments try to bring forth lice, says the text, but they could not—very happily, we may be permitted to add—and they say to Pharaoh: This is the finger of God. But Pharaoh's heart being hardened by Jehovah, he heeded them not. Why they should have found it harder to turn dust into lice than rods into serpents or water into blood, and to call up swarms of frogs from the ditches at the word of command, does not appear. And how the despotic Pharaoh of Egypt should have been so indulgent as to suffer Moses and Aaron to afflict his people with such a succession of scourges, instead of throwing them into prison or shortening them by the head, is surely as much of a miracle as any of those we have had detailed.

How are frogs and lice produced under God's own natural law?

Frogs once a year, on the return of spring, from spawn that has been maturing in the body of the female parent from the same period of the preceding year; lice from eggs called nits, which are attached to the hair and clothes of the lousy, and are hatched at all seasons of the year; frogs and lice being alike the product of pre-existing kinds, male and female, and alike requiring a certain time before they can be hatched; frogs, moreover, having to pass some weeks in the tadpole state previous to appearing in their proper definite shape.

Do we in the present day ever see any such production of living creatures, whether of higher or lower type in the scale of being, as is here said to have taken place?

We do not ; but we are privileged to see what, by a metaphor, may be spoken of as the finger, and far more appropriately as the mind, of God, in the harmonious and invariable sequences of nature ; and seeing so much, we are bound to acknowledge neither interruption nor contravention of the all-pervading laws—expressions of the Godhead—that rule the universe in its measureless immensities as in its individual atoms.

But Pharaoh, when he finds his wise men at their wits' end, and referring the production of the lice to the finger of God, will give in and let his bondsmen go ?

Not yet ; though with the plague of flies which has now to be endured he yields so far as to say to Moses that he and his people were at liberty to sacrifice to their God, so as they did it in the land. But this did not suit the views of Moses, who answers : Lo, it is not meet to do so ; for we shall sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians unto Jehovah our God.

What may be understood by the objection made by Moses ?

The text does not help us to any interpretation of its meaning. There is no hint in any preceding part of the book that the Hebrews were ever interfered with by the Egyptians in their religion—we know nothing, indeed, of the religion of the Israelites during the long period of their servitude in Egypt—or that they were required to conform to the religious system of their masters. Neither is Moses' objection taken so much to any sense he may have entertained of the impropriety of the sacrifice referred to in itself, as to the danger to the Israelites that might accompany its performance, for he says : Lo, shall we sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes and will they not stone us ? What the abomination of the Egyptians may have been we are

not informed. Shepherds are said to have been an abomination to the Egyptians, but not sheep; they are reputed, indeed, to have objected to mutton as food, but they sacrificed rams to their god Amun.

Pharaoh again shows signs of relenting. I will let you go, says he now, that ye may sacrifice to Jehovah your God in the wilderness; only ye shall not go very far away; intreat for me, adds the sorely-trying and singularly submissive sovereign. So Moses intreats Jehovah, and the plague of flies is abated. But Jehovah, according to the record, having other and more terrible wonders in store whereby he should further "proclaim his power and make his name known throughout all the earth," Pharaoh's yielding is only for a day.

Among the number of new plagues inflicted in this view we find enumerated—?

A murrain, which killed all the cattle of the Egyptians, but spared those of the Israelites, not one of these being lost; an epidemic of blotches and blains upon man and beast, to bring about which we for the first time find certain physical means prescribed by Jehovah: Moses is to take handfuls of ashes from the furnace and scatter them toward heaven, the effect of which would be that wherever the dust fell there should follow boils and blains upon the flesh.

Would casting cart-loads of furnace ashes into the air cause blotches and blains upon the men and cattle of a country a thousand miles and more in length?

It were absurd to suppose that it would; wood-ashes, used as directed, could only have caused inflammation of the eyes among such as were somewhat near at hand. To abrade the skin, wood-ashes must be mixed with quicklime and applied moist to its surface.

What further plagues or calamities do we find enumerated?

A grievous hailstorm, such as had not been seen in Egypt since its foundation, with thunder and light-

ning and fire that ran along the ground and smote everything that was in the field—man and beast, herb and tree, flax and barley ; only “in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel dwelt, was there no hail ;” next we have a *flight of locusts* that came up with an east wind—another physical agency—and ate up all that had been spared by the hail ; and then a *thick* darkness in all the land for three days, so thick that people “saw not one another, even darkness that could be felt,—but the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.”

Jehovah, the God of Moses, as pictured by the Jewish writer, shows himself utterly ruthless in this ?

No doubt of it ; but the writer’s purpose was to show Jehovah, as patron God of the children of Israel, superior to the gods of Egypt. His visitations must obviously have affected the individual Pharaoh much less than his subjects, whose hearts had not been hardened for the occasion, like that of the ruler. To have punished Pharaoh at all, indeed, when he was only exercising his prescriptive rights, and must be presumed to have lost all power of self-control—his heart having been expressly hardened by Jehovah—was manifestly unjust ; and to make Jehovah spread desolation over the land of Egypt, when he was himself the author of its ruler’s obstinacy, can only be characterised as derogatory to the Idea of God that must be entertained by rational man, and at variance with the goodness and mercy always associated with the essential nature of Deity.

Considerations these which seem satisfactorily to dispose of the Plagues of Egypt as occurrences founded on fact ?

Effectually. And then murrain and pestilence and the light of the sun make no distinctions, but by pre-existent eternal ordinances affect all that live alike.

The narrative, interrupted at this point, gives us an opportunity of asking what we, as reasonable men,

gifted with understanding and moral consciousness, assured moreover of the changeless nature of God and his laws, are to think of the long array of unavailing miracles thus far detailed with wearisome prolixity, and of the motive assigned for their exhibition?

On such grounds we can but think of them as tales of Impossibilities — Myths, Embodiments in language of Ideas belonging to a rude and remote antiquity, and worthy henceforth of notice only as records of erroneous conceptions of the attributes of God and the nature of his dealings with mankind and the world of things. The means brought into requisition prove inadequate to satisfy Pharaoh of the superiority of the Hebrew wonder-workers over the magicians of his own country, or of their God over the God whom he and his people adore. Did we think of God using means to ends at all, which our philosophy forbids—purpose, or end, mean and act being one in the nature of God, and not distinct from one another, or sequences in time*—it were surely falling short of a worthy conception of The Supreme to imagine him making use of any that were inadequate to the end proposed.

What is to be said of the reiterated allegation that God so hardened the heart of Pharaoh that he would not suffer the Israelites to be gone?

That it is not only derogatory to the name of God, but in contradiction with his avowed purpose, which was from the first that the children of Israel should quit Egypt and settle in the land of Canaan as his peculiar people, in fulfilment of contracts entered into with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the last of them made some four hundred and thirty years before the time at which Moses is believed to have appeared on the scene; for so long, according to the record, was the interval between the date of Jacob's arrival in Egypt and that of the Israelites leaving it.

* See 'Dialogue by Way of Catechism,' Part II. page 35.

But we have no information about the children of Israel during the four hundred and thirty years of their reputed sojourn in Egypt ?

We have not a word of or concerning them through the whole of this long time.

How then believe that we should have such particular intelligence about Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Noah and the flood, Lot and his daughters, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Joseph and his brethren, &c. &c., comprising a period of a thousand years and more, according to the computations of our Bible chronologists ?

How, indeed, unless we assume that it reaches us through the imaginations of writers who lived during and after the era of the kings, the Babylonian Captivity, and still later periods in the history of Judah and Israel.

Pitiless as he has hitherto appeared, Jehovah will now interpose, soften the heart of Pharaoh, and so spare the unoffending Egyptian people from further disasters ?

Not yet. Mercy, with the object the writer has in view, must still be made foreign to the nature of his God. Pharaoh does indeed now call Moses, and says : Go ye ; serve Jehovah ; only let your flocks and herds be stayed. But Moses answers that they must have the means of sacrificing to Jehovah their God. "Our cattle," continues he, in the haughtiest tone, "shall go with us ; there shall not a hoof be left behind." Jehovah, however, continuing to harden Pharaoh's heart, he will not suffer them to go. "Get thee from me," says the now indignant and sorely-tried sovereign ; "take heed to thyself ; see my face no more ; for in the day thou seest my face thou shalt die."

Moses, we may presume, will be more cautious in his communications with such a threat hanging over him ?

So we might have expected ; but he is more arrogant and outspoken than ever, for he replies : "Thou

hast spoken well—I will see thy face no more.” Yet he does; for, as the writer now makes Jehovah say: “Yet will I bring one plague more upon Egypt; afterwards he will let you go,” Moses has to return to the presence with the following message: “Thus saith Jehovah: About midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt, and all the first-born in the land of Egypt shall die, from the first-born of Pharaoh that sitteth on the throne even unto the first-born of the maid-servant that is behind the mill, and all the first-born of beasts. And there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there was none like it nor shall be like it any more. But against any of the children of Israel there shall not a dog move his tongue.”

Threatened with such calamities as the death of his own first-born son, and the death of the first-born of man and beast throughout his dominions, taught, moreover, by the experience of preceding plagues, Pharaoh will now assuredly take security against the threatened visitation by laying hands on Moses, whom he has already doomed to die did he venture again to come before him?

So might we reasonably have expected; but this would not have tallied with the end the writer has in view. Pharaoh is therefore made to forget his purpose of putting Moses to death, and very inconsiderately, as it seems, to treat the announcement just made as an idle threat. The envoy, consequently, is left at large, and even goes out from the Pharaoh's presence “in a great anger.” And so it comes to pass, as had been predicted, that at midnight Jehovah smote all the first-born both of man and beast in the land of Egypt.

The wholesale slaughter of the Egyptians and their cattle accomplished—by what means we are not informed, unless we take the text literally as it stands, and assume Jehovah himself to have been the agent—

we learn that against the children of Israel not even a dog was to move his tongue. The ground for the distinction is plain enough: the Israelites were the cherished, the Egyptians the hated, of Jehovah; but there is a particular reason given for the heavy visitation which had now befallen the Egyptians?

The reason assigned is this: "That it might be known how Jehovah had put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel."

What difference had God—and here we add, not the Jewish Jehovah—really put between the Egyptian people and the children of Israel?

God had made the Egyptians, as the superior race, the *masters*; and the Israelites, as the inferior race, the *slaves*. He had given the Egyptians the valley of the Nile for an inheritance, and the ingenuity and industry needful to turn it into "the garden of the Lord," which it was; he had further made them astronomers, architects, engineers, sculptors, painters, inventors of the loom and of paper; contrivers of more than one system of writing, and familiar, besides, with many of the most useful and elegant arts of settled and civilised life—workers in gold and silver and precious stones, &c. Morally and religiously, moreover, he had enabled them to approximate to the idea of the Oneness of Deity though seen under various aspects—here propitious, there adverse—and led them to the great conception of Duty or Responsibility for their doings in the present life to be answered for in a life to come.

And the Hebrews or Israelites?

God had left in the lower grades of neat-herds, shepherds, labourers in the fields; settlers by sufferance if not by compulsion in an outlying district of their masters' territory, ignorant of astronomy, architecture, mechanics, sculpture, and of every one of the arts that "put a difference" between the nomad barbarian or savage and the policed citizen of

the settled State : he had conferred on them no fine sense of the distinction between the mine and the thine ; and to conclude, had left them without the conception of a judgment and immortality beyond the present state of existence.

The first-born of man and beast in the land of Egypt, then, are smitten, and Jehovah has now, according to the veracious writer, had sufficient opportunity of displaying his power over the Gods of Egypt and the Egyptians themselves. The Israelites may therefore at length be suffered to depart ?

Brought to his senses at last,—or shall we say taught by the terrible calamities that had befallen his people, yielding to the pressure of circumstances and getting the better of the hardness of heart imposed on him by Jehovah, Pharaoh is now as urgent with the Israelites to be gone as he had hitherto been resolute to keep them from going. Rising up in the night and summoning Moses, he says : “Get you forth from among my people both you and the children of Israel, and go and serve Jehovah, as ye have said ; take also your flocks and your herds and be-gone.” The Egyptians too were urgent upon the people that they might send them out of the land in haste, for they said : “We be all dead men.”

The Israelites on their part, though the permission to depart must have come on them unexpectedly, are not slow to take Pharaoh at his word or remiss in yielding to the urgency of their masters ?

They pack up their kneading troughs at once in their clothes with the dough that is in them ; but they do not neglect the order they had received to borrow of their neighbours jewels of silver and jewels of gold and raiment, with which and their own belongings they set off immediately on their journey towards the promised land.

Can we imagine the Egyptians ready to lend their jewels of silver and gold and their garments to

people—their slaves—whom they were driving out of their country with as little prospect as wish ever to see them again ?

It certainly is not easy under the circumstances to imagine any such favourable disposition on the part of the Egyptians.

When men *borrow*, it is still with the understanding that they are to make return, as when they lend that they are to have return made ?

There appears to have been no such understanding in the present instance, on one side at all events. Jehovah, it is even said, “gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they lent them all they required, and they spoiled the Egyptians.”

But this makes Jehovah an aider and abettor in the theft ?

No doubt of it. But the Jewish writer believed it not only lawful but meritorious to spoil the enemies of his people, and he does not scruple to make his God of the same mind as himself. But the tale is libellous and false ; for God, the universal father, emphatically forbids theft through the sense of the mine and the thine implanted in the mind of man—not to allude to the express commandment which a later and more conscientious writer in the Hebrew Bible sees fit to put into the mouth of his God when he makes him say : Thou shalt not steal !

The Israelites fly or are driven out of Egypt at last ?

The first-born of the land both of man and beast being dead, there was no longer any ground for delay. What extraordinary and utterly incomprehensible means were used to accomplish the *discriminating* slaughter of the first-born of the people and their cattle in the course of a single night we are not in this place informed ; and the reason given for the singular despatch in which Jehovah is presented to us as having held the Egyptians—the hard service in brick

and mortar imposed on the Israelites, to wit—does not accord with the flourishing state in which they meet us at the moment of the Exodus, millions as they must have been in numbers, if they could bring six hundred thousand able-bodied men into the field with arms in their hands, possessed besides of flocks and herds innumerable, and enjoying such credit with the native people that they lent them freely of all they had.

The slaughter of the first-born of Egypt must therefore be another of the mythical tales contrived by the writer to exalt and glorify in his own mistaken way the tutelary God of his people, Jehovah?

Let the candid reader, with any conception which he as living in this nineteenth century of the Christian era can form of the nature of God, answer the question for himself by yea or by nay.

The narrative provokingly enough and on the very eve of the Exodus is interrupted to speak of a change to be made in beginning the year; and, in immediate connection with this change, of the institution of the Passover and the dedication to Jehovah of the first-born of man and beast among the children of Israel?

Jehovah, says the record, now speaks to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying: "This month shall be to you the first month of the year," without naming the month. But we by-and-by discover that it is Nisan, called Abib of old, that is meant; this being the month in which the Exodus is believed to have taken place, as it is known to be the one in which the vernal equinox occurred in ancient times. The notification, however, is prefatory and subordinate to the order for the celebration of the Passover, which the writers of the Hebrew scriptures show particular anxiety to connect with the escape from Egypt,—which they would present in fact as a feast commemorative of this event in the legendary annals

of their people, the whole procedure as set forth being made to harmonise with this intention.

The rites connected with the celebration of the Passover were peculiar and solemn ?

On the tenth day of the first month the head of each house, or where the families were small, the heads of two or more houses, were to take a lamb or kid, a male of the first year, without spot or blemish, and sever it from the flock until the evening of the fourteenth day, when it was to be killed. With a bunch of hyssop dipped in the blood the lintels and doorposts of the houses were to be struck, and no one was to leave his home until the morning. The carcase was to be eaten in the night with unleavened bread and bitter herbs, and it is particularly ordered that the flesh shall not be eaten raw, nor sodden with water, but roast with fire. The meal is farther to be despatched in haste, the people having their loins girded, their shoes on their feet, and their staves in their hands.

This is plainly enough an account by a relatively modern writer of the way in which he imagines the feast of the Passover might have been kept by his forefathers on the eve of their flight from Egypt, and so of the way in which it was ever after to be observed in memory of that event. "And it shall come to pass," says the record, "when your children say unto you : what mean ye by this service, that ye shall say : It is the sacrifice of Jehovah's passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians and delivered our houses."

The Passover, however, could not have been celebrated in any such way by the Israelites on the eve of their flight ?

There was no possibility of its having been so celebrated, for they fled in such haste that they had no time to leaven the dough that was in their kneading

troughs, much less to bake it. A *family feast*, moreover, is turned by the writer into a *Sacrifice* to Jehovah, in every indispensable element of which it is wanting.

The reason for striking the lintels and door-posts of the Israelites' houses with the blood is not very satisfactory?

Being done to guide Jehovah in his visitation to slay the first-born of Egypt, it meets us as a poor contrivance of the writer: "When I see the blood," says he in the name of his God, "I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you when I smite the land of Egypt." Jehovah must, therefore, as he imagined, have required an outward and visible sign to guide him in his acts of mercy as of vengeance.

The colour of the blood may have had something to do with the act enjoined?

Red was the proper colour of the Sun-God, among the ancients generally; and with the Egyptians came into special use in the spring of the year for the decoration of their dwellings, as well as the statues of their Gods. The Hebrew writer would therefore seem, after a play upon the word *Pass* or *Passover* (*Pesah* in Hebrew, with which our word *Transit* corresponds exactly), to be substituting *red blood* for the *red paint* of the Egyptians, Phœnicians, and other cognate peoples, and using, as a safeguard for the children of Israel, a sign which the Egyptians, from time immemorial, had been wont to employ with a view to ornament and propitiate their gods.

In immediate connection with this unsatisfactory account of the institution of the Passover, we have the dedication to Jehovah of the first-born among the children of Israel themselves. He had slain the first-born of the Egyptians, and must, as it appears, have the first-born of the Israelites also?

"Sanctify to me all the first-born; whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both

of man and beast, it is mine," are the terrible words in which Jehovah is made to announce his will.

It seems singular that the Jewish writers of the Bible should manifest the same desire to connect the sacrifice of their first-born with the most awful of the incidents said to have accompanied the flight from Egypt, as they show to associate the Passover with this event ?

"It shall be," says the text, "when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying : What is this ? that thou shalt say to him : By strength of hand Jehovah brought us out from Egypt, from the house of bondage ; and it came to pass when Pharaoh would hardly let us go that Jehovah slew all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both the first-born of man and the first-born of beast ; *therefore* I sacrifice to Jehovah all that openeth the matrix, being males"—the words *being males* must have been added, the requisition in several other places being *general*.

Such a reason for such a sacrifice is surely neither logical nor satisfactory. *Because* Jehovah slew all the first-born of Egypt, *therefore* were the Israelites to sacrifice all that opened the womb both of man and beast among themselves ! They were to pay a much heavier tax, in fact, than that exacted of the Egyptians ; for the sacrifice of their children by the Israelites was to be in perpetuity, whilst that of their old oppressors had been required but once. How should such an event as the escape from slavery, only to be thought of as subject of rejoicing, be fitly associated with the tears and heart-wrings of parents that must needs accompany the immolation of the first-born of their children ?

The dedication to Jehovah of the first-born of man and beast can scarcely therefore have any connection with the mythical slaughter of the first-born of Egypt, the legendary flight from the country, or the feast of the Passover ?

There can be little question that it has none. The consecration or making *Cherem* implying the necessary sacrifice to their God of all that opened the womb is not so associated in other parts of the Hebrew Scriptures. "Sanctify to me all the first-born; whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and beast, it is mine," says the text already quoted (Exod. xiii. 2). "The first-born of thy sons shalt thou give to me," says another (*Ib.* xxii. 29). "All that openeth the matrix is mine," yet another (*Ib.* xxxiv. 19). In every instance, therefore, without reference to Egypt, the Exodus, or any other event. The requirement is absolute, unconnected with any historical or quasi-historical incident. The sacrifice of the first-born of man and beast was in truth a custom sanctioned by general usage among the whole of the Semitic tribes or peoples and their colonies inhabiting Western Asia and the shores of the Mediterranean Sea.

But the first-born of man are ordered to be redeemed?

Not as the ordinance stands where it is first met and has not been tampered with, and as the custom of child-sacrifice is repeatedly referred to in other places, more especially by the prophetic writers. The redemption clauses are all interpolations by later hands; they had no place in the text even so late as the time of Ezekiel; and then there is the positive ordinance concerning things *Cherem* or devoted to Jehovah, which puts redemption out of the question. "None devoted, which shall be devoted of men shall be redeemed, but shall surely be put to death" (*Levit.* xxvii. 29).

May not the Passover also have been a festival having no connection with the Exodus from Egypt?

There can be as little doubt of this as of the sacrifice of the first-born of Israel having no reference to the slaughter of the first-born of Egypt. The festival

called Pesach by the Jews is a much older institution than the notice we have of it in the Book of Exodus. Its Hebrew name is exactly rendered as said, by the English word *Transit*; and the transit celebrated was no passage of Jehovah over the Egyptians to destroy, or over the Israelites to spare, but of the Sun over the Equator at the epoch of the vernal equinox—a season of rejoicing that may be said to have been universal among all the policed peoples of antiquity, and that is still observed with fresh accessories and under a new name in the world of to-day; for the Easter of the present age is in reality no other than the Pascha, Neomenia, and Hilaria of the old world—a tribute *Deo Soli Invicto*. Mounting from the inferior or wintry signs, triumphant as it were over darkness and death, the Sun then appears to bring back light and life to the world; and the God he symbolized seems to have been held entitled in return to a portion at least of the good things so obviously and immediately dependent on his presence. Hence the offerings in the spring of the year of the first fruits of the fields, the sacrifice of the firstlings of the flocks and herds, and at length, and as the influence of the offering on the God was believed to rise in the ratio of its worth to the giver, of the first-born of his sons by man—victim of all others the most precious to him, and so thought to be the most potent of all to propitiate the God.

The Passover may, therefore, have been truly a solar festival, and by no means peculiar to the Israelites?

The period of the year at which it was celebrated suffices of itself to proclaim it a feast in honour of the Sun, and the universality of its celebration over the whole of the ancient world shows that the Israelites only followed suit in its observance. But the great spring festival of the year has been obscured by the miraculous and mythical wrappings in which it has

been presented by the Jewish post-exilic Jehovistic writers, seeking to hide its meaning by turning this among other Pagan observances of their age and country into institutions appointed by their God Jehovah through the agency of his servant Moses.

The Jewish writers, however, are not even agreed as to the grounds they assign for the observance of the Passover ?

In one place it is to be kept as a memorial feast because the Israelites were spared the visit of the destroying angel when the first-born of Egypt were slain; in another it is to be observed in memory of their delivery from Egyptian bondage. But it was in the spring time of the year that the barley harvest of the East occurred; and with the bringing of the first sheaf as an offering to the Sun-God at the season of his awakening from his death-like wintry sleep, and the season of rejoicing then universally observed, was by and by associated the legendary escape in exaggerated numbers of the Israelites from Egypt and the veritable sacrifice of the first-born of their sons.

The Jewish Passover is often said to have been derived from the Egyptians ?

That the Israelites had various festivals in common with the Egyptians and other ancient peoples is certain. That they borrowed so much from Egypt as it is often said they did is very questionable. Such a conclusion would seem rather to be grounded on assuming the large amount of influence which a people so far advanced in civilisation as the Egyptians must have had on the rude descendants of Jacob, than on any strong resemblance between the social, political, and religious ideas and doings of the Egyptians and Israelites. To unprejudiced minds the Israelites, when they meet us on the eve of the Exodus, and for ages afterwards, appear as having profited so little by their contact with the Egyptians that additional doubt is thrown over the whole story of their relationship with

the land of the Nile. For some ages after the reputed epoch of the Exodus we never see the Israelites save as a horde in quest of a settled home, at war with all around them, and but little, if at all, removed from utter barbarism.

Having spoiled the Egyptians to the utmost of the borrowing and lending powers of the two parties, the Israelites set off, a mixed multitude with flocks and herds, "even very much cattle." We are not without data from which their aggregate number may be computed?

We have such in the "Six hundred thousand on foot that were men" (Ex. xii., 37); "six hundred and three thousand five hundred and fifty from twenty years old and upwards, all able to go forth to war in Israel." (Numb. i., 46.)

Such a number of able-bodied men, harnessed or armed, as said, implies a gross population approaching three millions of souls?

Something like that of the great city of London or the whole of Scotland a few years ago!

And this vast multitude quit their homes in a single night and betake themselves to the desert with no other preparation in the shape of supplies than the dough that is in their kneading troughs?

"They were thrust out of Egypt, neither had they prepared for themselves any victual." (Ex. xii., 39.)

Without a word of the first requisite for even a single day's journey in the burning desert—water?

There is nothing said about water.

What of the means of transport for the sick and infirm, who must have numbered ten thousand at least; for the three hundred women busy in bringing children into the world, and something like the same number of men and women going out of it—for so many are ever thus engaged in a population approaching three millions in number during each day of the year?

There is nothing said of the sick and infirm, of the parturient and the dying.

Then must the story in its proportions be a fable involving contradictions innumerable and impossibilities in the nature of things. The whole population of the valley of the Nile, from Nubia to the Mediterranean, did not probably at any time in its most palmy days of old amount to so many as the Israelites are said to have been when they *fled*, were *driven out*, or were *brought out from Egypt with a high hand*, so various are the words used in the accounts we have of the way in which the Exodus was effected. Six hundred thousand and odd able-bodied men with arms in their hands needed to have asked no leave of the Pharaoh of Egypt either to go or to stay. Instead of fleeing to the desert on the faith of promised settlements in a land, even though reported to be flowing with milk and honey, they would have been apt to think that the fertile land of Egypt, watered by the mysterious river which rose and fell no man knew how, was possession preferable and enough. Instead of consenting to the expulsion, they are allowed in more than one place to have suffered, from the soil where they had lived so long and grown to such a multitude, they would most assuredly have either expelled or enslaved where they had not slain their oppressors. Instead of robbing them of their jewels of silver and jewels of gold and fine raiment, and stealing away like thieves in the night, they would have installed themselves in their masters' places and taught them in turn what it was to make mud bricks without straw!

But this would have interfered with Jehovah's providential arrangements for the settlement of his chosen people in the land of Canaan?

The providence of God is over all his works indifferently and alike. God was then as now the Father of the Egyptian as of the Jew; more partial as parent

to the Egyptian than to the Jew, indeed, were his love to be truly tested by the Hebrew standard—the measure of temporal good enjoyed.

The Jews did not think, and have not yet learned to think, that God is verily the impartial parent of mankind ?

No ; they were, and still are, presumptuous enough to fancy themselves the objects of their Jehovah's peculiar care ; and the world may be said, in spite of its persistently cruel treatment of their race, to have been complacent enough to take them at their word. Lately, however, there has been something like an awakening out of this baseless dream ; a suspicion has at length got abroad in the world of the possibility of its having been mistaken. With the recent discovery of the Vedas and Zendavesta, the Buddhistic scriptures, and the Chinese moral writings, we have come to know that other more ancient, more moral and better policed peoples than the Israelites had also their sacred books, though none of them presume, as do those of this people, to make God the mouthpiece of some few good and reasonable, yet of many bad, barbarous, childish, objectionable, and indifferent ordinances, and the immediate agent in innumerable cruel and unjustifiable acts.

The Israelites, however, escape or are driven out of Egypt at last, and in such numbers, it is said, as plainly appears impossible. Have we any clue to the way in which the exaggerated multitude of the fugitives may have been arrived at ?

Curiously enough we have. In one of the latest Midraschim—Hebrew Commentaries or Expositions of the Law we possess (*Jalkut Thora*, 386), there is a passage to this effect : “ God said to Moses : Number the Israelites. Then said Moses : They are as the sands of the sea ; how can I number them ? . God said : Not in the way thou thinkest of ; but wouldst thou reckon them, take the first letters of their tribes

and thou hast their number.”* And sure enough, if the numerical values of the initial letters of the names of the twelve tribes be added together, the sum that comes out is five hundred and ninety-seven thousand; to which if the three thousand slain on occasion of the worship of the golden calf which Aaron made be joined, the exact number of the men in arms, as first given, six hundred thousand, is obtained.

This, however, is not the only number of able-bodied men that is mentioned?

Elsewhere (Ex. xxxviii., 26, and Numb. i., 46) it is set down at “six hundred and three thousand five hundred and fifty men.”

There may perhaps be some recondite and not very obvious way in which this number too may have been arrived at?

It tallies exactly with the number of bekahs or half shekels said to have been produced by the capitation tax imposed for erecting and furnishing the Tabernacle. The whole amount collected is stated to have been 100 talents 1,775 shekels, = 301,775 shekels, which \times by two gives 603,550 shekels, the precise number of the able-bodied men of the second Census.†

Once on their way, whither do the Israelites go?

If it were towards the promised land they certainly took a very roundabout road to reach it. Elohim, it is said, led them not by the way through the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for Elohim said: “Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war and they return to Egypt.” Elohim therefore led them through the way of the Wilderness of the Red Sea, from Rameses, whence they set out, to Succoth and Etham in the edge of the Wilderness;

* Comp. ‘Popper Der biblische Bericht über die Stiftshütte; ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Composition und Diaskeuse des Pentateuch.’ S. 196. 8vo. Leipz., 1862.

† ‘Popper.’ Op. cit. P. 196.

Jehovah (it is no longer Elohim) going before them as a pillar of cloud by day, as a pillar of fire by night to guide and light them on their way. But Moses must have thought that a native of the country would be a good addition as a guide through the trackless waste; he would not trust entirely to Jehovah's pillar of cloud and of fire—for he says to his brother-in-law, Hobab the Midianite: "Come thou with us; thou mayest be to us instead of eyes; and it shall come to pass, if thou wilt go with us, that what goodness Jehovah shall do unto us the same shall we do unto thee." (Numb. x., 29-32.)

Jehovah, we might have imagined, as miracles were so much in course, would have steeled the hearts of the Israelites and made the hearts of all opposed to them like wax, as he is said to have done on other and later occasions. Why he did not see fit so to do at this time, when it would have spared so much toil and suffering, we are not informed. But where are the places mentioned—Rameses, Succoth, and Etham?

Rameses, a town and district on the Nile; Succoth, a station (now unknown), presumably northward from Rameses, in the direction of Palestine; Etham, a place east from Rameses, between thirty and forty miles away, and not far from the northern extremity of the western head of the Red Sea. Instead of advancing from this, however, and nearing their final destination, the Israelites are strangely enough now ordered to turn and encamp before Pihahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, over against Baalzephon on the opposite coast.

What extraordinary reason is given for this divergent course, and, in the event of any pursuit by the Egyptians, ill-chosen position in a strategical point of view?

It was, according to the text, that Jehovah might get him honour on Pharaoh and let the Egyptians know that he was the Lord. "For Pharaoh will say

of the children of Israel: They are entangled in the land—the wilderness hath shut them in; and I will harden the heart of Pharaoh that he shall follow after them, and I will be honoured upon Pharaoh and upon all his host.”

Pharaoh pursues the fugitives, to bring them back we must presume, though he and his had lately been so eager to be rid of them. They are sore afraid when they see his host behind them, and turn upon Moses and reproach him for having led them out of their bondage. “Were there no graves in Egypt, say they, that thou hast taken us away to die in the Wilderness? Better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the Wilderness.”

But Moses encourages the faint-hearted crew?

He bids them not to fear; for Jehovah shall fight for them. He has but to lift up his rod and stretch out his hand towards the neighbouring sea to have its waters divide and part asunder, so that the people shall go through on dry ground. “And I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians,” the narrative proceeds, Jehovah himself being now brought in as speaker, “and they shall follow after; and I will get me honour upon Pharaoh and his host and his chariots and his horsemen; and the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord.”

The pillar of cloud which had hitherto headed the column of fugitives is made to interpose between them and their pursuers at this point?

It moves most accommodatingly from the front to the rear, coming between the camp of the Israelites and that of the Egyptians, and as there was now an opportunity for another miracle, or violation of a physical law, we are told that, “Whilst it was a cloud of light to the fugitives, it was a cloud of darkness to the pursuers, so that the one came not near the other all night.”

And Moses—?

Stretches out his hand over the sea, and it is driven back by a strong east wind which blew all night, so that the children of Israel advanced on dry land, "the waters being as a wall unto them on their right hand and on their left."

A wind of the sort, however, would not have piled the waters of the Red Sea to the right and left, but have swept them clean away ?

It would had it blown hard enough ; so that the writer had better have left all to the magic rod, and not had recourse to any natural agency that would have failed of the effect described.

The Egyptians pursue ?

As arranged by the narrator—" Even all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen into the midst of the sea."

Jehovah now interferes actively ?

" Looking out through the pillar of cloud and fire in the morning watch, he troubles their host ; and takes off their chariot wheels, so that they drave heavily ! " And now had the moment for the discomfiture and destruction of the enemy arrived : " Stretch out thine hand over the sea," says the revengeful man speaking in the name of his God, " that the waters may come again upon the Egyptians ! " " And the sea," it is said, " returned in his strength and covered the chariots and the horsemen and all the host of Pharaoh : there remained not one of them."

The great work of immediate deliverance and destruction thus accomplished— ?

Moses and the children of Israel sing a grand song of triumph to Jehovah ; and Miriam the Prophetess, the sister of Aaron, and all the women, with timbrels in their hands and with dances, answer them in chorus : " Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously ; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea."

Though we miss any word of thanksgiving for their deliverance by the Israelites in this song of triumph, we meet with phrases that point conclusively to the late period of its composition; for we discover that the people have been already "guided in the strength of the Lord to his holy habitation;" the meaning of which is that they are dwelling in the city of Jerusalem conquered by King David from the Jebusites, and having the Temple on Mount Moriah built by King Solomon as the habitation of their God. And we see farther that the peoples of Palestine, the Dukes of Edom, the mighty princes of Moab, and the natives of Canaan, have all already had cause "for trembling and amazement," according to the words of the poem.

What in brief may be said of the account we have of the Exodus from Egypt?

That the story in so far as the accessories are concerned—the serpent charming, the river turned into blood, the frogs, the gnats or lice, the flies and the locusts—must be the work of a writer who had some acquaintance with Egypt and its natural history: the river in the beginning of the inundation coming down of a red colour; frogs abounding in a land so thoroughly irrigated as Egypt; gnats and flies swarming at particular seasons of the year, and locusts invading occasionally and devouring all before them. The thunder and lightning and hail, though not impossible, must still have been extremely rare in Egypt. The receding of the Red Sea from its northern shores, moreover, by the action of the tides, was known to the writer. At complete ebb the sea became fordable (or was so before the cutting of the Great Canal) for a short time, twice in the twenty-four hours, at the new and full of the moon. The writer used facts in the natural history of Egypt in his narrative; but possessed of a love of the marvellous and a fine spirit of exaggeration, he has turned

the natural into the supernatural, and, it may be, the actual into the impossible, for the purpose of displaying the power of his God Jehovah, not only over the Gods of the Egyptians, but over the domain of the true God—the world and the laws that inhere in it, and all to favour the escape of a party of thankless slaves from their fetters !

Is it either reasonable or reverent to think of God “getting him honour” by the destruction of the beings who can only have come into existence through conformity with his natural laws ?

It is both against reason and reverential feeling to entertain such thoughts of God.

Or to hold that the men were inspired by God who formed such ideas of his nature and attributes, as the words they presume to ascribe to him, and the acts they make him do, proclaim them to have entertained ?

It is not merely unreasonable, but verily impious to believe that they were.

Or that they could have been inspired by the holy spirit of truth associate with knowledge, who make God say at one time that he brought the Israelites out of Egypt with a high hand, and at another, that they were driven out of the land after having been ordered by their Deity to rob the natives of their jewels of silver and jewels of gold and fine raiment ?

Inspiration from God can only be fitly spoken of as coming through the mind of man, and in harmony with the right and the reasonable in his nature, never with the irrational in thought and the reprehensible in deed.

Or that between the dusk and the dawn, a population approaching three millions in number, with flocks and herds innumerable, could have crossed an arm of the sea, were it but a mile in breadth, laid dry by the receding tide for half-an-hour or less ?

The thing is physically, and so absolutely, impossible.

Pharaoh and his host effectually disposed of, the Israelites we must presume will now proceed on their way towards the land reported as flowing with milk and honey ?

Most singular to say, however, they do not ; they even turn clean away from it, advance along the eastern shore of the Red Sea towards the southern extremity of the Sinaitic peninsula and come, it is said, into the wilderness of Shur.

Where is Shur ?

Not where the Israelites could have been at this time, if it was on the way to Shur that Hagar was found by the Angel of Jehovah when she had been so ruthlessly driven from his tent by Abraham, then encamped in the land of Canaan. The desert of Shur is on the east side of the Dead Sea towards its northern extremity.

The first stage of the fugitive Israelites after leaving Rameses is farther said to have been Succoth. Succoth, we should consequently conclude, must be within an easy march of Rameses ?

Yet the only Succoth of which we read elsewhere in the Old Testament is the one to which Jacob came on his way from Mahanaim after his interview with his brother Esau, Lord of Seir, in Moab, some hundreds of miles away from Rameses in Egypt and the Red Sea. It is, therefore, impossible that the children of Israel could have reached the Succoth and Shur mentioned in the histories of Abraham and Jacob ; and as neither desert nor camping place is known on the borders of Egypt by these names, the only conclusion possible is, that the redactor of the part of the Pentateuch which now engages us must have had two documents before him, severally detailing incidents pertaining to different periods in the earlier nomadic wanderings of the Hebrews in search of better feeding grounds or more settled homes. The confusion in the account of the Exodus as we

have it, and the impossibility of following the Israelites in their course by the names of the stations or camping places given, has even led to the suggestion that the *Misir*, translated *Egypt*, from which they are described as having escaped was not the *Misir* of the Nile, but an outlying district of Phœnicia called Goshen (see Josh. x., 41 and xi., 16), in which they had been slaves; and farther, that the sea they are said to have crossed dry-shod was not the Red Sea at all, but an inland lake characterised in the original as the reedy, rushy, or sedgy sea (*Schilf Meere*, *DeWette*), a title totally inapplicable to the briny Arabian Gulf on whose shores reed or rush never grew.*

The Israelites, however, in the account we possess, have made great speed in reaching the east coast of the Red Sea after quitting Rameses in Egypt?

They seem to have spent but a few days—three days?—if we may judge by the narrative, in getting thus far.

What is the distance from Rameses to Suez on the western head of the Red Sea?

About thirty-five English miles.

How long would it take a column of men, women, and children, approaching three millions in number, burthened with all their belongings in the shape of furniture, baggage, tents for shelter, &c. &c., to say nothing of sick and infirm, hampered besides by numerous flocks and herds, to march in the most perfect order—impossibility under the circumstances indicated—from the borders of Egypt to the coast of the Red Sea?

A satisfactory answer will be found in the Bishop of Natal's exhaustive work, 'The Pentateuch and Book of Joshua.' Very many days, at all events—if not even weeks, or, by possibility, months!

* Vide 'Radenhausen, Die Bibel wider die Glaube.' 8vo. Hamb., 1865. Also 'Goethe: Zum West-Ostlichen Divan; Israel in der Wüste,' Bd. vi., S. 158 Stuttgart. and Tubing, 1828.

Yet the Exodus is said to have been effected in the course of a single night?

Between midnight and the next morning, as we read the account; Etham, on the coast of the Red Sea, being reached by the following day at farthest; how much longer it was before Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, was attained we do not learn.

Surely this was impossible?

On natural grounds certainly. But the process of evacuation is to be seen as it presented itself to, or rather as it was elicited from, the writer's imagination—viz., as miraculous; which, being interpreted, means against nature, therefore against God, and so impossible. For, with our faith in the changeless laws of nature, expressions, as we perforce apprehend them, of the power and attributes of God, we acknowledge no reported interferences with the necessities they impose as other than fables devised by ignorance in view of particular ends—the end in the case before us being to show forth the superiority of the Jewish God Jehovah over the Gods of Pharaoh and the Egyptians, and the peculiar favour in which he held the children of Israel.

What befalls the fugitives next?

They come to Marah, where the water is found so bitter that it cannot be drunk, and the people murmur against their leader.

But the bitterness of the water is said to have been removed or remedied?

Jehovah is said to have showed Moses a tree, which, being cast into the water, made it sweet.

Does the knowledge we now possess of the chemical nature of the salts which cause brackishness in water, and of the principles which give plants their special properties, warrant us in believing that any tree grows, or did ever grow, capable of neutralising or eliminating the alkaline and earthy chlorides and sulphates which commonly embitter and make water undrinkable?

It does not. On the contrary it enables us to speak positively, and to say that no such tree did ever grow or could ever have grown. Distillation alone is competent to make bitter or brackish water sweet and wholesome; and the art of distillation, though it came from Arabia, could hardly have been known in the days of Moses and Aaron, or, if it were, it is not said, at all events, that it was called into requisition.

The Israelites next reach Elim, where there are said to be twelve wells, and threescore and ten palm-trees. Suppose a mixed multitude of nearly three millions of men, women, and children—to say nothing of cattle—how many would there be to a well?

Two hundred and fifty thousand.

And if thirty of these may be supposed to have drunk in the course of every hour of the twenty-four, and each to have had access to the well twice a day, how long would it be before all could have quenched their thirst?

A very long time—the reader who is curious to *know* the exact number of hours, days, weeks, months, and years may amuse himself by making the calculation.

And reasonable men are still asked to give credit to so impossible a tale as that of the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt—that some two and a-half or three millions of men, women, and children, several thousands of sick, infirm, parturient, dying, and dead, besides vast herds of kine, sheep, and goats, left their homes in a single night and subsisted for forty years in a desert that does not furnish food for the four thousand souls with a few camels and goats who now possess it?

They are, indeed, and have it propounded to them as part of a revelation from the God of Reason for their guidance in learning to know something of him

and the nature of his agency in the world they inhabit.

Does not the exaggeration in regard to the numbers of the Israelites who leave Egypt find its corrective subsequently?

Elsewhere we learn that the Israelites were not chosen by Jehovah "because they were more in number than any people, for they were *the fewest of all people*;" and truly when the history of the tribe is perused with unbiassed mind, such an indifferent reason is seen to be as good as, or possibly better than, any other that could be given for the choice—all things else considered. The population of Palestine—Phœnicians, Syrians, Edomites, Moabites, Israelites, &c., did not at any time of old amount to the numbers said to have left Egypt under the leadership of Moses in a single night.*

The palm-trees need not detain us, for, as the Exode is said to have taken place in the spring of the year, their fruit could not have been ripe; and had it been so, what would the fruit of threescore-and-ten palm-trees have been among three millions of hungry human beings, the produce of each tree having to be divided between 42,857 mouths! Food, as well as water, failing, and supplies being indispensable, how says the record they were furnished?

Flesh meat by means of a flight of quails which

* An excellent authority estimates the population of Palestine never to have exceeded two millions (Movers 'Die Phœnizier,' B. ii., S. 303); and the inhabitants of the Sinaitic Peninsula, in which the children of Israel, approaching three millions in number, are said to have wandered and found subsistence for themselves and flocks for forty years, do not now, and probably never did, exceed four thousand souls, who are not even dependent on the produce of the land for their means of living, but on the wages they earn in forwarding merchandise and travellers through the desert they inhabit; food and necessaries of every kind reaching them from Egypt and Palestine. See Robinson's 'Travels in Palestine.'

covered the camp, and bread by a fall of manna from the skies. Of the latter every man was to gather, or to have gathered for him, an omer by measure. Did he gather more on any working day, it was found next day to stink and to have bred worms; but, that wonders might not cease, and as it was unlawful in the writer's mind to do any work on the Sabbath, two omers were to be gathered on the preceding day, and the one reserved was found to keep sweet and good, as if there had been a preservative or antiseptic quality in the air of the Sabbath.

There was also an omer ordered to be gathered and kept for a memorial and a witness to coming generations of the wonderful way in which the chosen people had been fed in the Wilderness. This omer of manna, like that gathered on the eve of the Sabbath, was also miraculously preserved from stinking and breeding worms, and is ordered to be laid up first before Jehovah—the Lord (xvi., 33), and then before the Eduth—the Testimony (*Ib.*, 34).

What may the object be which is thus designated indifferently Jehovah and Eduth?

The Hebrew word Eduth, here met with for the first time and translated Testimony with us, is commonly understood to signify the Law or Tables of the Law. But the Law had not yet been delivered to Moses; the stones on which it was written were still in the quarry, and the ark in which it was kept was in the tree, so that the word Eduth must mean something other than the Law, though it may have the sense of Testimony.

The literal meaning of the Hebrew word Eduth might lead us to the sense in which it is here used?

The word among other meanings implies *brightness*, and as the type of all splendour is the Sun, and the Sun was the chief God of all the ancient peoples, so the Eduth has been held by some learned mythologists to signify either an Image of the Sun-God, or

a Symbol of the Deity in one of his most notable attributes.

Is there anything in the Hebrew Scriptures that countenances such an interpretation ?

Hadad, Hadod, or Adod was a Phœnician name for the Sun-God ; and the passage from this to Edud or Eduth is easy. Jehovah, in the text quoted above, is spoken of by the name of Eduth, and Eduth is used as synonymous with Jehovah.*

Journeying through the Wilderness of Sin there is no water, and the people chide with Moses for bringing them out of the land of Egypt to kill them and their children and their cattle with thirst in the desert. This gives occasion to another great miracle ?

To the notable one, so much made of by painters and poets in later times, where Moses strikes the rock with his wonder-working rod, and water flows for the people to drink.

What are we to think of this ?

As of the *report* of a miracle, *i.e.*, a statement implying contravention of an eternal and changeless Law of God.

No more possible therefore than that a touch of the same rod could have turned the water of the Nile into blood and the dust of the ground into gnats or lice ?

Certainly not ; unless we are prepared to give up our trust in the changeless nature of God and his Laws, and to live in a state of chaos in which, as the poet has it : " Function is swallowed in surmise and nothing is but what is not."

Does not the mention of a Wilderness of Sin and a Meribah, or bitter well, in connection with the early tale of the Exodus and the southern extremity of the Sinaitic peninsula, arouse suspicions of the trustworthiness of the record ?

* See, farther on, what is said about the contents of the Sacred Arks or Coffers of the Ancients.

It certainly does so, coming as we do by and by upon a Wilderness of Sin and a Meribah on the borders of Palestine, when the spies are sent out by Moses to report on the land,—the long-looked for goal of all the desert toils.

Passing over this difficulty, ascribable to the writer having different documents before him and drawing from one or other without critical tact or discrimination, we find that the Israelites as they advance come in contact with some of the desert-dwelling tribes by whom they are met and opposed ?

And first by the Amaleks in Rephidim, against whom Joshua as Captain is ordered out, whilst Moses with the rod of God in his hand takes his stance on a hill overlooking the field. "And it came to pass," says the story, "when Moses held up his hand that Israel prevailed, and when he let down his hand Amalek prevailed."

Observing this, what do Aaron and Hur who have conveniently accompanied the leader to the hill-top ?

They set him on a stone, and one on either side stayed up his hands until the discomfiture of Amalek, which was only completed with the going down of the sun.

Can we conceive any connection between a rod in the hand of a man on a hill-top and the success of one of the parties engaged in a skirmish on the plain below ?

It is impossible to imagine any : force is force, and courage is courage, and the greater force and the greater courage by the law of necessity, which is ever the law of God, prevail over the less : the Israelites, braver, more numerous, better armed or better led, defeated the Amalekites.

What does Moses after the battle ?

He builds an altar and calls it by the name of Jahveh-Nissi, not in thankfulness for his victory, however, but because "Jehovah hath sworn that he will

have war with Amalek from generation to generation."

Is this, according to our modern notions, a seemly oath to have been ascribed to God?

To God, conceived of as the impartial parent of the universe, and in the light of the ideas of our day, it certainly is not; though it perfectly accords with such notions of Deity as might be entertained by a presumptuous, barbarous, cruel, and ignorant people, or of a later writer, with a dramatic turn of mind, throwing himself into the ideas and feelings of his rude progenitors.

The name which Moses gives his altar has a singular affinity with that of one of the principal Gods of the ancient world?

Jahveh-Nissi is not far from Jao-Nissi (Ja or Jao, being the name of a Phœnician deity), nor this from Dio-nissi or Dionysos, the God of fertility and increase of the Greeks and other ancient peoples. The Israelites, with all their exclusiveness, cannot be supposed to have remained through the whole of their history uninfluenced by surrounding nations—Phœnicians, Egyptians, Assyrians, and Medo-Persians, their predecessors in civilisation and so much better policed and more powerful than themselves.

Moses is now visited by Jethro his father-in-law, who brings him his wife and children?

He is; and in the interlude here introduced we meet with another of those simply natural and purely human incidents artistically used which lend so many parts of the mythical and legendary history of the Hebrews the charm and imposing aspect of reality. Jethro or Reuel, the priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law, hearing of all that God had done for Moses and for Israel his people, takes Zipporah, Moses' wife, and her two sons, and with them comes to him in the Wilderness where he was encamped by Horeb the Mount of God; and says to him: "I, thy father-in-

law Jethro, am come unto thee, and thy wife, and her two sons with her." "And Moses went out to meet his father-in-law, and did obeisance, and kissed him; and they asked each other of their welfare; and they came into the tent."

Jethro tenders his son-in-law some sensible advice?

"Now I know," says he, "that Jahveh is greater than all the Gods; for in the thing wherein they dealt proudly he was above them." But Jethro sees that no single man can do the whole of the work which Moses has imposed on himself, sitting from morning until evening with the people standing about him, judging between them and making them to know the statutes of God and his laws. "This thing," says he, "is too heavy for thee; thou art not able to perform it thyself alone. Now hearken to my voice. Be thou for the people to God-ward, that thou mayest bring the causes unto God; but provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness, and place such over them, to rule them and to judge them at all seasons; and it shall be that every great matter they shall bring to thee, but every small matter they shall judge; so shall it be easier for thyself, and thou shalt be able to endure."

Moses hearkens to Jethro's reasonable counsels?

He does, and in so doing shows us that all is not effected by immediate divine agency and miraculous means in this legendary narrative. Jethro's interference here, however, may fairly be held to be impertinent. A God-commissioned man must be presumed competent for every emergency and neither to need nor to take advice from another. In hearkening to Jethro Moses descends from his eminence as Envoy and Agent of his God, and so brings suspicion on all that is ascribed to him as leader of the children of Israel. Jethro, a Midianitish priest, has a clearer vision of human capabilities than Moses himself, the chosen of Jehovah. But the recommendation of

Jethro is by a modern writer, and is inserted in this place to countenance a favourite assumption of the later Jews that their Sanhedrim dates as an Institution from even so far back as the age of Moses !

Having now—a few weeks we must presume—after quitting Egypt, come to the desert of Sinai and pitched before the mountain, God, it is said, calls to Moses therefrom, bids him remind the people of all that had already been done for them, and say that if they will obey the voice of Jehovah and keep his covenant, they shall be a peculiar treasure to him above all people,—a kingdom of priests and a holy nation ?

Promises greatly calculated to foster pride and exclusiveness as regards themselves, contempt, hate, and uncharitableness as regards other peoples, to give a colour, moreover, to proceedings for which rapine and murder are the only appropriate names.

The people on their part declare their readiness to obey in all things ?

Of course they do ; the people are ever as ready to pledge their word as they are careless to keep it. Not Moses only but Jahveh-Elohim himself, according to the record, had at all times a heavy handful in trying to keep the wayward and stiff-necked people they had led out of Egypt in something like order, a task, indeed, in which it may be said that neither God nor man ever completely succeeded, as we shall find in the course of our exposition.

A great event is now impending and an imposing prelude is required ?

What is called the delivery of the Law from Sinai, preceded by injunctions for the people to sanctify themselves, to wash their clothes, and be ready against the third day, when Jehovah will come down in sight of all the congregation on Mount Sinai.

This great event takes place ?

Wrapt about by a thick cloud, amidst thunder and lightning and trumpet sounds exceeding loud,

Jehovah comes down, as said, and Mount Sinai is "altogether on a smoke, and quakes greatly, because Jehovah descends in fire." After the trumpet has sounded long and waxed ever louder and louder—by whom it was blown we do not learn—Jehovah speaks to Moses by a voice, and calls him up to the top of the Mount. There he is ordered to go down and charge the people that they break not through and many of them perish; he and Aaron are alone to come up; the people and the priests—of whom we have heard nothing till now—are not even to set foot on the sacred mountain, "lest Jehovah break out on them."

This is a strange materialistic exhibition and derogatory statement to be connected with the supersensuous, ubiquitous power conceived by civilised man as Immanent Cause in Nature, and by us in these parts personified and called God?

Of whom as one and sole in any sense now understood, in spite of all that has been said to the contrary, the Hebrew people until a very late period in their history had not a notion. The representation here is only in harmony with the jealous, irascible, partial, and ruthless human impersonation of the greatest among the Gods, their own peculiar God who, until after the era of the kings and the captivities, they continued to apprehend under various names at different times—Chiun, Chamos, El-Schaddai, Isra-El, &c., to whom they gave the title of Melek—King, turned into Moloch, the God to whom they sacrificed the first-born of their sons and their cattle, and who was in truth no other than the Kronos or Saturn of neighbouring cognate tribes and peoples.

The people and *the priests*, it is said, are not to set foot on the mountain lest Jehovah break out on them and consume them?

We have as yet had no intimation of the existence of *priests* among the Israelites. Aaron is still no

more than the subordinate of Moses, though his brother, and no priest as the word came afterwards to be understood. The mention of priests is consequently a slip of the pen of the late compiler of this part of the Pentateuch.

The thundering, smoking, quaking, and trumpet sounds having ceased, the delivery of the Decalogue or Ten Commandments follows?

Prefaced by the important announcement that "God spake these words saying: I am Jehovah thy God, thou shalt have no other Gods before me."

What is to be understood by the words: "God spake?"

"When God is described as speaking to man," says a learned and pious divine, "He does so in the only way in which He who is a Spirit can speak to one encompassed with flesh and blood; not to the outward organs of sensation, but to the intelligence that is kindred to himself."* Not in human language, consequently, as if God were a man, having the parts essential to articulate utterance, but by and through the mind of man, whose activities, aroused by impressions from without, and as emotions and thoughts proceeding from within, find expression by the instrumentality of his vocal organs in words as various as the races that people the earth.

The Decalogue is generally associated in a more especial manner with the name of Moses?

It has long been customary so to connect it. By the concurring testimony of the scholar and critic, however, the Decalogue has of late been recognised as an Eclectic Summary made in times

* Davidson (S.), D.D., 'Introd. to Old Test.,' I., 233. See also our 'Dialogue by way of Catechism,' pt. I., p. 13. It is strange and unaccountable to us to find Spinoza saying that he thinks it was by a "*real voice* that God revealed to Moses the Laws he desired should be given to the Jews." Tract. Theologico-Politicus, pp. 34 and 38, English Version.

very much later than the age of Moses, and only derived in part from the earlier documents that underlie the Pentateuch in its present form. A little study and reflection indeed suffice to show the ordinary reader, that the Decalogue in the compact form in which it meets us in Exodus (xx., 1-17) must be the work of a relatively modern hand. Some of the ordinances here artistically grouped have no bearing on the concerns of a tribe but just escaped from slavery and wandering in the Wilderness as Nomads. Several of them again exist among a great variety of others that are often not only objectionable, but indecent, or positively iniquitous in character, scattered throughout the next two or three chapters of the Book, which have an unmistakable air of much higher antiquity than the first seventeen verses of the twentieth chapter, and give us glimpses of a state of things among the early Hebrews that is never suspected when the polished summary presented under the ten heads of the Decalogue is alone considered.

The Decalogue being held of such high significance, everything connected with its delivery, we are to presume, must be beyond the sphere of question or of doubt ?

Unfortunately this is not the case. The original delivery of the Ten Commandments is not connected with any tables of stone on which they are subsequently said to have been written ; they are delivered *vivâ voce* by Jehovah himself amid thunder and lightning, and it is not until we come to the twenty-fourth chapter that we meet with a word about Tables of the Testimony, interpreted as Tables of the Law, which are ordered to be laid up in the Ark of the Covenant. By and by again, when we hear of two Tables of Testimony having been given to Moses (xxxi., 18), their contents are not specified ; and the account in the next succeeding chapter (xxxii., 15, 16),

where two Tables of Testimony are again spoken of, leads to the idea that it must have been some more lengthy document than the Decalogue that was engraved upon them; for they are now said to have been written on both their sides by the finger of God,—a fact, however, if it could by possibility have been a fact, of which the writer could by no possibility have known anything. It is not in fine until we come to the thirty-fourth chapter that the words said to have been in the first Tables are promised to be rewritten in the second: “Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first, and I will write upon these tables the words that were in the first which thou brakedst,” says the writer in the name of Jehovah.

We have no absolute assurance consequently as to the contents of these Tables of the Testimony?

None whatever. For when we look on to the fourteenth and following verses of the thirty-fourth chapter, we find several of the Commandments included among the ten side by side with a number of others, which are not there to be found. Here the text runs thus in brief: “Thou shalt worship no other Gods, for Jehovah is a jealous God; thou shalt not make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and go a whoring after their Gods; thou shalt not take of their daughters to thy sons; thou shalt make thee no molten Gods; the feast of unleavened bread shalt thou keep; all that openeth the matrix is mine; six days shalt thou work, but on the seventh day thou shalt rest; thou shalt observe the feast of weeks; thrice in the year shall all your men children appear before Jehovah Elohim, the Elohim of Israel; thou shalt not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leaven; the first fruits of thy land thou shalt bring into the house of Jehovah thy God; thou shalt not see the kid in its mother’s milk.” This enumeration of acts to be done and left undone concludes with these

words: "And Jehovah said unto Moses, write thou these words, for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel. And he, Moses, was with Jehovah forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread nor drink water; and he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments." Besides the change in the *Tenor* of the *words* as here delivered, we have, therefore, Moses as the writer and not Jehovah, in opposition to the statement elsewhere made. The confusion that reigns in connection with the delivery of the Decalogue points not only to a variety of hands engaged on the text, but to much uncertainty of the commandments that were really at different times comprised in the summary. Each writer doubtless followed the tradition of his day or of his ken; and would have his readers infer, as he himself believed, that something in the shape of the then accredited Decalogue was that which was engraved upon the stone tables.

So much of the thirty-fourth chapter as refers to the Decalogue has a marked paraphrastic and supplementary look about it?

It certainly has. But it is not the only chapter bearing on the Decalogue that meets us in the same way; for, turning to the nineteenth of Leviticus, we find a repetition in varied terms of many of the old ordinances, with sundry additions, some of them, in all probability, from an ancient document, but others unmistakably from one of the most modern of all the editors of the Pentateuch.

The late writer of the Book of Deuteronomy, however, says positively that the tables were inscribed with the Ten Commandments, and the still more recent writer of the Books of the Kings (I. Kings, viii., 7-9) informs us that when the Ark of the Covenant was "brought into its place under the wings of the Cherubim" within the Temple of Solomon, "the two

tables of stone which Moses put there at Horeb" were still to be seen. As this must have been done hard upon five hundred years before the writer's day (he having lived some time after the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar), and he shows himself familiar with the Mosaic Saga, he can only be held as giving expression to the popular belief; and elsewhere we learn that when the ark was examined at a later period it was found empty; the mythical stone tables writ by the finger of God, had they ever been there, as well as everything else,—the *Agalma tou Theou*, &c., which we believe had been there, had disappeared.

Looking narrowly into these Ten Commandments, of which so much is made, we ask first on what authority they rest?

On that of the immediate spoken word of God, says the text. "Elohim spake these words," is preface to the first of the versions we have of them (Ex. xx.); "These words Jehovah spake," is the introduction to the second (Deut. v.). But we have determined the sense in which these statements can alone be taken: they are the utterances of men, not the words of God; for God never speaks, and never spoke in words to man.

The two versions, we must presume, will be found to agree?

In every essential particular they do, save one: the reason given for the observance of the seventh day of the week as a Sabbath or day of rest.

The religious sense, the moral sense, and the reason of man we may farther presume will be efficiently met and appealed to in the ordinances of the Decalogue?

Inasmuch as with a single exception they are entirely *negative* in their character, the important elements in the nature of man now named may be said to be left uncared for. The entire domain of

Deity, or of acts to be done, is untouched in the Decalogue, and reason and intelligence are left wholly out of the question.

The words, "I am Jehovah thy God," meet us at the very outset as an announcement that could fitly have come from the tutelary God of the Jews only?

And never from the God of humanity at large. The next clause again, "Thou shalt have no other Gods before me," was assuredly not wanted; for there are no other Gods, but One God only; a truth, however, which the writer could not have known, or he would have guarded himself from speaking as he does.

"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above or in the earth beneath; thou shalt not bow down to them nor serve them, for I Jehovah am a jealous God."

The writer makes God speak in terms of his own apprehension, little dreaming that the heaven *above* him *now* became a heaven *below* him *by and by*! The injunction here is obviously enough directed against practices long familiar to the countrymen of the writer, and still followed in the late times in which he lived. Through by far the greater part of their history the Hebrews were mere idolaters; they made images of the sun and moon, and of their own peculiar star Baal-Chiun (Saturn); they burned incense, and poured out drink offerings to the Queen of Heaven (the Moon), as their fathers, their kings, their chiefs, and they themselves had done in the cities of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem; and they had had plenty to eat, and were well, and saw no evil so long as they continued to do so. "But since we left off to burn incense to the Queen of Heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings to her, we have wanted all things, and have been consumed by the sword and by famine; and as to the word that thou hast spoken to us in the name of Jehovah, we will

not hearken unto thee," say the people in reply to Jeremiah's exhortation to them to forsake the Queen of Heaven and their other Gods for Jehovah (Comp. Jerem. xliv., 15-19).* The Hebrews undoubtedly worshipped many Gods, even into late periods of their history, and under a variety of emblems, from the unhewn stone block to the sculptured column; from figures of the Serpent and the Tree, to those of the Bull, the Goat, and, we may safely conclude, the nobler image in human form enthroned between the Cherubim upon the mercy-seat, and present as part of the furniture of every house under the title of Teraphim or Ephod.

Observing such discrepancy between commandment and practice, it is not easy to conceive the writings in which the Commandments are set forth as being in any sense inspired by God, or as dating from any remote period, such as the age of Moses?

God trusts his eternal ordinances neither to stone, to parchment, nor to paper, but implants them in the nature of things and the mind of man.

We should conclude, then, against the *inspiration* of which these disjointed, mythical, legendary, and contradictory Hebrew records are held up as evidence?

And say that it had no existence out of the imagination of those who proclaim it.

Moses could then have been no God-inspired man?

Had he been so, the writings ascribed to him could be none of his. Of the life and laws of Moses we have, in fact, but "a few scattered and unconnected

* "Is it not," says Professor Dozy, "as if we had here the Romans speaking in times when the Empire had become the prey of the Barbarians? For to the neglect of the Old Religion they, too, ascribed all the misfortunes that had come upon them; Christianity, in their opinion, being to blame for the disruption of the State, which the Old Gods had so well and truly protected."—Dozy, 'Die Israel. zu Mekka,' 162.

fragments; and even these, for the most part, obscured and altered by the tamperings of later times.”* The idolatry that prevailed through the period of the Judges, and for ages after this, suffices to prove that the Commandment against making and worshipping graven images is of relatively modern date.

Jehovah is made to announce himself as “a jealous God”—and we naturally ask of what in heaven or earth might God, body and soul of the universe in one, be jealous?

Of other Gods, doubtless, according to the Jehovistic writer whose work we have before us. Of them, indeed, might the Jewish Jehovah well be jealous, for his service was constantly deserted for theirs,—was never popular, indeed, until more than one of the few pious and respectable kings ever boasted by Judah had lived and died, and the country, at war with itself, was verging to its fall.

“Visiting the iniquities of the fathers on the third and fourth generation”—proceeds the tale.

But God does not visit the sins of parents upon children in any sense intended in the text, a truth which a later writer than the compiler of the Decalogue, and at variance with him, announced when he said: “The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin.” (Deut. xxiv., 16.)

“Showing mercy to thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments.”

Surely God is merciful to all who study to know and faithfully obey his laws, written as they are, and far more at large, in the great open book of Nature

* “Profecto non nisi fragmenta Vitæ et Legum Mosis supersunt pauca, dissipata disjectaque, et hæc ipsa pleraque temporum seriorum injuria denuo obscurata et turbata.”—Ewald, in ‘Comm. Soc. Gotting,’ vol. viii., p. 176.

than in the Hebrew of Exodus or Deuteronomy; even as they who know them not, or knowing who neglect them, assuredly bring penalties upon themselves.

“Thou shalt not take the name of Jehovah thy God in vain.”

The name of their God Jehovah was held of such sanctity by the Jews in later times that they believed it could not be spoken by man without sin. The high priest alone was authorised to utter it aloud, and that once only in the course of the year, on the great day of atonement. It is to enforce this usage that we have the story of the man born of an Israelitish mother by an Egyptian father stoned to death for having blasphemed the name of Jehovah—by which we are to understand nothing more than having dared to take the sacred name into his unhallowed lips (Levit. xxiv., 10-14). The verses here are plainly interpolated, and the text of verse sixteen that follows has been tampered with. In reading the scriptures aloud the NAME was at all other times either *sturred* so as to be inarticulate, or a *title* was substituted for it, Adonai,—Lord, being the one that first came into use, though this, too, was by and by esteemed so holy that it must not be pronounced articulately. Ha Schem—the name—is the word that is now spoken in the synagogue instead of either Jahveh or Adonai.

“Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy (‘as Jehovah thy God hath commanded thee,’” adds the Deuteronomist, referring doubtless to the text of Exodus); “six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of Jehovah thy God, in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter,” &c. And here occurs the important difference between the texts of Exodus and Deuteronomy:—“In six days,” says the former, “Jehovah made heaven and earth, the sea

and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day ; *wherefore* Jehovah blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it." "Remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that Jehovah thy God brought thee out thence *therefore* Jehovah thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath day," says the latter. The reasons given for the observance of the seventh day as a day of rest are as plainly at variance with one another as the writers of the several texts are seen to be at a loss for any reason for the Sabbath observance that might prove entirely satisfactory. The late writer of Deuteronomy may have seen the absurdity of having God, like a man foredone with the labour of six days, resting on the seventh day ; and so have shifted the ground for its special observance from God to the Exodus. A priest, he may farther have seen that men might possibly be better kept to the religious observances enjoined them, and so made more submissive, by having these relegated to one day of the week rather than spread over the seven. The Semitic races do not appear, like the Aryans, to have held each day of the week dedicated to a particular divinity—the first to the Sun, Sunday, the second to the Moon, Monday, &c. But their seventh day has, nevertheless, the same significance as the Saturn's day of the Phœnicians, Greeks, and Romans, even as their Chiun, El, Bel, Baal, Ja, and Jahveh have their type in the Kronos-Saturnus so familiar to us through our classical studies. The planet Saturn was THE STAR of the Hebrew people, and to the God it typified also belonged the seventh day of the week. The Sabbath, however, may be said to have lost its religious significance when God was conceived of as ONE and SOLE, when all days were declared to be alike in his sight—as most assuredly they are—and when charity between those who thought one day holier than another and those who looked on all days as holy alike came to be enjoined.

Is it not likely that neither in the Decalogue of Exodus nor of Deuteronomy have we the *Originals* of the Ten Commandments?

It is not only likely, but may be said to be certain that we have not. The Decalogue, as already said, is an eclectic summary by a late writer of certain ordinances scattered among many others over the books of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, which he held of the highest import and significance. The Commandment concerning the Sabbath, in particular, is to be met with as often as three times in different chapters of Exodus, in close proximity with the one which contains the Decalogue, and in what may be safely assumed as earlier forms than that in which it meets us there. "Six days shalt thou work, but on the seventh day thou shalt rest," says the text, that is probably the earliest of any (Exodus xxxiv., 21). "Six days shalt thou do thy work, and on the seventh day thou shalt rest, that thine ox and thine ass may rest, and the son of thy handmaid [concubine] and the stranger [slave] may be refreshed," says another version, somewhat amplified and having a purely human motive for the observance of the day appended (Exodus xxii., 12). "Six days may work be done, but the seventh is the Sabbath of rest, . . . for in six days Jehovah made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed," says the one that appears to be followed most closely in the Decalogue (Exodus xxxi., 15-17). Such are the different forms in which the *order*, as well as the *reason* for observing the seventh day of the week as a day of rest are delivered, the last quoted being in all likelihood from the hand that gave the Commandments final shape in the Decalogue of Exodus.

Have we any clue to the probable composer of the Decalogue?

In him the lynx-eyed criticism of modern times thinks it sees the writer to whom so much of the

Pentateuch in its present shape can be fairly ascribed —“ Ezra the Priest, the Scribe, even a *scribe of the words of the Commandments of Jehovah and of his statutes to Israel.*”*

With the final triumph of Jehovism, the Jewish scribes could not suffer the seventh day to continue sacred to Baal-Saturn, the old tutelary God of the country ; neither could they have the Tabernacle and Ark dedicated to the same Divinity. The day holy to him and the Tent and Ark in which he dwelt had, therefore, to be given to the modern God Jehovah. “ In the veiled sagas of the Pentateuch,” says an able writer, “ we discover many elements of the idolatrous worship which prevailed so long among the Israelites. The mass of the people honoured Saturn as their national God ; they carried about with them in a Tent his Image in the form of a Bull, as it seems ; to him they sacrificed the first-born of their sons, and to his service they devoted the seventh day of the week.”† Until the time of the exile, says another accomplished scholar, the Jews were without a passable religious motive for the observance of the seventh day of the week as a Sabbath. It was Ezra who found for them the one that came finally to be adopted ; for without misgivings may we assume that it was he who wrote the Persian story of the Creation and Paradise as it exists in the beginning of Genesis. And who, indeed, had such opportunity of learning something of the Persian sagas as he who lived so long in exile in the kingdom of Persia, and was finally sent by its king to Judea “ with the Law of his God in his hand ”—we venture to add ; and with what was not in his hand, in his head.‡

The Sabbath, as a day of rest, must have been much more a matter of necessity in times when all

* Ezra vii. 11 and 14.

† Vatke, ‘Bibl. Theologic’ I., 201.

‡ Comp. Dozy, *op. cit.* 34, 35.

below the ruler and the land-owning classes were slaves, as they appear to have been among the Israelites, as among the nations of antiquity generally?

Then, indeed, was the day of rest a most humane and beneficent institution. Imposed on religious grounds, it stood between the arbitrariness that so commonly comes of wealth and irresponsible power and the impotency that inheres in dependence. At the present time, the Sabbath as a religious institution has lost much of its significance: slavery no longer exists in the civilised world, and, in trading and manufacturing communities, the labouring classes give it little heed. They no longer look forward to *one* especial day of rest in the week, but make several Sabbaths in its course; in many cases they even dictate the terms on which they will consent to work at all, and make the accumulated fund of the capitalist available for profit. Unhappily they do not commonly use their power aright, turning the two or three days of the week in which they do no work into days of idleness and dissipation, instead of using them for the cultivation of the higher and nobler elements in their nature. But with our faith in the possible limitless advance of man in science and morals, and our belief in the influence of education freed from the trammels of Churches and the blight of dogmatic indoctrination, we have no doubts of the brighter phase of humanity that will in the course of ages make its appearance.

“Honour thy father and thy mother (‘as Jehovah thy God hath commanded thee,’ adds the Deuteronomist, referring again to the version of the Decalogue he found in Exodus) that thy days may be long upon the land which Jehovah thy God giveth thee.”

“Honour thy father and thy mother”:—a commandment natural, beautiful, good and proper in itself assuredly, but unhappily immediately marred by the context which adds: “that thy days may be long in the land, which the Lord thy God giveth thee;” as if there were no finer sense of duty or moral obligation in question, and the merely selfish or animal element in the nature of man were the only ground of appeal for its observance! The commandment, as it stands, is not unconditional, as it ought to be, but is weighted with a motive, and so meets us in guise of a compact or bargain, much of the same kind as that which Jacob proffers for the acceptance of his God when he sets up the stone Pillar at Beth-El, and vows a vow, saying, “*If God will keep me in the way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, &c., then shall Jehovah be my God.*” (Gen. xxviii. 20, 22).

“Thou shalt not kill.”

“Thou shalt not commit adultery.”

“Thou shalt not steal.”

Respect for life, respect for that which is won by industry and thrift—property in the proper sense of the word; and respect for the sanctity of the hearth and all that pertains to it,—these the Hebrew writer sees as the foundations on which human society rests. Propounded in this place as coming immediately from God, these laws, comprised as they are in the primary nature of man, are in complete accordance with the necessities and contingencies amid which he lives. More than one of them, indeed, appears to obtain even among certain of the sociable lower animals. Unhappily they are not all, and at all times, so carefully observed among ourselves as they deserve to be. How little they were regarded by the early Hebrews, is seen throughout the whole course of their history,—from the murderous invasion of Palestine and the rapine that accompanied it; the treachery of Simeon and Levi when they slew the Sechemites; the terrible order of Moses to the

Levites to consecrate themselves to Jehovah and earn a blessing by slaying their sons, their brothers, and their neighbours; the wholesale murders perpetrated by such heroes as Samson, Gideon, Samgar, and the rest; the individual homicides of Moses and Phinehas, and Jael and Judith; the incestuous acts of Reuben and Amnon; the cruelty, vindictiveness, unforgiveness, and adultery of David, &c., &c.

“Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.”

Nothing, undoubtedly, can be imagined more immoral and reprehensible in itself, or more adverse to the security of settled life, than false witness-bearing. Such a commandment, however imperative in a policied state of society, could obviously have had little application among nomads in the wilderness. Its place in the Decalogue consequently gives us another assurance of the late date at which this summary was composed and promulgated.

“Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbour’s.”

The injunction against covetousness in general is a decided advance, in a moral point of view, on all that had gone before, and may be said to anticipate the high tone of feeling presumed possible in humanity by Jesus of Nazareth when he said that whosoever lusted unlawfully had already committed the sin in his heart. But it may not be impertinent to observe that the commandments against false witness-bearing and covetousness are not propounded as of universal application. It is his neighbour alone that the Jew is to have in respect. It was even held lawful to spoil the Egyptians; was it not, perchance, lawful also to swear falsely against them, and to covet their men- and maid-servants, their asses and their oxen.

The Israelites are repeatedly enjoined to keep these commandments?

Repeatedly, but never on the ground of moral propriety or unconditional necessity. It is always in prospect of some material advantage or return: that they may have long lives, that they may have a numerous progeny, that they may be victorious over their enemies, that they may escape Jehovah's anger, and not become victims of pestilence, famine, or the sword. The Decalogue, however, comprised but a very small part of the Hebrew legislation. Almost every particular in the life of the Jewish people, even to its most private and intimate relationships, is touched upon and regulated; practices being in several places denounced that proclaim a state of morals to have prevailed among the people which shocks the higher and more delicate feelings happily current in these our days.

Slavery is one of the subjects particularly referred to?

Slavery was an authorised institution among the Jews, as it continues to be among so many other barbarous and half-civilised peoples at the present time; notable, however, in the case of the chosen seed, as countenanced and regulated by their God. What is remarkable, too, is this: That Jewish slaves were not only obtained from abroad, but were purchased from among themselves. Parents were even authorised to sell their sons and daughters into slavery. The native Hebrew slave, however, had privileges of his own, for when he had served six years he recovered his freedom. Had he fallen into slavery having neither wife nor child, he then went out as he had come; but had he married and had had sons and daughters born to him during the term of his servitude, the children went not with him: they were the master's property, and—hard measure—the husband and father only obtained permission to remain with his wife and children by vowing himself to slavery for the rest of his life!

Resolving to share their fate, a particular ceremony was gone through?

The man being brought before the judge, and, we may presume, a declaration made and implemented, his ear was then bored through with an awl against the door-post, to signify his ascription to the house for ever, and the ceremony was complete.

The Israelites were in the habit not only of selling their daughters as slaves, but as concubines?

“If a man sell his daughter to be a maid-servant [concubine, as appears by the context], she shall not go out as the men-servants [slaves] do,”—to labour in the fields, doubtless. She is to do the indoor-work of the house and be her master’s bed-fellow. If she pleased not her master, however, “who hath betrothed her to himself,” or if she ceased to find favour in his eyes, she might be redeemed [euphemism for bought] by another; or she might be handed over to the owner’s son; but she was not to be sold to one of a strange nation. Did her owner, notwithstanding his disgust, continue to keep her, having taken to himself another wife, he was to provide her with food and raiment, and still to comport himself towards her in all things else as a husband. Failing in any of these particulars, the woman was free to go; but it was to be “without money,” *i.e.*, without a provision from the man to whom she had been as a wife. An easy way, therefore, lay open to the peculiar people of ridding themselves of disagreeable wives or concubines: they had but to neglect to be quit of them.

Did a man smite another so that he died, the offender was to be put to death?

So it is said, but with important reservations; for if the smiter had not lain in wait for his enemy, but “God had delivered him into his hands,” that is, had he come upon him unawares and slain him, then was he to have a place of refuge to flee to, Jehovah himself being held in this case to have thrown the obnoxious party in the slayer’s way, and given him the required opportunity to wreak his vengeance on his enemy.

“ If, in striving together, one man smite another with a stone or his fist, and he die not, but keep his bed, if he rise again and walk abroad upon his staff, then he that smote him shall be quit ; only he shall pay him for loss of time and his healing ”—surely an equitable law, though something more might possibly in many cases have been required.

Did a man smite his servant or his maid (his male or female slave) with a rod, and he or she died under his hand, then was the smiter to be surely punished ; but, did the servant or the maid “ continue for a day or two,” he was not to be punished, for the servant or maid “ is his money.”

A notable distinction this between a cause immediate and a cause a little more remote, and made on grounds that excite our wonder in the present day when met with in a book still believed by so many to be the word of God to man ; to have been composed under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, whatever meaning is attached to the phrase, and to be used as among the prime and indispensable instruments in the education of the young.

The slave, however, was not even thus indifferently protected, save when his life was endangered ?

Did a man smite the eye of his servant, or the eye of his maid, says the inspired text, so that it perish, he shall let him go free for his eye’s sake ! Worse we are to understand might have befallen the unhappy slave, and he was, therefore, to be well content that he had only lost an eye.

The same pleasant award is made in case the loss were the minor one of a tooth ?

Did the owner smite out his man-servant’s tooth, or his maid-servant’s tooth, he shall let him go free for his tooth’s sake !

Did a man strive with and hurt a woman with child, so that her fruit departed from her, and no farther mischief followed, he was to be surely punished

as the woman's husband should lay upon him, or, "he shall pay as the judge determines," but if other mischief followed—if the woman died, then should life be given for life.

This paying of like with like was a general principle in the ancient Israelitish legislation?

Not carried out to the letter in every case, however, as we have seen above, still it is said: Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe,—the *lex talionis*, in a word, was the rule. But the savage nature of the precept, though delivered as from God, and the evils to which it necessarily led, were seen through by more than one of the later Prophets, and the moral teacher of Nazareth expunged it from the code of humanity for ever when he said: "It was said of old, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth; but I say unto you, do good to them that hate you," &c. (Matt. v.) If we perchance see that this is carrying matters somewhat far, we are still within the pale of our proper humanity when we abstain from returning evil with the like.

Among these ancient ordinances or laws ascribed to Moses, though a few of them only can be presumed to date from of old, there is one that is completely in harmony with what seems natural right, though entirely ignored by modern legislation?

That which says in these terms: "If a man entice a maid that is not betrothed and lie with her, he shall surely endow her to be his wife" (Exod. xxii. 16.) Were such a law now on the statute book there would certainly be less seduction practised, and fewer bastard children brought into the world. If union of bodies be the sole bond of marriage, as it is acknowledged to be by our laws—ceremonies and parchments going for nothing, but being mere shams or make-believes, would it not be logical were the fact of such union having taken place to be constituted legal marriage in every instance?

Such being God's or Nature's law, there can be but one consistent answer to the question.

An ordinance follows those we have on matters connubial which had long a most disastrous influence on human society?

That which says: "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live."

A witch! what is a witch?

An old woman presumed to be possessed of supernatural power of a wicked or maleficent kind.

We have no such personage among us now?

The kind became extinct when physical science was born. The last reputed English witch was judicially murdered by a learned but credulous judge about two centuries ago—warning for all time that prescriptive learning and legal eminence are no safeguards against superstition and its offspring inhumanity.

The learned judge in the instance referred to, as in others—and they are legion—that had gone before, only followed in all simplicity and blind sincerity the injunction he found in his Bible, and administered the law of the land, based, like his belief, on its text?

No question of this. But the bad law has been abrogated, and the judge is now pitied for his credulity; the belief in witches and witchcraft having died out from among the cultivated, though it still lingers among the imperfectly educated and the vulgar, kept alive as it is by the authority of the book which the clergy and ignorant laity alike continue to force on the world as inspired by God, and as the absolute guide in morals and religion, which the open-eyed see that it most assuredly is not.

There is another ordinance among these reliques of old and barbarous times that must have wrung the hearts of parents, and brought mourning into the homes of men through countless ages of the ancient world?

The one we have seen attempted to be particularly connected with the escape from Egypt and the institution of the Passover, which says: "The first-born of thy sons shalt thou give unto me, likewise of thine oxen and thy sheep; seven days it shall be with his dam, on the eighth thou shalt give it unto me." Of the terrible meaning hidden in these words we have already had occasion to speak, and found it not doubtful that "giving to the God" in ancient times meant sacrifice upon his altar. And it is to be noted that the ordinance as it stands in this—one of the least manipulated parts of the Hebrew Scriptures,—makes no provision for redemption by substitution or by money: the first-born of man and beast, by the oldest Hebrew statute we possess, was *Cherem* to the God; and that which was *cherem* could not be redeemed, but must surely be put to death. The word in the original which is softened down in the English version into "set apart," means *burned*:—the blood as the life was poured out about the altar, and the body burned upon its fire as an offering of a sweet savour to the El God,—Baal (Saturn), or Molech. So late as the days of the prophet Ezekiel, the redemption clause made no part of the text; it was interpolated after his day.*

Sacrifice we know, by the universal practice of ancient peoples, to have been among the oldest, as it was also believed to be the most potent of all the means possessed by man of propitiating the God he feared as having power to do him good or ill?

It was so unquestionably, especially among the Semitic tribes that peopled Western Asia, and the more precious the offering, whether in itself or to the giver, the higher rose the claim upon the God for favour through its means. But the life of a human being was obviously of far more worth than that of a

* Comp. Dozy, *Op. cit.*, S. 8.

beast, and the life of a man's own child priceless to him in comparison with any other human life. Hence the value attached to human sacrifice in general, but, above and beyond all other, to the sacrifice of a son by his father.

✓ Ideas of the same nature appear to have continued to influence men's minds and their acts up to relatively recent epochs in religious history ?

That they have done so is as unquestionable as that they continue to do so at the present hour. Ecclesiastical Christianity has no other foundation. The "crowning sacrifice," as the death of their Christ is characterised by the churches, has been well said by an able and learned writer to perpetuate an ancient rite in its most appalling form, making of a merciful God a ruthless demon, and giving to the purely moral doctrine of Jesus of Nazareth the character of a religion of Molech.*

In the later periods of the Jewish History, however, as we have it, the first-born of men were ordered to be redeemed ?

They were so, and Jehovah is even made by one of the later prophets to repudiate the claim to all that opened the matrix which is put into his mouth by the earlier writer : "They caused their sons and daughters to pass through the fire to Molech, which I commanded them not." (Jerem. xxxii. 35). Such a rite as the ever-recurring sacrifice of a new-born babe, the first of its parents, wore too terrible an aspect to continue as an institution after some little progress had been made from utterly barbarous to more civilised life. *Substitution* was, doubtless, the first step taken in favour of the human victim, and among the Hebrews may even be supposed to have preceded the *circumcision*, or partial sacrifice, and the money price that were finally paid to the priest in its stead. But it

* Mackay, 'Progress of the Intellect,' ii., 460.

was not among the Israelites alone that redemption of the human subject from immolation to the God by means of a substitute or a payment in money came at length to be effected. We have evidence of a like advance in ideas leading to like results in practice among other ancient peoples. If in the Hebrew legends we have the ram caught in the thicket as a substitute for Isaac on the point of being sacrificed by his father Abraham—a tale of very modern invention, as has been hinted,* the name of Abraham not having been known to the Jews before the days of David—in those of Greece we find Athamas spared the trial of sacrificing his son Phrixos, the divinity in his now more placable aspect consenting, like Jehovah, to receive a ram instead of the youth. Iphigenia, too, in some of the myths, escapes her impending doom by the goddess at whose shrine she was to have bled, accepting a hind in her place. Belonging to still earlier periods, perhaps, there is, further, the myth of Jupiter Laphisteus, to whom Rhea presents a stone in swaddling bands instead of the customary new-born child,—Jupiter Laphisteus, in whom we not only recognise the Chronos and Saturnus of the Aryan race, but the El-Elijon, the Chijun, Chamos, Baal, and Molech of the Semites under another name. In the Egyptian records, still farther, we have the story of the Three Candles burnt to the Sun God in his temple at On, in lieu of the Three Men who, from immemorial times, had been the daily sacrifice at his shrine.

These legendary and mythical tales all proclaim the advance that may have been made somewhat simultaneously among the better policed and more civilised peoples of the ancient world in their ideas of what might be truly acceptable to their gods?

Very possibly : *Substitution*—an animal for a human

* Vide Our Genesis, page 70-71.

being ; *Circumcision*—Sacrifice of a small but significant part for the whole ; Presentation at the shrine with an *Initiatory rite* of no more moment than the sprinkling with a little water—still practised in these days, and a *Money payment* to the priest—still also part of the ceremony.—Such, in all likelihood, were successive steps, proclaiming advances in the Religious Idea, due, undoubtedly, to progress in the knowledge of Nature, as well as in civilisation and general refinement among mankind.

Human victims, however, long continued in ancient times to be offered to the Gods on extraordinary occasions ?

No longer presented as the rule, they nevertheless continued to be offered occasionally and exceptionally. In entering on their wars, some of the ancient peoples seem to have thought that an oblation of the kind to the God of Slaughter was a due and necessary preliminary. Achilles, as we read in the *Iliad*, offered up a number of his Trojan captives to Ares ; and Themistocles, in less mythical times, sacrificed three distinguished Persian prisoners to Dionysus on the eve of the battle of Salamis. After his victory over Antony, Augustus, to propitiate the manes of the deified Cæsar, sacrificed three hundred victims of senatorial and equestrian rank upon his altar. Commodus offered up a human victim with his own hand in the Mithriac mysteries to which he was attached ; and Heliogabalus, two centuries after the Christian era, had the sons of some of the most distinguished families of Italy brought to Rome and sacrificed in the Syriac mysteries which supplied the fashion of his religious clothing. In the Hebrew history we have the story of Mesha, King of Moab, besieged in his capital and sorely pressed by the Israelites, sacrificing his son and heir, dressed in the royal robes, upon the wall in sight of the besiegers, and with such effect that they, indignant, alarmed, and satisfied that no

further effort on their part would now avail them—the God being necessarily propitiated by so distinguished a victim—raised the siege and departed home. Is it needful, in fine, to allude to the great sacrifice which the successors of the Jewish sect having Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph, for their teacher, believe to have been offered to Jehovah as a propitiation for the sins of mankind; or to speak of the fiery deaths of heretics and so-called blasphemers in modern times, as other than offerings to appease the offended majesty of God?—Ordinary criminals were beheaded or hanged; they to whom heresy or blasphemy was imputed were done to death by fire.

What may be said to be the general character of the many commandments or ordinances that now follow in the book of Exodus?

That many of them are good and humane, some of them childish, and a few positively wicked. But all obviously are not by the same hand; numerous interpolations in favour of the Levitical caste and the priesthood being especially conspicuous. There is further such incongruity between so many of the commandments and the circumstances of the times in which they are generally presumed to have been promulgated, that it is easy to see they cannot all date from the days of Moses. They are, indeed, mostly and very distinctly adapted to a people policed in a certain sense, settled in fixed homes, and having the culture of the soil for their principal occupation, not to a multitude wandering in the wilderness, destitute of everything, and only kept from perishing of hunger and thirst by reiterated miraculous interpositions—a multitude who could not possibly have brought ripe fruits and fermented liquors, the produce of carefully tended vineyards and fields, nor consumed in smoke upon the altars of their God holocausts of the bullocks, sheep, and

goats which, had they had them, were so much wanted for their own subsistence. What lands, among other items spoken of in the legislation, could they have had at this time either to till or to leave untilled; with what were they to hold high festival three times in the year, when they had neither leavened nor unleavened bread to eat; what could they have sown, what reaped in the waterless wilderness; and how could they have appeared otherwise than empty-handed at all times before Jehovah? Let us cease to think of these ancient writings as contemporaneous with the still more ancient times and circumstances they pretend to portray!

All, indeed, seems plainly enough to imply that the legislation ascribed to Moses or referred to his age must have been the product of much more modern times?

Such a conclusion is inevitable. There is, nevertheless, so much that is old in the 21st, 22nd, and 23rd Chapters of the Book of Exodus that they have together been referred in the main to ancient documents, believed to have been extant in the time of the authors of the text in its present form.*

Moses is now called up into the mountain along with Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the Elders of Israel; but Moses alone is admitted to the presence of Jehovah, the rest being ordered to worship afar off. In spite of this, however, and very inconsistently as it seems, we are by and by informed that the Elders of Israel saw God and he laid not his

* Compare particularly Dr Davidson's Introduction to the Old Testament: 'Authorship and Composition of the Pentateuch,' Vol. I., p. 1—134; Knobel's 'Kurzgefasstes Exegetisches Handbuch zum alten Testament—Die Bücher Exodus und Leviticus,' 8vo, Leipz. 1857; Kuehnen, 'Hist. critique des Livres de l'Ancien Testament,' Trad. de l'Hollandais par M. A. Pierson, Tom. I.; the Bishop of Natal's exhaustive work, 'The Pentateuch and Book of Joshua,' and the learned Dr Kalisch's 'Commentaries on Exodus and Leviticus.'

hand on them; they saw God and yet did eat and drink!

Saw God! What man has ever seen God, save in the manifestations made of his Being and Agency in the things of heaven and earth, and in their various properties or aptitudes? If we are not informed in so many words that it was an Image of their God that was seen by the Elders, the context seems to show that it could have been nothing else; for, under his feet, it is said, "they saw as it were a paved work of sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness"—the similitude of the God, in a word, relieved by the clear blue sky. Or, did the Elders of Israel perchance see more of the Infinite body of God than appears in the expanse of heaven—called Dyaus by our far off Aryan Ancestors, Zeus and Deus by their descendants, the Greeks and Romans? If it was not an Image on which they looked they certainly saw no more of God—the Infinite, the Eternal—than meets man's eye when he gazes on the depths of endless space. But this is not what is meant in the text. The ancient Hebrews, like modern Christians, thought of God as a Person, and so, perforce, possessed of parts and proportions, as well as of the intellectual and moral endowments they owned themselves.

The Elders see Jehovah, however, as said, and survive the sight; but Moses alone is allowed to come into his immediate presence. And there upon the mountain, shrouded by a cloud, he remains according to the record for forty days and forty nights, without meat or drink—a long time if we measure it by what we know of aught that passed between his God and him.

Jehovah, it is said, bids Moses speak to the children of Israel and order them to bring offerings of gold, silver and brass, of blue, purple and scarlet fine linen, of goats' hair, rams' skins dyed red and badgers'

skins, of shittim wood, oil for the lights, spices for the anointing oil, ingredients for sweet incense, onyx stones for the Ephod, and precious stones for the breastplate of the priest. "And that I may dwell among ye," proceeds the narrative, making Jehovah the speaker, "let them make me a Sanctuary after the pattern of the Tabernacle, two cubits and a half long, a cubit and a half broad, and a cubit and a half high, to be overlaid with gold within and without; and a Mercy Seat of pure gold two cubits and a half high, a cubit and a half broad; and two Cherubims of beaten gold, one at either end with wings covering the Mercy Seat, their faces looking towards one another," &c.

This Ark or Sanctuary was a highly-important piece of furniture with the ancient Hebrews?

As with several others among the peoples of the old world—Egyptians, Phœnicians, Assyrians, &c. Upon the proper ark or coffer, the seat or throne, designated *Mercy Seat* in the Old Testament, is ordered to be placed, where the God was to be found for consultation by the priest; and within it the object entitled EDUTH was commanded to be kept. The ark itself, in some sort the symbol as containing the symbols of Deity, was believed to be possessed of supernatural powers; for it was death to touch or attempt to look into it, and the power and countenance of the tutelary God was supposed to accompany it wherever it went.

We have already had the Eduth mentioned incidentally in connection with the miraculous manna of the wilderness, when we found the word translated *Testimony*, and used now as if it were Jehovah that was meant, and again, as if the Law or Tables of the Law were the thing signified; the word Eduth, indeed, is always translated *Testimony* in this sense in the English version of the Bible. But when the context is taken into account, it seems as if it cannot

always have such a meaning. It constantly meets us as if it could only apply to an *image* or *symbolical figure* of some sort.

The Israelites, however, were emphatically forbidden to make molten or graven images, or the likeness of anything in heaven or earth?

At an advanced period of their history as a people; certainly not before the age of Solomon. But neither in the days of this Sybarite king, nor even in much later times, do the Jews appear to have known, or, if they knew, to have given any heed to the prohibition. We have but just seen figures of Cherubim ordered by Jehovah himself for the covering of the Ark; and an empty seat would have been an indifferent object for consultation by the priest when he entered the holy of holies to ask advice. The seat must have been occupied, therefore, and doubtless by the Image or Symbol of the God. If neighbouring tribes and peoples had images and emblems of their Gods, we may be very certain that the early Hebrews also had theirs:—They had borne for forty years in the wilderness the “Tabernacle of their Chiun, their idol, the Star of their God which they had made,” says one of the earlier prophets whose writings have escaped mutilation by modern editors (Amos v. 26). The golden *calf* set up by Aaron in the Wilderness and the golden *calves* erected by Jeroboam at a subsequent period, as the God and the Gods who had brought them out of Egypt, could have been no novelties to the Israelites. On the contrary, they were the old familiar forms under which Deity was conceived and approached with offerings by their fathers as by themselves. The interdict against molten and graven images came from the advanced Jehovistic party of the kingdom of Judah, about the time of Hezekiah probably, if it were not even so late as that of Josiah, when the leading minds among the Jews had attained to the conception of the all-pervading, or so-styled,

spiritual nature of the Godhead, which as Infinite and Ubiquitous can be fitly represented by no "*similitude*."

The Eduth may, therefore, have been an image, if not of any such specific Divinity as was conceived of under the names of El, Eloha, Chiun, Chemosh, Baal, Melkart, Molech, or Jahveh, yet of the emblem that was once universally held typical of the reproductive power inherent in Nature or the Nature God?

There are hints in various places of the Hebrew sacred writings that have escaped the expurgating hands of their latest editors which necessarily lead to the conclusion that the seat in the sanctuary was not unoccupied, but was verily filled by an image of the God himself, carefully secluded, however, in later times at least, from the prying eyes of vulgar curiosity. Aaron, on entering the inner veiled compartment of the shrine, was to take a censer full of live coals from the altar of burnt offerings, to sprinkle incense thereon, and "raise a cloud before Jehovah." The prophet Isaiah must have seen something more than an empty stool when he exclaimed that he was undone, for that he "a man of unclean lips had seen the king (Melek, Molech), the Lord of Hosts (Jahveh-Tzabaoth) vi. 5. Ezekiel, indeed, does not hesitate to fill the throne which he saw with the "likeness of the appearance of a man" (i. 26), a roundabout way of saying an image of Jehovah; and then we have Jehovah's own orders for the construction of the sanctuary in which he promises to *dwell* among his people. But God the Infinite and Eternal can have his dwelling-place in no sanctuary made by the hands of man. It was his similitude, therefore, or his symbolical representation that was to be seen on the lid of the Sacred Coffer between the Cherubim; and, when not there displayed, that was laid up with other sacred apparatus in its interior, the coffer being of the precise dimensions calculated to receive the life-size seated figure of a man.

The ancient Hebrews were not, as already hinted, the only people who had a sacred ark or coffer, in which articles held holy, or apparatus employed in their religious rites were stored?

By no means. The ark of the ancient Egyptians, as we see it in their paintings and sculptures, bears the most exact resemblance to that of the Hebrews as described in their records. It has the mysterious figures of the cherubim with wings on its cover, and between them the Truncated Cone, symbol of the generative or reproductive principle immanent in nature. Among the peoples of the ancient world the Ark or Sacred Coffer appears to have been more especially connected with the worship of Dionysus—the Sun, in his character of regenerator. In the one said to have been found in the citadel of Troy, when taken by the Greeks, the image or emblem of Dionysus—*Αγαλμα Διονῶσου* (*αγαλμα simulacrum, res auro ornata, an Image, a gilded Something*), is the article that is particularly mentioned as having been found within it; and from an old writer, Clement of Alexandria, we learn that in the heathen arks or sacred coffers, generally, the article laid up was *του Διονῶσου Αιδοιον* (*αιδοια pudenda ab αιδως*). These references may help us to a conclusion as to what the Eduth really was which was stowed away in the Hebrew Ark of the Covenant, and so carefully concealed from all eyes save those of the priest. Is not the Greek word *Αιδως*, in fact, the Hebrew word Eduth?*

* On the Hebrew Ark of the Testimony see Spencer, *De Legibus Hæbræor. Ritualibus*, Lib. iii. Diss. v. Singularly enough the word Eduth is not mentioned in that mine of learning and interesting information, Winer's *Biblisches Realwörterbuch* (3tte. Aufl., 2 vols., 8vo, Leipz., 1847). To suppose that Winer was ignorant of what is said above were absurd. He knew it all; but the theologian could not face the conclusion to which the scholar and critic must necessarily have come. See also Movers, *Die Phœnizier* i., chaps. 2 and 3.

Exodus : The Seven-light Candlestick. 223

There are several other articles connected with the Hebrew ritualistic worship which require more than a passing notice ?

The Seven-light Candlestick in particular, with its arms—three on either side, to hold as many lamps ; its shaft, branches, bowls, knobs, flowers, and even the accessory tongs and snuff dishes being all alike ordered to be “one beaten work of pure gold, after the pattern that was shown thee in the mount.”

The lavish expenditure of gold and precious stones, and of such costly stuffs as purple, blue and scarlet linen, &c., might lead to the conclusion that the fugitives had spoiled the Egyptians more effectually than it is easy to imagine them willing to lend. But the whole tale is a fiction, involving as it does childish or worse conceptions of the Deity, and containing injunctions so utterly impossible of execution under the circumstances, that there needs no more than a hint to satisfy every reasonable person not blinded by a foregone conclusion, that it must date from days when Jerusalem was the capital of the kingdom of Judah, with the first or even the second Temple already in existence, and serving as a model from which the writer drew.

The gold candlestick with its seven lights, so particularly described in the text, must be presumed to have had a special significance, symbolical or otherwise ?

That it was symbolical, may be safely assumed, of the Sun, Moon, and five known Planets—Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and, high and far removed over all, Saturn, the peculiar star of the ancient Hebrew race—the star of their God by whatever name known to them at different epochs of their history—Chiun, Chamos, El, Israel, Baal, Molech, or Jahveh.

This costly piece of furniture it has been surmised was not for ornament only or even for giving light ?

Besides its symbolical significance and every-day uses, it appears to have been in constant requisition, in conformity with the astrological notions of antiquity, for purposes of divination, and especially in casting nativities. The arms of the candlestick being in sockets and moveable, the lamps they carried, severally representing a planet, were probably arranged by the priest in fanciful accordance with the relative positions in the heavens of the sun, moon, and wandering stars at the moment of a birth, and a forecast thus obtained of the fate that was to befall the future man or woman.*

Such forecasts or predictions, however, must have been constantly falsified by events ?

No doubt ; but in spite of this the belief in Judicial Astrology has either had such tenacity of life in itself, or continues to possess such attractions for the superstitious and uninformed, that it cannot be said even now to have wholly died out from among us. Though no use is ever made, in so far as we know, of the information obtained, and the end for which it was once so eagerly sought after is not even surmised, the precise moment at which every child born among us comes into the world is still regularly noted by the gossips who hold high festival in the Lying-in room.

There are other remnants of the old sun, moon, and star worship, and of the beliefs once universal in planetary influences that still linger in the world ?

The general and genial merry-making at the winter solstice—*Dies natalis Solis*, of the ancient world—the brief period of mourning followed by rejoicings at the vernal equinox—Easter (*Ex Oriente Lux*)—of which we have already had occasion to speak ; the Beal-fires (El, Bel, Baal), still danced about and leaped through with shouts and exclamations by the Breton and Irish peasantry at the summer solstice ;

* See Landseer, 'Sabæan Researches,' 4to, Lond., 1823.

the sacrifice of the goats, one to Jehovah, another to Azazel, by the Israelites on *Soul-Affliction* Day, and the weeping of the women of Northern Palestine for Tammuz, in the olden time, at the autumnal equinox, are all alike reminders or relics of the Sun, Moon, Star, and Time or Season worship that once prevailed so extensively over the ancient world ; a form of worship, however, implying a considerably advanced epoch in the history of human society ; for *Astrologism* proper could have formed no element in the religious system of the primitive races of mankind. Among these the mere sense of A Something beyond themselves, accredited with power to do them good or ill, would seem to have constituted, as it still continues with the Savage to constitute, the ground and the substance of all religious belief and observance.

Particular instructions are given for the fashion and quality of the altar, or altars,—for there were two, one for burnt offerings, another for incense ?

The sacrificial altar in earlier times was of the simplest possible construction, consisting of nothing more than a heap of earth or a circle of twelve unhewn stones—one for each month of the year—set up on level ground. At a later period it seems to have consisted of a grating of brass, resting at the sides on supports, and approached by a number of steps.

The Priest's robes are also objects of most minute instructions to Moses ?

They are so indeed ; he was to speak to such as were "wise-hearted and filled by the Lord with the spirit of wisdom ;" and they, with the directions he should give them, were to make a robe and brodered coat, an ephod and girdle, all of gold, and of blue and purple and scarlet fine twined linen, with cunning work ; a cap or mitre for the head ; two chains of pure gold of wreathen work for the neck, hung from two onyx stones on the shoulders, set in gold and engraven with the names of the twelve tribes of

Israel. Besides which there was to be a "Breast-plate of Judgment,"—Choschen,—four-square, with four rows of precious stones, three in each row, engraven with the names of the twelve tribes, and attached to the Ephod by means of gold chains; and another article that has been the subject of much discussion with Bible expositors and commentators,—the "Urim and Thummim."

What was the Urim and the Thummim?

The text says no more than this:—"Thou shalt put in the breast-plate of Judgment the Urim and the Thummim; and they shall be upon Aaron's heart when he goeth in before Jehovah."

This would make the Urim and Thummim distinct from the breast-plate of Judgment:—something to be put into or contained within it?

It would so according to the rendering of the original usually followed. But the Hebrew may as well be translated *put upon* as *put into*. The Urim and Thummim has consequently been thought by competent critics to be nothing more than the complete breast-plate under another name—a conclusion which has much to recommend it. By one distinguished scholar and historical writer, however (Michaelis, *Mosaisches Recht*), it is believed to have consisted of two or more precious stones, cut as dice, which were used in "asking Jehovah by Lot"—a mode of essaying to look into futurity of which we find such frequent mention in the Hebrew Scriptures, although the lots or means used are nowhere named. The learned Spencer (*De Legibus Hæbræorum Ritualibus*, Lib. iii. Diss. vii.), following the LXX., and assuming the words to signify Manifestation and Truth, after a disquisition extending over one hundred and ninety-three quarto pages! opines that the Urim and Thummim were Teraphim or sacred domestic images of the God or Gods! Great obscurity, therefore, manifestly hangs over the sub-

ject of the Urim and Thummim. But when we think of the many hands through which the Hebrew Scriptures have passed, the numberless manipulations they have undergone, and the interest later editors had in keeping everything like Idolatry and Sabæism out of sight, we shall not wonder that so little is left us by which we may positively know what the Urim and Thummim signified in itself, or how it was used for purposes of *divination*, in which, as its designation, Breast-plate of Judgment, implies, it was undoubtedly an important instrument.

The thing called Urim and Thummim is ordered to be composed of twelve precious stones, which are said to have been—

A Ruby, a Topaz, a Carbuncle,
an Emerald, a Sapphire, and a Diamond ;
a Ligure or Cornelian, an Agate, an Amethyst,
a Beryl, an Onyx, and a Jasper ?

Assuming the stones to be rightly named, the first series of six is seen to consist of such as are of a lustrous or brilliant character ; the second series, like in number, of others that are generally opaque or lustreless. To the first series it must have been that the epithet Urim (*Ur, Or, Light*) was applied ; as to the lustreless set of six, it was that the title Thummim was given (*Tumas, Sanskrit, Darkness*).* Ordered to be engraved with the names of the Twelve Tribes of Israel, the twelve stones upon the High Priest's Choschen certainly also typified the twelve signs of the zodiac, which, besides symbolizing the months of the year, were likewise held to be the *houses* of the planets and of several of the more remarkable among the fixed stars, whose rising and setting marked the seasons. The brilliant stones were doubtless representatives of the signs when the sun, in the ascendant in the northern hemisphere, was pouring light and

* Nork, *Biblische Mythologie*, i. 175, note.

life upon the world; the dark or lustreless stones, again, stood for the inferior signs, when the power of the sun is in abeyance, and darkness, symbolical of night and death, dominates the hour.

The composition of the Urim and Thummim seems, therefore, to proclaim the astrological or divining nature of the instrument?

That it was consulted through the priest as an oracle, and referred to at times in learning the will of Jehovah, is certain. It is to be presumed that the aspect of the heavens and the places therein of the planets and principal fixed stars having been noted at the time action in any contingency was proposed to be taken, the Urim and Thummim was then consulted by the priest in conformity with the rules of the diviner's art, and an answer in affirmation or negation of the purpose in question obtained.

We have instances in the Hebrew Scriptures in which the Urim and Thummim was used in this way?

When Joshua, the son of Nun, was chosen by Moses as his successor, he was set before Eleazar the priest, and the congregation of Israel, and the priest is ordered at all times to "ask counsel for him after the judgment of the Urim before Jehovah" (Numb. xxvii. 21). Saul enquiring of Jehovah on a certain occasion after he had fallen out of favour with Samuel the priest, through non-compliance with his behests, "received no answer, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by the prophets," *i.e.*, the soothsayers (1 Sam. xxviii. 6). The Teraphim, or household gods, of which the Ephod was one of the forms most familiar to the chosen people of Jehovah in historical times, appears to have been frequently substituted for the Urim and Thummin: "Bring hither the Ephod," says King David, the man according to God's own heart—by credit and report, to Abiathar the priest, upon a certain occasion; and addressing

the Idol he says : " O Jehovah God, will the men of Keilah deliver me up into his (Saul's) hand ? " And Jehovah said : " They will deliver thee up " (1 Sam. xxiii. 9). Another time the same pious and exemplary monarch—according to the Bible and the clergy—says : " Bring me hither the Ephod," and he " enquires of Jehovah, saying, shall I pursue after this troop ? " and is answered : " pursue " (Ib. xxx. 7). The Urim and the Ephod, or Gilded Image of Jehovah, were therefore used indifferently as means of ascertaining the will and pleasure of their God by the Hebrew people.

But the children of Israel are always credited with having been worshippers of the one only God, and to have known nothing of idolatry ?

Let the reader conclude for himself on the above showing what they were in fact, and begin, if by possibility he may, to read the Bible with his eyes unsealed and his reason as his guide.

Returning to the prescriptions for the priest's robes, a certain part called Ephod, is particularly described ?

It was to be made in fashion of a habergeon, or cape, having a hole in the upper part for the head to pass through. Its hem, however, was elaborately ornamented with figures of pomegranates of blue, and purple, and scarlet, having gold bells interposed.

The pomegranate had a particular symbolical significance in the religious mysteries of the ancient world ?

It was a special emblem of fertility, and an element in the cult of the Reproductive Principle inherent in Nature, with which, as with Sabæism, the Hebrew system, when seen with the eyes of the understanding, is found to assimilate in so many particulars.

The word Ephod has, therefore, two different meanings in the Hebrew scriptures ?

In one we have seen it applied to the Image of

Jehovah, used by King David as an oracle; here we find it applied to a part of the priest's robes.

The High Priest was further to have his special title or designation engraved on a plate of gold fastened to the front of his mitre or cap?

A title expressed in these solemn and significant words: Holy to Jehovah (Holiness to the Lord, Eng. vers.).

What might this imply?

More than appears at first sight. The High Priest—Aaron—was “to bear the iniquity of the offerings hallowed by the children of Israel in their gifts;” *i. e.* Aaron, as High Priest and consecrated to Jehovah, in receiving the offerings of the people at the door of the Sanctuary was presumed to concentrate on himself the essence of their expiatory powers, and in virtue of his office was liable to be called on at any moment to enact the part of substitute and make atonement in his individual person for the sins of the people at large. And we shall find sufficient reason by and by for concluding that Aaron was actually required, at a critical moment in the progress of the Israelites towards the Promised Land, to make good the terms of the contract or understanding on which he held his office.

Aaron's sons, solemnly consecrated as his assistants in the priestly office, and so devoted to Jehovah, are also furnished with clothing according to special patterns ordered by their God?

They are to have coats, breeches to cover their nakedness, caps of a certain fashion, &c.

Can we, living in this 19th century of the Christian æra, believe that any orders for the clothing of Aaron and his sons ever came from God?

The Infinite all-pervading Essence or Spirit conceived by us as Cause, and called God, sends man into the world naked enough, but furnished with the senses which induce, and the ingenuity which enables

him to clothe himself for decency, for comfort, and even for what he intends as ornament—whence not only the loin-band, and the blanket and skewer, but the embroidered coat, the chignon, and the bustle—all according to patterns he devises for himself; certainly after none devised for him by God.

The ceremonies by which Aaron and his sons are consecrated to their office are also matters of particular instruction to Moses from Jehovah?

Besides anointing with consecrated oil, a bullock and two rams are to be sacrificed before the tabernacle of the congregation. The fat, kidneys, and caul of the bullock are to be burned on the altar of sacrifice, but the rest of the carcase is to be consumed with fire outside the camp. The blood, as Jehovah's most peculiar portion, was to be streaked upon the horns of the altar, and poured out about its base.

And the rams—how were they to be disposed of?

One of them was to be sacrificed, like the bullock, but the whole carcase was to be burned upon the altar as an offering to Jehovah; the bullock, doubtless, was seen as too bulky to be conveniently dealt with in this way. The other ram, having been slaughtered, its blood was to be put on the tip of the right ear of Aaron and his sons, on the thumbs of their right hands and the great toes of their right feet severally, their robes being at the same time sprinkled with anointing oil and blood; and whilst the fat and kidneys, the rump and right shoulder were burnt on the altar as Jehovah's portion, the rest of the carcase was to be seethed in the holy place, and there eaten by Aaron and his sons.

This eating of the victims sacrificed in view of the expiation of sin was held to be an indispensable part of the religious rite?

Without it the act of atonement was not believed to be complete. As the Life had gone to Jehovah in the blood, and certain parts, sublimated by fire, been

presented to him for a sweet savour and for food, so was it by the flesh of the victim, hallowed through Jehovah's acceptance of his share, entering the bodies of the priest and the assembly, that they were presumed to be sanctified and their sins forgiven them. Like other old observances grounded on speculative notions, the custom of offering an imaginary sacrifice, eating the imaginary flesh, drinking the imaginary blood of an imaginary victim, and so obtaining forgiveness of their sins—oftener real than imaginary—is still kept up by communities boasting of the advances they have made in reason and refinement.

Can we in the present age of the world, and with the lights we have through our cultivated understanding and accumulated knowledge, believe that God ever gave such instructions as we have but just perused—ever ordered the fashion of the priest's garments—ever, as a means of consecration to his service, commanded his ministers to be anointed with spiced oil; to be touched on the tips of their ears, their thumbs, their great toes, and to have their clothes sprinkled with the blood of a sheep?

It is impossible to do so any longer.

Or that forgiveness for his sins and shortcomings can be had by man through eating and drinking, were it even the body and blood of the God he worshipped?

Let every man answer this query for himself. If he have not been crippled in his capacity to judge aright by a vicious education, or have not naturally a soft part in his head, he will only be able to answer it in one way. The more advanced among the Jews themselves indeed must, in later times, have come to the conclusion at which all reasonable men, whether Jew or Gentile, have now arrived, when we find one of their more advanced writers addressing them in such words as these:—"For what, O man, does Jehovah require of thee but to do justly and to love

mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God " (Micah vi. 8).

Can we, however, suppose that God gives commandments at one time which he abrogates at another ?

God is the changeless and eternal : the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. It is man who changes, makes and unmakes, orders and annuls, not knowing his mind from one hour to another.

What, then, conclude as to these minute commandments about slaying and burning, anointing with oil and sprinkling with blood, roasting, seething, and eating in the holy place, &c., &c. ?

That very certainly they never came from God ; and that the men who maintain that they do are either possessed of the moral and intellectual obliquity of vision that leads astray, or are chargeable with the blindness that comes of wilfulness.

Certain ordinances follow concerning the various kinds of sacrifice that were to be offered, and the times and seasons at which particular rites were to be observed ?

A bullock is ordered to be offered daily for a sin offering and for an atonement ; two lambs also, day by day throughout the year, one in the morning, the other in the evening ; these last being presented apparently as a kind of daily ration to Jehovah : Anthropomorphosing God, man imagined that God must be fed like himself.

In this case flesh meat required the addition of bread ?

Which is not forgotten any more than a measure of wine to flavour the repast. Twelve cakes of unleavened bread baked of wheaten flour, with olive oil, seasoned with salt and spice, were to be duly laid with each recurring Sabbath morn upon the table which stood beside the altar of sacrifice, the stale cakes being then removed for the use of the priests, whose perquisite they were.

There is also a special altar of Incense, the Jewish Jehovah being held to delight in other and to human nostrils sweeter scents than the smell of burning fat, flesh, and blood ?

This altar, ordered to be overlaid with pure gold, was to stand by the Ark of the Testimony, before the Mercy Seat. On it Aaron was to burn sweet incense every morning when he dressed the lamps, and at even also, when he lighted them ; for there it was that Jehovah was to be met with and " give the children of Israel to know that he was Jehovah their God, and that he dwelt among them."

Are we not to think that God is the God of All the inhabitants of the earth, and that he dwells not here or there, in a tent or tabernacle, seated on the lid of a coffer, but has his habitation in the universe ?

Our reason and philosophy assure us of so much ; but the children of Israel and their teachers did not think so ; and they who accept their annals as from God are bound in consistency to agree with them ; an obligation, however, with which we see the world feeling it every day more and more difficult to comply.

" When thou takest the sum of the children of Israel, says the text, then shall every man give a ransom for his soul (life) unto Jehovah, that there be no plague among them." The price to be paid as insurance of their lives against pestilence being ?

Half a shekel of the sanctuary, the rich giving no more, the poor no less.

Such an ordinance must surely point to a time when the Israelites were a settled community, not to one when they were wanderers in the wilderness, and at starvation point ?

No doubt of it ; and the order, now seen in this light by every competent and candid critic, proclaims the relatively modern date not only of the writing, but of the institution of the festival itself ; for neither in Exodus (xxiii. 14), nor in Deuteronomy (xvi.),

where the festivals of the year are particularly commanded, do we find any mention made of an atonement festival. It cannot even have been known to Ezekiel (xlv. 18), the festivals of the Seventh month of which he speaks being mere repetitions of those of the First month, and the word *Atonement* does not occur in his text. The great day of the year to the Jews of Post-Exilic times, consequently, was unknown to the Israelites who lived before the Babylonian Captivity.

Is it reasonable, however, to suppose that man can ransom his life, atone for his sins, or make an offering to God by means of a piece of money ?

It is most unreasonable to think that he can. Man can approach God in no way save by studying to know and religiously obeying his laws. The money price was a recent tax for the support of the religious establishment of the country : "thou shalt take the atonement money of the children of Israel, and shalt appoint it for the service of the tabernacle of the congregation." There could obviously be neither numbering nor taxing of a horde wandering in the wilderness, and having no tabernacle of the congregation with numerous attached officials to maintain.

There were to be lavers of brass for the ministering priests to wash in—furniture most essential, considering the bloody work in which they were habitually engaged. The oil used in anointing or consecrating was also to be prepared in a particular manner with oil olive, myrrh, and cassia ; it was a holy anointing oil, not to be imitated nor put upon a stranger under penalty of death. The confection for burning on the altar of incense also, composed of sweet spices and frankincense, was to be prepared after the art of the apothecary, and was to be accounted holy to Jehovah ; whosoever should make any like it, or who should even "smell thereto," was to be cut off from his people.

Can we, we ask yet again, as reasonable beings, believe that instructions for such trifles as these were ever given by the great God of Nature to mankind ?

No, no, no !

Or that he should threaten death to the man who smelled at a compound of spice and frankincense ?

Never !

And can the book in which such commandments are propounded as coming from God either be, or by possibility be conceived to contain, the word of his will to man ?

It is impossible to think that it can, when viewed in connection with the Idea we are now privileged to form of God. All that is said in the book before us on the topics in question is, however, in perfect conformity with the Idea which the legendary Moses, and generations long after Moses and his age, may be presumed to have entertained of their God, who was in no wise the impartial parent of the universe, but the partial God of the children of Israel ; not the God who makes the sun to shine and the rain to fall on the just and the unjust alike, but a capricious despot who guided the sunbeam and the shower at his arbitrary will and pleasure on those he favoured or had in despite.

How could the Israelites, so lately slaves to the Egyptians, be supposed to have had among them workmen possessed of skill to prepare the materials and execute the details of the apparatus ordered for use in the worship of their God ?

We can only conceive them short-handed in this respect ; still Jehovah, according to the text, informs Moses that he had called Bezaleel, the son of Uri, and filled him with the wisdom to contrive cunning works in silver, and gold, and brass, in cutting and setting precious stones, and in carving timber, and had given him Aholiab, of the tribe of Dan, to help him, beside

others, wise-hearted, though unnamed, and filled with the wisdom necessary to make all as commanded.

It is somewhat difficult, nevertheless, to imagine gold- and silver-smiths, lapidaries and engravers in jasper and calcedony, carvers, gilders, weavers, upholsterers, and the like, at work in the midst of a starving multitude of fugitives from slavery, locked in by a howling wilderness, and in want of the merest necessaries of life ?

It is certainly difficult to think of arts that only belong to settled and peaceful communities being carried on under such circumstances.

Whence we conclude ?

That all these instructions are the work of relatively modern times, and that so much of the Pentateuch as embodies them, as it cannot be from Moses, so neither can it be from any document derived from his age. The writer lived after the age of Solomon and had the temple as a model from which he drew, and the skilled Phœnician artizans who built and ornamented it—Hirom of Tyre and his assistants, as types of Bezaleel, the son of Uri, and Aholiab of the tribe of Dan. Even in times when the Chaldæans and Assyrians were policied peoples—astronomers, artizans, &c., and using engraved cylinders as seals in their dealings with one another, the intaglio of the cylinder is not *cut* by the lapidary's wheel of later days, but by *scratching* with some point harder than jasper or cornelian.*

Moses must have been some considerable time away whilst receiving all the minute instructions said to have been given him by Jehovah on the mountain ?

He was absent, according to the record, for forty days and forty nights, and is said neither to have eaten bread nor drunk water during all that time—

* See Landseer, 'Sabæan Researches.'

a statement sufficient of itself to stamp the entire narrative as mythical; for as by God's eternal fiat man must eat and drink that he may live, so fasting from solid and liquid food cannot be continued for more than a very few days without serious derangement to the health, and, if persisted in for any much longer term, without death ensuing as the penalty.

A very notable incident occurs during the absence of Moses in the Mount?

The people come to Aaron and say: Up! make us Gods to go before us; for as for this Moses who brought us out of the land of Egypt we wot not what has become of him.

Is this a style of address likely to have been made to Aaron the Priest, the brother of Moses, the leader of the people?

A late writer might be supposed to speak in such terms—more respectfully couched, however,—for the information of his public; but the people about Aaron could scarcely have thought it necessary to remind him that it was Moses who had brought them out of Egypt; and they could not but have known that their leader was up in the mountain, in conference with Jehovah.

Aaron, however, remonstrates with the foolish people, and bids them think of all the wonders done for them by Jehovah, who still dwelt amid the cloud which only hid Moses from their sight upon the mountain?

He does nothing of the sort; assenting at once to the reasonableness of their clamour apparently, and familiar, as it might seem, with the worship of God under the figure of a Bull, he bids them bring him the rings of their wives and of their sons and daughters; and having made a molten calf of the gold, and fashioned it with a graving tool, he presents it to the people as the God who had brought them out of their Egyptian bondage! He does even more

than this ; he builds an altar before the Image of the Bull-calf he has fashioned, and makes proclamation for the morrow of a feast " to the Lord ! "

This is most extraordinary—altogether incomprehensible and incredible ! Would the man who had witnessed and even taken an active part in the performance of the extraordinary wonders said to have been wrought in Egypt, and who could not but have felt assured of the continuing countenance of Jehovah, have acted as Aaron is now reported to have done ?

It is impossible to believe that he would.

Would a brave man, a truly pious man, who put his trust in God through simple natural instinct, have done anything of the kind ?

He would have suffered himself to be torn in pieces by the rabid multitude first.

What then conclude concerning the tale of the golden calf ?

Either that it is a fabrication, contrived for a purpose which the writer has in view, or that Aaron is inadvertently allowed to appear as he probably was in fact—no priest of Jehovah, the spiritual conception of the late writer of the Pentateuch, but the minister of the God—El, Baal, Chiun, or Chamos, the true deity of the ancient Hebrew and other cognate semitic tribes—the God of Times and Seasons and Reproduction ; the God who ceaselessly begetting ceaselessly devours his offspring, and whose visible image in the early ages of the world struggling from darkness into light was the Stone, the Tree, the Serpent, the Bull, and the universally recognised symbol of the reproductive power inherent in nature—the Phallus. The mythical Aaron, we must conclude, either presented the people with the image of the God with whose worship they were already familiar ; or the late writer whose work we have before us—one of the Jehovistic Reformers, a priest of Judah, and living in or after the reign of Hezekiah—may have

invented the tale of the Golden Calf of the Wilderness for the purpose of proclaiming how abhorrent to Jehovah, the God of the Jews, was the Calf worship established by Jeroboam as the religion of his realm of Israel, which he had rent from the kingdom of Judah.

The people are well content with the Idol which Aaron has provided, and the feast he has promised?

They rise up early in the morning, and having made burnt and peace offerings to their Calf-God, they sit down to eat and to drink, give themselves up to merriment and the rites hallowed in the worship of the Nature-God, upon the particular character of which it is not necessary to speak more at large in this place.

What, according to the text, says Jehovah to Moses on the Mount, whilst all this is going on below?

“Get thee down,” says he, “for the people have corrupted themselves; they have turned aside quickly out of the way I commanded them; they have made them a golden calf, and have worshipped it, and made offerings to it, and said: This is thy God, O Israel, which has brought thee out of the land of Egypt!”

It is Aaron the priest, however, who has just said so; but what more?

“Behold, this is a stiff-necked people; now, therefore, let me alone that my wrath may wax hot against them and that I may consume them.”

Jehovah would, apparently, have Moses restrain him from breaking out upon the people and consuming them. What answer does Moses make?

He beseeches Jehovah, and asks him why he should be wroth with the people and give the Egyptians occasion to say:—He brought them out for mischief, to slay them in the mountain and consume them from the face of the earth. “Turn from thy fierce wrath,” he continues, “and repent of this evil against thy

people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, to whom thou swarest by thine own self and saidst, I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and this land I have spoken of I will give to your seed to inherit it for ever."

What reply is the Jewish writer's Jehovah—generally accepted by Christians as the Omnipotent Creator of the Universe—made to give to this friendly remonstrance and reminder of the man Moses?

It certainly is not the God of Philosophy and Enlightened Piety who replies; it is the redactor of this Hebrew legend who speaks when he makes his God say that he "repents of the evil he thought to do to his people;" for God is not a man that he should repent, as a later and more advanced writer in the same heterogeneous collection of books and fragments of books has said of the Deity whom he, in better days, conceived.

Moses comes down from the mountain with the two tables of the law in his hand, the writing, we are informed, being on both sides, and the handy work of God himself. Coming near he hears shouting and uproar in the camp, which Joshua, who seems now to have joined him—although we have heard nothing of this before—mistakes for sounds of discord or war, but which Moses, with a truer ear and the intelligence he had from Jehovah, interprets as no sounds of strife but of mirth and rejoicing. Reaching the camp, he sees the Calf and the dancing; his anger is roused, and in his passion he casts the tables out of his hand and breaks them in pieces beneath the mount.

This last act was surely unbecoming in a great leader, as showing a lack of self-control, although his anger was natural enough. What does he with the Calf?

That, it is said, he burns in the fire, grinds to powder, strews it on water which he makes the people drink, and so compels them to swallow the God that Aaron had made for them.

Can Gold be burned into ashes in the fire, and strewed on water so that it may be drunk ?

Gold is unchangeable in any heat short of that which is centred in the electric spark, by which, if in leaf, it is dissipated in vapour. Gold, however, may be beaten out into leaves and then broken up into particles so fine as to be diffusible through liquids; but it cannot be reduced to powder by burning in a furnace; neither, indeed, can it be melted and cast into an image of any description save with means and appliances such as Aaron could not have commanded in the wilderness.

So much at least of the story must, therefore, be a product of the writer's imagination; even as must the information he gives, whereby we learn that the tables which Moses brake in his vexation were written on this side and on that by the finger of God himself, a fact—if by possibility it could have been a fact, and as involving an absurdity we unhesitatingly declare it could be none, the Supreme Cause not having fingers like a man—which the narrator could by no possibility have known ?

So much presents itself as certain to the unprejudiced mind.

Moses will, of course, be wroth with Aaron his brother for what he has done ?

So we should have expected; but there is little show of anger in the remonstrance he makes. "What," says he, in the mildest terms imaginable, where the most severe would have been so much in place, "did this people unto thee that thou hast brought this great sin upon them ?" A question to which Aaron can find no better reply than by begging my Lord, his brother, not to be angry with him, repeating the particulars of his reprehensible act, and declaring that, having cast the gold given him by the people into the fire "there came out this calf;" a miraculous image, therefore, that fell out of the fire, like

those we read of in Greek and Roman legends which fell from heaven ! After this the subject is dropped in so far as Aaron, the chief offender, is concerned.

But not as regards the ignorant people who, by their doings, have roused the anger of Jehovah, and the still more significant wrath of their leader ?

No, truly ! For Moses seeing that the people were naked—"Aaron having," as it is said, "made them naked to their shame"—scant clothing or *nothing on* being the proper costume in the religious orgies of the earlier ages of the world—he takes his stand in the gate of the camp and says : "Who is on Jehovah's side, let him come unto me ; when all the sons of Levi gathered themselves to him."

What order is given them in the name of Jehovah, the God of Israel ?

A very terrible order indeed ! "Put every man his sword by his side," says he, "and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour."

What ! in spite of his having persuaded Jehovah to repent of the evil he had intended against his people ?

So it appears by the report, which, though we may cling to the hope that it never had any foundation in fact, is nevertheless not entirely out of keeping with other horrible practices of barbarous man—the *custom* of the West Coast of Africa at the present time for example. "On that day it is said there fell of the people three thousand men ! for Moses had said : 'Consecrate yourselves to-day to Jehovah, even every man upon his son and upon his brother, that he may bestow a blessing upon you this day !!!'"

And there are men with open eyes and accessible understandings among us who still maintain that human sacrifices were not only never offered to their God by the early Hebrews, but that they were even

abhorrent to the old Jewish mind ; that the firstborn of the sons and daughters of Israel were at all times redeemable by presentation at the Tabernacle to the priest and payment of the petty sum of five silver shekels of 'the sanctuary ?

Many men whose soundness of understanding, scholarly acquirements, critical acumen and candour can be implicitly relied on in all other directions, halt in this one, and become false to themselves and the great task they undertake of bringing light and proclaiming the truth. And how shall we, living near the end of this nineteenth century since Jesus of Nazareth, our brother, and Epictetus, and Antoninus, and Seneca, and Marcus Tullius, and so many others spoke their words of reason and of love and mercy to the world, imagine that God could ever have ordered the men who lived in any age to *consecrate themselves* and *earn his blessing* by the wholesale murder of naked, defenceless men, their sons, their brothers, their neighbours, and their friends ; or how continue to receive the record of such atrocities as the revealed word of God ?

How, indeed ! But such stories begin at length to be questioned even by the many ; the few—the really educated, the well informed, the rational, the merciful—have long rejected them as blasphemies, if there be any such ! against every conception which reasonable man can form of the Supreme NOT OURSELVES of a pious writer of the present day, by us called shortly GOD.

What have we in the way of assurance that the tale of this massacre cannot be founded on fact—cannot be true ?

The certainty that the Levites did not exist as a priestly caste—and the priestly character is implied in the sacrificial part they are here made to enact—in the age of Moses. Though pains are taken by the late writers and editors of the Pentateuch to refer

the connection of the Levites with sacred matters to the age of Moses, the Levitical Priesthood is satisfactorily ascertained to have been a relatively modern institution—certainly not to have existed until after the age of Solomon.

God, therefore, we must believe, never gave orders to Moses of the kind detailed ?

God speaks not and never spoke in human speech to man. We know not what amount of barbarity had place in the mind of the mythical Moses, but an order to slay ignorant men for yielding to the blind instincts of their nature and conforming to the usages of their forefathers very certainly never came from God.

What does Moses now ?

He tells the people that they had sinned a great sin, and full sorely have they been made to know and to pay for it ; but he adds that he will now go up to Jehovah and peradventure make atonement for their sin—speaking as if none had already been made through the three thousand lives sacrificed by his own orders !

What says Moses to Jehovah ?

Oh ! this people have sinned a great sin and made them gods of gold ; yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin [and here there seems to be a gap in the narrative, the terms Moses would make for the sinners being wanting], and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written.

What answer does he receive ?

“ Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book,” is the curt reply.

This surely cannot be the God whom men in the present day conceive and speak of as the loving father of all, ready to forgive the sin of whosoever repents and amends his ways ?

Certainly not ; he is the God of a still earlier age of the world even than that of the Jehovistic writer

whose work we have before us,—a God delighting in blood-stained altars, best pleased of all with human sacrifices, requiring the first-born of man and beast as burnt-offerings to himself, having his preferences and partialities, commanding the extermination of the peaceful and less powerful inhabitants of lands no longer in his gift, and making lavish promises of dominion, never attained, to a horde of barbarians arrogating to themselves the title of his peculiar people.

Jehovah, too, is represented as keeping a sort of debtor and creditor account against mankind, after the manner of things on earth; but we find no notice of the unwarranted use that had just been made of his name, and of the slaughter of the three thousand defenceless men in defiance of his own resolution, on remonstrance made to him, to abstain from the evil he had purposed against his people. Moses' order to the murderous Levites, however, was surely a crime of a far deeper dye than the people's sin—admitting for a moment that the worship of their God under the form of the Bull was a sin rather than an act of ignorance, harmless in itself, sanctioned by the high priest, and in conformity with immemorial usage among themselves?

There is no mention of anything of the kind; neither is Moses taken to task for having himself presumed to order the act of vengeance from which he had diverted his God. He is merely commanded to lead on towards the promised land. Jehovah, however, still angry! with his people, will not accompany them in person as usual; he will not trust himself among them, "lest he break forth on them and consume them by the way;" he will only send his angel with the host in his stead.

This cannot surely be any likeness of the one God, ruler of heaven and earth, with the conception of whom the Jews are generally credited?

Exodus : Jehovah plagues the People. 247

It is much rather the portrait of an irascible mortal not over-much possessed of self-control. It certainly has nothing in common with the IDEA of the Infinite, Ubiquitous Cause, which men of culture now apprehend under the name of God.

Though represented as not *breaking out* on the people at once, and consuming them on the spot, the Jehovah of the writer, we soon find, does not really forego his purpose of revenge; he does not truly keep his word to Moses, and "repent of the evil he had purposed against his people;" he rather, as it appears, abides by his resolution to blot them out of his book; for in striking contrast with his merciful purpose as previously announced, he now assures Moses that "the sins of the people shall be visited upon them." And the threat is not idle; for even as if nothing had already been done in the way of expiation or amends by the slaughter of the three thousand, Jehovah, we now learn, visits the people with a plague "because of the Calf which Aaron made."

Do not the poor people appear to us in these days rather to have needed instruction than merited plaguing for yielding to the error of their age and worshipping, under the form of a Calf or Bull, the unknown Something beyond themselves which their intuitive nature led them to divine, but which the knowledge of their age did not permit them to conceive aright?

As simply compassionate and considerate men we should assuredly say so. And there is indeed excuse as ample for the efforts of early man by *personification* to obtain something like a definite conception of his Deity as there is now nothing to be said for those who still insist on speaking of God as a Person. Modern theologians do, in fact, fall into the same error as the ancient Hebrews when they speak of a personal God; for a Person is an Entity among other entities, limited in space, having length, breadth,

and thickness,—in other words, having a Form of some sort. But figure God as he may, and in the noblest fashion he can imagine, man's Image of God must still be as far from having any *similitude* to the Supreme as was the golden Calf of the idolatrous Israelites.

Referring to the later history of the Jewish people—the split that took place between the kingdoms of Judah and Israel, their mutual jealousies, animosities, disastrous wars, and the coarsely expressed hostility of the Jehovistic religious party of Jerusalem to the worship of any other than the conception of Deity under the name of Jehovah, to which the leading minds among them had attained,—may we not infer a motive for the invention of such a story as that of the Golden Calf and the slaughter that followed its worship?

The tale may almost certainly be said to have been composed after the reign of Solomon, its purpose being as certainly to show the terrible consequences that followed the desertion of Jehovah, the God of Judah, for such Gods as Jeroboam, King of Israel, set up for his subjects in Sechem and Dan.*

Jehovah, then, all in renewing his promises of giving the people possession of the land flowing with milk and honey, having driven out its present occupants the Amorites, Hivites, Hittites, and others from before them, will not trust himself to go in their midst as heretofore, lest enraged by their perversity and stiff-neckedness he break out and consume them by the way—how does Moses proceed?

He pitches the Tabernacle without the camp, and whilst all the people stand at their tent doors, he himself enters the structure, and it comes to pass, says the text, that the cloudy pillar descends and stands

* See Bernstein: 'On the Origin of the Legends of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,' one of Mr Scott's series of papers, of great interest.

at the Tabernacle door. "And Jehovah talked with Moses," speaking to him "face to face as a man speaketh unto his friend."

How could so vast a multitude as the Israelites are said to have been, have stood at their tent doors within sight of the Tabernacle, and seen Moses enter it to have a colloquy with Jehovah ?

How, indeed, seeing that they were millions in number. But have we the matter of the conversation ?

We have—from the writer, understood. Moses entreats Jehovah not to desert them, and reminds him (!) that the people are his people. "Is it not in that thou goest with us that it shall be known that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight, and so are separated from all the people that are on the face of the earth ?"

Does Jehovah yield to the remonstrance of the man ?

He does. The foolish mortal whose words we have here, presuming to speak in the name of his God, proceeds: "I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken; for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name."

Moses, presuming apparently on this compliant mood of his God, makes another request as a kind of personal favour: "I beseech thee," he says, "show me thy glory." To which Jehovah, according to the text, replies: "I will make all my goodness pass before thee; I will proclaim the name of Jehovah before thee, and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy;" but "thou canst not see my face; for there shall no man see me and live. Behold there is a place by me; thou shalt stand upon a rock; and it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a cleft of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by; and I will take away my hand, and thou shalt see my back parts."

All this is worse than childish—it is absurd—altogether unworthy even to have been imagined, much more to have been reduced to terms by man gifted with reason. How shall the Omnipresent God, immanent in the yet farther than the farthest of the fixed stars plunged in the depths of endless space as in the point therein that is filled by the mote on which we dwell, be conceived of as shrunk to the limits of a person, communing in human speech with an inquisitive man as with his fellow, and showing him his back parts? God, let us be well assured, hides not his face, though it have no feature in common with the face of man, from him who reverently seeks to know and to hold communion with him. In the universe of things is God ever to be clearly seen, and in the changeless laws by which the wondrous fabric is upheld are his power and his providence ceaselessly made known. Perusing these man dies not, but rises ever into newness of life.

Have we not something analogous to this tale of Moses' curiosity in wishing to see the face of Jehovah in what is called the *heathen* to distinguish it from the *Hebrew* mythology?

We have. Hercules, urgent with Jupiter to be allowed to see his face, is long denied by the Father of Gods and men. But, yielding at length, Jove slays a Ram, wraps himself in the fleece, puts the head of the animal over his own as a mask, and so meets the Hero. Whilst it is extremely difficult to connect a meaning with the Hebrew myth, it is not difficult to read the mystery involved in the one we have from the Greeks. Herakles, the Sun, in his annual course through the Zodiac, is eager to arrive at the vernal equinox, whose sign in the olden days was the Ram, when, emerging from the inferior to the superior signs, he escapes from his wintery impotence to his summer power—from seeming death to renovated life. This old astrological myth, the later Jewish

writer, without understanding its meaning, has in all probability transferred to his pages, but so travestied as to leave it without the symbolical and poetical significance it had in its original shape.

After his interview with Jehovah in the Tabernacle and the vision he has whilst ensconced in the cleft of the rock, Moses receives fresh instructions?

He is commanded to hew two tables of stone like the first, on which, says Jehovah, "I will write the words that were in the first tables which thou breakest; and be ready in the morning and come up unto Mount Sinai?"

Moses does as he is commanded?

With the two tables of stone in his hand he ascends the mountain, and Jehovah, on his part, descends in a cloud and proclaims himself as "Jahveh-Elohim, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and upon the children's children unto the third and fourth generation."

The former and the latter clauses of this communication do not very well agree?

Certainly they do not, and herein we have fresh assurance of the composite character of the text—evidence of the manipulation it has undergone and of the additions that have been made to it at different times. The merciful idea of one, and he, we may presume, the later writer, is utterly opposed to the revengeful and merciless conception of the other and, let us believe, the older hand. God the absolute, had he ever spoken—and we venture to say again that God never did speak in articulate sounds to man—could not in one breath have so mixed up mercy with far-reaching vengeance. We know the world is so constituted that all things with their being have in-

herent aptitudes which fit them for their states; and it is in the exercise of these that sentient beings enjoy their lives, and that what is called the goodness of God finds its expression; as, on the other hand, it is in contravention of the laws of Nature, which are the laws of God, that they bring down pains and penalties on themselves, and that that which must be held to be the righteous justice—never to be spoken of as the vengeance—of God is displayed.

God does not surely visit the sins of the fathers on their children?

Never, in the sense in which the statement in the text is made and is meant to be understood. In conformity with *the laws of hereditary descent*, however, the children of vicious and immoral parents, as well as of those who have injured their health by indulgence and excess of any kind, are apt to be vicious and immoral, sickly and short-lived.

Jehovah renews the covenant he has already made at several times with Moses and the patriarchs, and declares his purpose of doing marvels such as have not been done in the earth before. He will drive out the inhabitants of the land to which he is leading his people, and they, on their part, are to destroy the altars of the natives, to break in pieces their images, and cut down their groves [Aschera—wooden pillars, typical of Astarte]. They are to worship no God other than Jehovah, “for Jehovah, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God;” to make no covenant with the inhabitants of the land; to make no sacrifices to their gods; not to take of their daughters as wives or concubines for their sons; to make no molten gods; to keep the feast of unleavened bread; and much besides, though it is mostly repetition of what has gone before, even to the seething of the kid in its mother’s milk; the injunction as regards the first-born of man and beast being here accompanied by the interpolated clause authorising its redemption, in

contravention of the positive order elsewhere implemented, that it was Jehovah's unconditionally, and that whatsoever was *cherem* or devoted to Jehovah "was surely to be put to death." How long does Moses remain in the mountain on this second visit?

Forty days and forty nights, of course, forty being the sacred number; and under the same impossible conditions as before, without meat or drink during all that time.

There is something remarkable about Moses when he comes down from the mountain?

"The skin of his face shone," it is said, "though he wist it not." The people being afraid to come near him, he puts on a veil whilst speaking with them, which he only removes when he goes in to commune with Jehovah.

What may be the meaning of this?

It were hard to say, unless it be that Moses is occasionally made to take the place of his God, as he certainly at times shows himself the more placable and considerate of the two,—than which nothing can be conceived more absurd; or it may be that, coming from the great presence in which he is said to have stood, he is represented as shedding physical as well as metaphysical light; whence the shining of his face and the need of the veil; hence, too, the horns, typical of rays of light, with which the sculptor and painter have felt themselves authorised to ornament his brow.

These extraordinary particulars appear to turn Moses into a wholly mythical personage?

Assimilating him as they do in so remarkable a manner with the Dionysos, or Bacchus, of the Pagan Mythology. He, as well as Moses, is born in Egypt, and the birth of each is concealed for a time, to escape the hostility of a royal personage. Both are exposed in an ark or cradle on the Nile, and are alike rescued by a king's daughter. Both lead a host to victory—Dionysos in India, Moses in Palestine—

with a rout of women and children among them. Both walk dryshod through seas and rivers, which part at the word of command; and both draw water from the rock by striking it with a magic rod. Both have one of their names, at least, from Water—*Mou*, in Egyptian, signifying water,—the Hebrew leader being called Moses, and the heathen god *Myses*. Dionysos, moreover, like Moses, has the predicate Legislator, Thesmophoros; and both are represented as horned,—Dionysos being characterised as Taurokeros, Bull-horned, and Moses, as just said, being familiarly represented with horns upon his forehead. As the heathen god, to conclude, was styled Luaios and Liber, the *Free*, the *Freer*, so is Moses the *Deliverer*; and if Dionysos have several proper names, so has Moses,—Manetho informing us that he was known as Osarsiph and Tisithes; Osarsiph being no other than Osiris, and Tisithes, *i.e.* Seth, the sacred name of Sirius, the star whose heliacal rising regulated the Egyptian year and symbolised its God.

Is there not something like inconsistency in the circumstances amid which the *Tables* of the Law are at length delivered to Moses, and the fact that the *Law* itself—in so far, at least, as the decalogue is concerned—has been already imparted, with every possible impressive adjunct,—Mount Sinai quaking and being all of a smoke, thunder bellowing, lightning flashing about its crown, and loud and long-breathed trumpet-blasts coming out of the cloud that hung about it?

It might be said, with great show of truth, that the account we have of the delivery of these Tables is but another version, and by another hand, of the delivery of The Law at large—many of the heads of the Decalogue following in the part of the text that is now before us, such as the commandment to have no God but Jehovah, to make no molten images, and to rest on the seventh day. To these, however, are appended

many other injunctions, some momentous, many indifferent, but all alike left out of the Eclectic Summary under the Ten heads which we presume we owe to the more practised and much later writer of the Twentieth Chapter. Among the number of these additional commandments is the order to keep the feasts of unleavened bread and of weeks, of first-fruits and the in-gathering of the year's increase at the year's end ; to appear thrice in the year before Jahveh-Elohim, the Elohim (God) of Israel ; not to offer the blood of his sacrifices with leaven ; to leave nothing of the feast of the passover until the morning ; and not to seethe a kid in its mother's milk—a procedure that must have had a significance to the Israelites which we fail to discover.

Besides these, there is the important reminder that all that opens the womb, whether of man or beast, ox or sheep, that is a male, is Jehovah's ; the firstling of an ass, however, being ordered exceptionally either to be redeemed with a lamb or to be put to death by having his neck broken. What Jehovah's objection to receive the firstling of the ass may have been we do not learn from the Hebrew scriptures. From other sources of information, however, we know that the ass was one of the animals sacred to the Egyptian Typhon, the God in his adverse aspect ; and that the mode of sacrifice of the animal to him was that precisely which is commanded in the Hebrew text,—it was thrown down from a height, and so killed or had its neck broken. The first-born son of the human kind, is now ordered to be redeemed, and none are to appear before Jehovah empty.

The redemption clauses, where they occur, we have already seen reason to conclude, must have been added subsequently to the original requisition for the first-born ?

When we observe that the text in several other places has nothing about redemption, that this is in

direct contradiction to antecedent positive requirements, and that denunciations against the practice of child-sacrifice are of frequent occurrence in the writings of the later prophets,* we shall find no reason to doubt that inasmuch as the first-born of man, being males, are now ordered to be redeemed, so were they in former times, and as the rule, sacrificed on the altar of El, Bel or Baal-Molech, the proper God of the early Hebrew people and no other than Saturn, the chief God of the Semitic race.

So much for the Book of the Exodus; all that follows after the thirty-fifth chapter, to which we have now arrived, containing little or nothing but repetitions of what has been already minutely set forth in the chapters from the twenty-first to the thirty-fourth inclusive.

The whole of this concluding part of the Book has been held by two esteemed Jewish critics and scholars to be the composition of a writer who lived not earlier than from the 270th to the 260th year before the Christian æra.† The text of these chapters, however, being referred by Kuehnen to the Book of the Origins, and given by Dr Davidson to the Elohist, may, possibly, be as old as the earlier portions of the Book which treat of the same matters. But questions of age and authorship do not greatly, and at every turn, interest us here, engaged as we chiefly are with the moral aspects of the subject, and

* To quote a single instance from the Prophets: "They built the high places in Tophet, in the valley of the sons of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire." (Jerem. vii. 31.) The restriction of the sacrifice to males appears even to have been a late addition. All that opened the matrix, whether male or female, was doubtless the original form.

† See Kalisch, 'Hist. and Crit. Comment. on the Old Testament: Exodus and Leviticus;' and Popper, 'Die biblische Bericht über die Stiftshütte.' 8vo. Leipz. 1862.

the possibility of receiving it as the veritable word of God to man. That Exodus comprises some of the most ancient records of the Hebrew myths and legislative enactments that have reached us, is unquestionable. Down to the thirty-fifth chapter it is, in the main, very certainly older than every part of the Book of Genesis, and has been presumed to have been compiled and put together about the beginning of the seventh century before Christ—a thousand years after the age of Moses, but both added to and altered in still more recent times. How can we, in truth, as reasonable men, imagine Moses surrounded by the Israelites in the desert calling to him Bezaleel and Aholiab, and others, cunning workers in gold and silver and precious stones, weavers, dyers, embroiderers, tanners, with a host of artificers besides, and setting them to carry out the minute instructions he is said to have received from Jehovah for making the Tent or Tabernacle, the Ark of the Testimony, the Altars of burnt offering and Incense, the Table of the Showbread, &c., &c.,—the surfaces of these last being ordered to be overlaid with pure gold (when they are not to be wholly composed of this precious metal), the cherubim all of beaten gold, the seven-light lampstand with its knobs, branches, lamps, snuffers and snuffer dishes, all also of pure gold; the hangings of fine twined linen—scarlet, purple, and blue—interlaced with gold, fastened to pillars having chapiters overlaid with silver by means of hooks of the same precious and, in the olden time, little known metal, &c., &c.,—as we find matters set forth with wearisome prolixity and iteration in this concluding part of the book of Exodus?

It is not possible to do so. The people, according to the record, were only kept from starving by miraculous showers of manna (which we feel certain never fell from heaven, though it may then have been, as it still is, scantily produced at a particular season by

the thorny mimosa that lives a dwarfed existence in many parts of the desert), and flights of quails, which still arrive in Egypt, Palestine, and other lands at certain times of the year. How could a community so circumstanced have had the apparatus—furnaces, crucibles, moulds, lathes, looms, saws, planes, dye-stuffs, tan-pits, and the hundred other implements and appliances indispensable to workers in wood, metal, and precious stones, in wool, flax, and leather? The Israelites were never mechanics or mechanicians. So late as the age of Saul they had not a blacksmith among them, but sent their ploughshares and coulters to their neighbours, the Philistines, to be sharpened. If this be true their early battles could have been fought with no better arms than clubs; in the days of the Judges, Samgar is said to have used an ox-goad, and Samson so primitive a weapon as the jaw-bone of an ass, in the mythical combats in which so many hundreds or thousands of the enemy complacently suffered themselves to be slaughtered by these heroes of the imagination—even so late as the age of Solomon artificers had to be brought from Tyre to plan and build the Temple! The whole of the tales about Moses' laws and constructions are beyond all question the creation of writers who lived long, very long, after the age of the great leader—men who had seen settled life, and must be presumed to have had not only the First but the Second Temple as the model from which they drew.

It was not very long, according to the record, after the Exodus, before the Tent or Tabernacle, the Ark and Altars, with their furniture complete, were set up and ready for inauguration?

No more than a year: "On the First day of the First month of the Second year after quitting Egypt," all being in order, the ceremony of Inauguration was performed. The lamps having been lighted, incense sublimated, and burnt offerings presented, "a cloud,"

it is said, descended and covered the Tent, and the Glory of Jehovah filled the Tabernacle.

This is but a short time, all things else considered ?

Were so much accomplished by the end of the first year or beginning of the second, it becomes by so much the more difficult to imagine what the Israelites could have been about during the remaining thirty-eight or rather thirty-nine years said to have been spent by them as wanderers in the wilderness. From the inauguration of the Tabernacle the history of the people is a blank until we meet with them making an attempt, in which they were foiled, to penetrate Palestine proper on the side of Moab. Forty years, however,—*forty* being the sacred number and indispensable in the narrative—had to be got over, and the historian—or shall we say the *poet*—uses them in a series of marchings and counter-marchings, to and fro, from one imaginary station or camping-place to another, with ever-recurring miraculous interpositions of Jehovah to keep the people from dying of hunger and thirst, and repeated murmurings and rebellions on their part, not without good reason as it seems;—eight or nine-and-thirty years are consumed in getting over ground that, with every allowance for contingencies in the shape of delays, difficulties, necessary halts, &c., could easily have been left behind in something less than eighteen months after quitting Sinai, by a horde numerically great as it is possible to imagine the Israelites to have been, if they managed to live even for a year in the wilderness.*

The Book of the Exodus ended, and the apparatus for the ceremonial worship of the sons of Israel complete, we now come to the minute instructions for

* Goethe—*Nihil quod non tetegit*, &c.—has discussed this subject in a very complete manner in his notes to the better understanding of his *West-East Divan*: *Zum bessern Verständniss des West-Ostlichen Divan*: *Israel in der Wüste*.

carrying it into practice, these being especially comprised in the next Book of the Series—Leviticus—although many points have already fallen under our notice in the book that engages us. The ceremonial worship of the Jews, however, interests us little in the present age; it had even in most particulars ceased to interest the better minds among themselves some considerable time before their disruption and dispersion as a people. Its practice has long since and necessarily been abandoned in many of its most imposing elements by the modern Jew, the dweller in every inhabited land beneath the sun where there is a living to be made by petty or more liberal traffic, money-dealing, and the like. The record of such a system of religious observance, the outcome of the blind religious sense, indeed, could have no real interest apart from the tale it unfolds of the childish beliefs and barbarous acts mistakenly held good and acceptable to God in an early age of the world's history, were it not for the influence it has had on the religious ideas and religious practices of the most civilised among the peoples of the earth. There is now no longer any slaughter of bullocks and rams, goats and turtle-doves, before the Image of Jehovah at the door of the Tabernacle or Temple, no burning of fat and flesh to make what was regarded as a sweet savour to Jehovah, no longer the lamb at morning and at evening as his daily ration, nor the show-bread as its complement and the measure of wine as the indispensable drink offering! The terms of the later Jewish legislation may even be said to have made the continuance of the sacrificial and ceremonial system of earlier days, entitled Mosaic or Levitical, impossible. By the modern reformed code sacrifice could only be performed in *one* place, and that Jerusalem, and at one altar—that of the Temple—an ordinance which may have been devised in view of the Jewish people scattered over the face of the globe, and

announced as a means of getting rid of the blood-stained rites of the earlier system.

The worship of God by the descendants of the ancient Hebrews has indeed been long purified from almost everything that can offend the reasonable religious views of the cultivated in the present age; and it might even seem that there was a possible future for the Jehovism professed by the most advanced and enlightened of their later writers. Could the Jews but abandon the insolent and indefensible idea of their being, or ever having been, in any sense, the peculiar people of God; discard the barbarous rite of circumcision as a necessity of their initiation; cease to think of any kind of wholesome aliment as otherwise than clean, and of bullocks and sheep as food unfit for them unless slaughtered in a certain way by one of themselves, they would have done away with almost all that keeps them Parias in the midst of the enlightened among European communities. The last named silly prejudice in particular given up, one great bar to a good social understanding between Jew and Gentile would be removed; and until it is removed no perfectly good understanding can be come to between them, for must not my brother eat of the same mess and drink of the same cup as myself! If so much be ever accomplished, the descendants of the ancient Hebrew stock will have made a greater stride in the Religious Idea than did their fathers when they forsook the worship of Baal-Peor, Moloch, and Astarte, gave up eating with the blood (eating raw flesh) on High-places, and ceased to celebrate the orgies of the Phœnician Venus in booths and under the shade of green trees. Comporting themselves in all respects as reasonable beings, they would possibly find that, instead of being looked on as subjects for the proselytising zeal of ignorant, bigoted, and presumptuous men and women to wreak itself hopelessly upon, they might,

without themselves coming under the influence of any such bad passion, discover that adherents to the simple theism they professed, were to be won from among their uncircumcised neighbours, more piously minded than the mass, but lacking the capacity to believe that God had ever cursed the world, or contrived matters so indifferently as to make its redemption necessary by appearing in human shape to be a propitiatory sacrifice to himself. The people of England spend a million a-year in missions and futile efforts to convert the Jew and the heathen to Christianity,—whence may the mission come that shall convert them from the unworthy ideas of the Supreme they entertain, and teach them the eternal laws he has ordained for the rule of their lives, of the earth they inhabit, and of the infinite Universe of which they and it are so small and insignificant a part !



THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS.

THE LEGISLATION OF ISRAEL.

THE earlier part of the Book of Leviticus is wholly taken up with ordinances touching the offerings that were to be brought to the altar of Jehovah; with the manner of performing the several kinds of sacrifice commanded, and with the ritual to be observed in consecrating Aaron and his sons to the Priesthood?

It is; the offerings being classed under different heads, such as Peace Offerings—Fire-food of a sweet savour for Jehovah (De Wette); Sin Offerings—offerings for sins against one or other of the commandments or ordinances, whether done through ignorance or inadvertence (*a*) by a Priest; (*b*) by a Chief; (*c*) by one of the common people; or (*d*) by the Congregation of Israel at large. Besides these there are offerings for Trespasses done wittingly, both of omission and commission: for having kept silence when profane swearing had been overheard; for having touched an unclean thing—the dead body of a man or beast, a bone, and the like; for keeping possession of an article delivered for safe custody; for false-swearing as to the possession of something that had been lost; for theft—with violence especially, and so on.

With such a list, the victims brought to the altar—and in every instance they were to be brought of free-will—must have been somewhat numerous?

In settled as well as unsettled times they must have been so assuredly—*i.e.* if the ordinances were ever

truly observed. Added to the daily, weekly, monthly sacrifices which formed the essential elements in the religious ritual of the Jews, and the constantly recurring extraordinary offerings, which were also indispensable, the priests' hands must have been more than full—so much more than full, indeed, that even with the exaggerated statements as to the numbers employed about the altar in later times, it seems impossible to conceive that the levitical ordinances concerning sacrifice could ever have been carried out to the letter. That they never were so carried out at any time may indeed be said to be demonstrated by the Bishop of Natal;* and as to the possibility of their having been observed by wanderers in the wilderness in want of the merest necessities of life, the supposition is absurd. Such a system as that we find prescribed in the Book of Leviticus, if practicable at all—and this is very questionable—could only have been so by a settled and policed community.

Certain ceremonies were of course to be observed in presenting the victims destined for sacrifice?

They were in every case to be brought to the door of the tabernacle, and the individual making the offering was to lay his hand on the head. They were then to be slaughtered (by dividing the throat and pouring out the blood). The priest was next to dip his finger in the blood and to “sprinkle it seven times before Jehovah;” to streak with it the horns of the altar (the altar in the wilderness was of earth or unhewn stones; it was the brazen altar in Solomon's Temple that had horns); to pour out the rest of it about the base of the altar, and having divided the carcase into pieces, to burn the parts appropriated to Jehovah, viz., the fat, the caul above the liver, the kidneys, the rump, and, upon occasion, certain other parts—the right shoulder notably, with

* The ‘Pentateuch and Book of Joshua.’ Lond. 1862, et seq.

which, as with the thigh, peculiar virtues were connected in ancient times; the powerful thigh was, in fact, held to indicate manly vigour in other respects; and among the old Romans we know that when the sacrifice was not a holocaust, the thigh-bones wrapped in the fat of the omentum were always burnt upon the altar as an offering to the God—of Increase, beyond question.

The whole carcase was not then, as a rule, consumed on the Jewish altar?

By no means; Jehovah had often by much the smaller portion, the priests usually came in for the larger share.

The Israelites do not appear, like other peoples of the ancient world, to have drawn auguries from the state and motions of the entrails of the victims?

We find no mention made of anything of the kind, at all events in their writings as we have them.

Besides these, characterised as Blood-offerings, there are others, called Meat-offerings, commanded?

Consisting of vegetable substances: flour and oil; unleavened cakes, baked and fried, kneaded with oil, and flavoured with salt and frankincense—the salt in particular, to which a sacred and sanctifying character was attached in the olden time, is ordered never to be omitted.* To the flour, oil, and cakes, other products of the vegetable kingdom, such as fruits and ears of corn of the different kinds grown, were added on several occasions and at the proper seasons; and, as all here is verily after the pattern of the every-day life of man himself, a measure of wine to season the repast of the God was not forgotten.

The bloodless, like the Blood-offerings, we may presume were burnt on the altar?

Only in part: Jehovah had no more than a handful

* Salt still retains something of the symbolical or superstitious virtues attached to it of old. We often observe a plate of salt on the breast of the dead or the lid of the coffin.

of the flour, a sprinkling of the oil, and a fragment of the cakes; the greater part went to maintain the servitors of the altar and their families; the show-bread, indeed,—twelve cakes renewed weekly,—were entirely the perquisite of the priests. Jehovah's portion, like that of his ministers, appears always to have been presented to him as food—the fire of the altar, symbol of the God, devoured it.

Jehovah requiring his daily sacrifices—a lamb in the morning, another in the evening, on every day throughout the year—the fire on the altar would have to be kept constantly burning?

It was on no account to be let out. It was, in fact, with the Hebrews, as with other ancient peoples, the Symbol of Deity, and held pre-eminently holy. The Altar of Burnt-offerings has, perforce, been long abandoned by the modern Jew; but the flame of the lamp that may still be seen burning on from year's end to year's end in his Synagogue, as well as in Christian churches according to the prescriptions of Rome, would seem to say that the Fire-worship of the far-off forefathers of Jew and Gentile alike had not yet died wholly out of the world.

The priest's portions of the Blood-offerings are the subject of particular regulations?

They are mostly ordered to be boiled and eaten by them in the holy place; others, however—the Sin-offerings—were to be "roast with fire," the sacrifice not being held complete unless the victim were dressed in this way, and disposed of by being eaten in the holy place. When the multitude of the sacrifices that must have been brought in times later than those referred to in the text are considered, it is obvious that the parts which fell to the priests as their perquisite could not all have been so consumed as ordered; they must have been taken home for the use of the households, or sold to the public for money. The pan in which the flesh was sodden for the priests,

if of earthenware, was to be broken; if of brass, it was to be scoured and rinsed in water as often as used.

Can we in the present day, with our advanced conceptions of the nature of Deity and the changeless laws of Nature—expressions, as we opine, of the all-pervading force we personify and call God—believe that such commandments as we have been discussing concerning the slaughtering of bullocks, rams, goats, turtle doves and young pigeons, the disposal of their blood by pouring out, sprinkling, or streaking, the burning of the fat, caul, kidneys, rump, and right shoulder of the victims, &c., &c., by way of offering what is called “a sacrifice of a sweet savour made by fire to Jehovah,” were ever given in so many words by God to man?

It is impossible longer to entertain any such barbarous conceptions in connection with the name of God, or to think of man’s offering aught to God that could be acceptable to him otherwise than as it was calculated to prove good and profitable to the offerer or his fellow-men: obedience to God’s laws as they are written in book of Nature, let us be never weary of repeating, is the only oblation required, as it is the only one that man can make to God.

Yet are all these childish and indifferent ordinances delivered as having come immediately from Jehovah to Moses: “This is the law of the burnt-offering, of the meat, of the sin and of the trespass-offering, and of the consecrations and peace-offerings which Jehovah commanded in Mount Sinai, in the day that he commanded the children of Israel to offer their oblations to Jehovah in the wilderness of Sinai” (vii. 37, 38), the same injunctions being found repeated in somewhat shorter terms at the end of the book (xxvii. 34).

So says the text; but the burden of the tale and the style proclaim the hand of the relatively modern narrator, the post-exilic scribe, author himself of the

Levitical code as we have it, but as it assuredly did not exist either in the age of Moses or for many long ages after him.

From the ordinances bearing on Sacrifice we pass to those that refer to the Consecration of Aaron and his sons to the Priesthood; a matter that must have been held of the highest moment, if we may so conclude from the very particular way in which the rites pertaining to it are set forth; rites, moreover, in which it is not unimportant to observe that Moses, as in all things else, is still seen to take the lead.

Through the whole of the earlier epochs of the Hebrew history, it is the Civil ruler who consecrates the priest to his office, not the priest who consecrates the ruler, a procedure which superstition, unhappily for the peace of the world, got power enough to reverse in after times. It is Moses, the leader, who sets Aaron and his sons before the Congregation of Israel, who washes them, robes them, sprinkles them with the blood of the Sacrifice, and anoints them with the holy oil. He does more, indeed; he takes on himself every part of the priest's function, slaying the bullock and the ram that are sacrificed for the occasion, pouring out and sprinkling the blood, burning the fat and the rump, and even giving orders about the boiling of the flesh, and the way in which it is to be eaten in the holy place!

Consecration, or devotion to Jehovah, as we have seen already, had a special significance in the old Hebrew ritualistic system.

Whatsoever was *Cherem*, or devoted to Jehovah, was "in nowise to be redeemed, but was surely to be put to death." Aaron and his sons, become *Cherem* through their consecration, might, therefore, as it seems, be called on to play the part of principal on an occasion held to require a victim of more than the usual worth and significance; and in the strange, suspicious, and ill-explained death of Nadab and Abihu,

Aaron's two eldest sons, which now befalls in immediate connection with the Dedication of the Tabernacle to Jehovah, a learned liberal critic sees an instance in which a special victim or victims being required, were not found wanting.* Nadab and Abihu are said in the text to have taken their censers, put fire therein, incense thereon, and "offered strange fire before Jehovah, which he commanded them not: and there went out fire from Jehovah and consumed them." But what possible interpretation can be put on this tale other than the one divined by the German writer? These men were sacrificed to the fiery God whose altar they served; not, of course, by the immediate act of the God himself, as said, but by the agency of his minister, Moses. "Fire, it is said, went out from Jehovah and devoured them, and they died before Jehovah." But to die before Jehovah was to die in front of the altar of burnt-offering, the appointed place of sacrifice, and to be devoured by the fire of Jehovah was to be burnt on his altar and sent in fumes of a sweet savour to the skies. Physically Nadab and Abihu were violating none of God's eternal laws, whatever the fire they used in their offering of incense; morally it may well be said that in performing an extra service they were verily giving evidence of the piety of their nature.

It is not unlikely, therefore, that the original account of the death of Nadab and Abihu may have been tampered with in later times?

It is even more than likely that it has. Human victims in the early periods of the religious history of mankind were held to be as indispensable to propitiate the Gods on great occasions as they have come, in modern times and under all circumstances, to be looked on with horror and aversion. Had we the record of the consecration of the Tabernacle with all

* Comp. Ghillanij, *Die Menschenopfer*, &c. S. 694, et seq.

the ceremonies thereunto pertaining in its original form—and we may safely conclude that we have it not—we should be better informed than we are on the grounds that were held to make a sacrifice of unusual solemnity requisite at the time. These grounds we are left to divine, and there is every reason to conclude that they are to be found in the important event in immediate connection with which the death of Aaron's two elder sons occurs.

There are other particulars in the disjointed and evidently imperfect narrative we have before us, which lend strong support to the conclusion that the death of Nadab and Abihu was sacrificial?

When the death of the young men is by and by referred to, there is no mention made of their offering of strange fire to Jehovah, as having led to it; they died, it is simply said, "when they offered before Jehovah" (xvi. 1.) Moses' address to Aaron on the death of his sons, moreover, is not a little enigmatical, couched as it is in these terms: "This it is which Jehovah spake, saying: I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified. And Aaron held his peace." Highly enigmatical language, indeed, and much in need of explanation, if it does not rather leave the question of the death of the young men distinctly open to the extreme interpretation that has been put on it. But Moses' words, so far, are not even all that tends in the same direction. All that was Cherem to Jehovah must come sooner or later to a violent end, by the pouring out of its blood and the offering up of its life to the God; and all mourning and lamentation by reason of the sacrifice must be foregone. "Uncover not your heads," says Moses, in continuation to Aaron the father, and to Ithamar and Eleazar the brothers of Nadab and Abihu, "neither rend your clothes lest ye die, and lest wrath come upon the people." The sacrifice would have lost its efficacy had it been

mourned over; the God would have been incensed and possibly have broken out on the people by pestilence, as he is said to have done on other occasions when displeased with the rebellious race he had adopted for his own. Forbidden to the near relations when the victim was a human being, mourning was not interdicted to the people at large; the host of Israel was at liberty in the present instance, as we learn, to "bewail the burning which Jehovah had kindled."

It seems difficult to imagine that the death of Nadab and Abihu can be without all historical foundation?

It is so, although late researches seem to make it less difficult to see the tale as the outcome of purely subjective conceptions. Still, the unconnected style of the narrative, the evidently incomplete state in which it has reached us, the enigmatical, unfeeling and peremptory language of Moses to his brother, coupled with Aaron's "holding his peace," and the certainty we have that human sacrifices were universally practised on solemn occasions in the early ages of the world—all, in a word, combine to assure us that in the unexplained and sudden death of Nadab and Abihu we have an historical instance of a human sacrifice on an occasion held important, and a purpose to propitiate the Deity addressed by this terrible means.

The death of Aaron's two elder sons, however, has always been interpreted literally by orthodox commentators?

Of course it has; but such an interpretation can scarcely be held worthy of consideration in the present day. How should they who accept one text which says that God desires not the death of a sinner, but rather that he live and repent of his sin, defend as an illustration of God's justice and power, another which declares that there went out fire from the Lord

and devoured the two sons of Aaron for no greater an offence than having "offered strange fire before the Lord!" God's awards for moral delinquencies are moral, as for physical delinquencies they are physical; and in no case do *judgments*, as they are styled, attach immediately to God as their agent, but to the violation of the moral or physical law itself. Man may use, and has often cruelly misused, fire as a means of punishment for the thoughts as well as the deeds he looked on as sins; God, let us be well assured, never did; properly speaking God can only be said to punish us in this way when carelessness or design leads to the burnings and explosions in which life is lost and things useful and beautiful are destroyed, in which case the deed is clearly seen to be man's own.

Another interpretation, hinted at above, may be put on the death of Aaron's sons?

The tale, like several others, may have been invented at a late period by a priest to warn all and sundry, even members of his own body, against departure in the most insignificant particular from the ritual prescribed by the hierarchy. The Jews of old did not think violators of the written law alone deserving of death; neologists, innovators, reformers and freethinkers must with them have been objects of their most concentrated hate, even as they continue to be so held by theologians generally, and by all ignorant and intolerant persons among ourselves. Though they are now no longer struck down and devoured by fire from Jehovah, judicially murdered at the stake, made to linger out their lives in dungeons, or driven as exiles from their native country—albeit the years are not yet many since all such cruelties were perpetrated, it is still held neither sinful nor unseemly, by calumny and misconstruction, to degrade them socially and to deprive them of their means of livelihood; for it is in this more insidious, and to the

cultured scarce less cruel way, that bigotry and obscurantism continue to exact their dues.

We might be tempted to think that all the sons of Aaron inherited a natural proclivity to do amiss, which their training had failed to correct, for we now find Ithamar and Eleazar, "the sons of Aaron that were left alive," guilty, as it seems to us, of a far greater offence against the prescribed ritual than any committed by the unfortunate Nadab and Abihu, they—Ithamar and Eleazar—having "burned the goat of the sin-offering instead of eating it in the holy place," and so "taking on them the iniquity of the congregation, and making atonement for the people before Jehovah?"

We should surely think so could we imagine that man might either expiate his own sins or take the sins of others on his shoulders by eating the flesh of a goat. By burning instead of eating the sin-offering, however, Ithamar and Eleazar violated an essential part of the Hebrew ritual, made the expiatory sacrifice that had been offered of non-avail, and so laid themselves open to rebuke, if not to punishment more severe. It could signify little to the community or their God by what fire a handful of incense was raised in fumes, but it must have been held of great moment that a solemn act bearing on the state of the community at large was carried out in the way prescribed to make it effectual. But Ithamar and Eleazar were fortunate in the moment of their trespass; the victims had already been found, the sacrifice had already been made, and no further offering from among the devoted to Jehovah was required at this time.

Moses will, however, be wroth with Ithamar and Eleazar for what they have done?

He was angry with them, it is said, "because the goat of the sin-offering was burnt," and said: "Wherefore have ye not eaten the sin-offering in the holy place, seeing it is most holy, and it hath been

given unto you to bear the iniquity of the congregation, to make atonement for them before Jehovah?"

Aaron will interpose in his son's behalf?

And in his own also; for he as well as they was in fault; but in terms that only find their explanation when seen beside the interpretation put upon the death of Nadab and Abihu as a sacrifice. Speaking first of his sons Aaron says: "Behold, this day have they brought their sin-offering (Qy. Nadab) and their burnt-offering (Qy. Abihu) before Jehovah!" And then, referring to himself, he adds: "And such things have befallen me! Had I eaten the sin-offering to-day would it have been good in the sight of Jehovah?" Unhappy Aaron! he did but venture to hint in the most distant terms at the untimely fate of his two sons and his own sorrow—he dared not farther to make lament. His eating or abstaining could only have been matter of indifference to his God; to himself the meal, had he partaken of it, would have seemed a sin, and would surely have lain a load upon his soul.

Besides the caution which Moses is now made by Jehovah to give to Aaron not to make too free by coming at all times into the holy place behind the veil, he is farther ordered to take no wine or strong drink when ministering in his office: "Do not drink wine or strong drink, thou nor thy sons with thee, when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation lest ye die." A most proper injunction, surely, and such as might serve for preface to the series of ordinances concerning things clean and unclean, fit or unfit for food that follow?

The Levitical code is very full concerning clean and unclean beasts as fit or unfit for the food of man; such as were cloven-footed and chewed the cud being alone accounted clean, and so available for food; such as divided not the hoof, though they chewed the cud—among the number of which are reckoned the camel,

the coney, and the hare—were to be looked on as unclean and so forbidden. The camel ruminates or chews the cud, but he divides not the hoof; the rabbit and the hare neither chew the cud nor divide the hoof in the Hebrew sense, yet are they all alike good and wholesome food. The camel is eaten in countries where he is indigenous, and when young is esteemed a delicacy, never partaken of, however, but by the wealthy, for he is too valuable as a beast of burthen, in his prospective life, to be often slaughtered for the sake of his flesh. The rabbit and the hare, found thoroughly wholesome, and even regarded as dainty fare in the present day, as they are not interdicted by the God of nature, so are they not excluded from the diet-roll of reasonable men, though they were forbidden in the so-called code of the Jewish Jehovah.

The swine is particularly forbidden?

Necessarily; for though he divides the hoof he chews not the cud. Nevertheless is his flesh most savoury and nourishing as aliment, and so by God's own unwritten law in opposition to the written code of the Jews, not only not interdicted, but even by its qualities positively approved.

It were not uninteresting to know why the flesh of the hog has come to be rejected as food by so many Oriental peoples, particularly by those of Semitic descent?

His form and habits may have had something to do with the denial. Full grown he is not a comely animal to look on, and his habit of wallowing in the mire and his indiscriminating voracity are not attractive traits in his character. But these are not probably the grounds of his exclusion from the spit and pot. This may probably be rather referred to his being like the rat and the mouse—also interdicted—nocturnal in his habits, and sacred in other ancient religious systems to the deities of night and winter—to Typhon, Hecate, &c. He could not, consequently, be proper

food for the elect of the God of Light, El, or Chiun, supreme over all the Gods, and the tutelary Deity of the Hebrew people through the whole of the earlier and by much the longer period of their history.

All fishes having scales and fins were to be accounted clean, and so available; those not so furnished were to be held unclean, and therefore forbidden as food?

The prohibition here was probably directed against the eel, from its resemblance to the serpent, a sacred animal among the ancients. The eel, however, like other bony fishes, is covered with scales; but they are so small as easily to be overlooked. His likeness to the serpent may suffice to account for his rejection from the diet-roll of the Jews, though he is now looked on as a delicacy. Cartilaginous fishes,—rays, sharks, and the rest, have neither scales nor proper fins, and they are indeed indifferently eaten, although to the strong stomach not unwholesome, and so not absolutely forbidden by the Supreme authority.

The vulture, eagle, kite, hawk, raven, stork, swan, lapwing, bat, and "fowls that go on all fours," are forbidden?

And in the majority of instances cited deservedly so, for they are carrion and disgusting as food. But why the swan, and with him, we must presume, his congeners, the goose and the duck, came to be excluded is not so readily imaginable. When young, the swan is both good and wholesome, and the goose and duck, as all the world know, are peculiarly savoury and excellent in their season. What the fowls that went on all fours were is a riddle. The bat, however, evidently classed with birds by the writer, may be the creature referred to. Seen on the ground, his mode of progression when he helps himself with his anterior extremities or wings, may explain it. But the bat is a mammiferous animal, brings forth live young, and suckles them as do the

mothers of the human kind. Bats are generally insectivorous, *i.e.*, carnivorous, stink abominably, and are unfit for food; but several of the large kinds of the Indian Archipelago are frugivorous, living on ripening fruits, and preying on the paddy grounds and gardens as sparrows do on our orchards and corn fields. The frugivorous bats need not therefore be excluded from the list of animals fit for the food of omnivorous man, though we know not that they are eaten.

Strangely enough to us, as it seems, locusts, grasshoppers, beetles, and flying creeping things are permitted?

Though only eaten in the present day by some of the most abject among savage men, locusts and grasshoppers committing such havoc in eastern lands, devouring the crops, and leaving desolation behind them, may have been held fairly deserving of being eaten in their turn. John the Baptist, we are told, lived at one time on locusts and wild honey; and, as purely vegetable feeders, a dish of locusts, well dressed, might possibly be found palatable and not unwholesome, unless they had been living on bitter or poisonous herbs.

The tortoise is expressly forbidden?

A great mistake; for tortoises are vegetable feeders, and are not only eatable but one among them, whose home is the sea, and the crop that grows at its bottom his food, is now regarded as among the greatest of delicacies, being found, when not made noxious in the dressing, to be not only wholesome and so not forbidden by God's own law, but to be among the most easily digested, readily assimilable, and restorative of aliments; by primal ordinance, consequently, anterior to all written legislation, the tortoise, or turtle, is pre-eminently recommended. Both land and water tortoises are found in Syria and Palestine, and are eaten by the Mussulman inhabitants at the present day.

The pens that wrote the sacred books of the Hebrews were not therefore always so well directed, or they who held them so well informed, as might have been expected of writers believed to have been inspired?

It would seem that they were not; but these men overlooked the true standard of fitness or unfitness; drawing on fancy or prejudice in their awards, they made many mistakes. As men advanced in knowledge they discovered that it was not that which went into the mouth that made a man unclean.

The horse and ass, as they neither divide the hoof nor chew the cud, are, of course, forbidden as food to the Israelites?

They are not named; but their conformation excludes them from the diet-roll of Israel. Nevertheless the flesh of both is eaten in countries where the power of the live animal is not in much request, and has often been found of signal service in the wars and sieges of modern times. If not the most palatable of food, this is probably due to the condition of the animals when slaughtered, or to their feeding in confinement, rather than to anything in the nature of their flesh, which certainly is not unwholesome, and so not out of the pale of edible things any more than that of the camel and elephant, though neither of these have proper hooves, and the camel alone chews the cud.

“Creeping things that do not fly,” among which, strangely enough, we find enumerated the weasel, mouse, ferret, tortoise, chameleon, lizard, mole, and snail, are all said to be unclean and so unfit for food?

It is probable that the animals thus named in English are not always those the Hebrew writer had in view. Some of them are carrion, doubtless, and objectionable as aliment, but the iguana among lizards, a vegetable feeder, is eaten and held a delicacy in the country he inhabits, and the snail of

the vineyard and garden is reckoned a light nutritious article of diet for invalids—snail broth is even a popular restorative for the consumptive; and the snails of the sea—whelks, periwinkles, cockles, clams, &c., are brought in bushels to our markets and consumed by the labouring classes as delicacies. If the oyster, so nearly allied to the cockle and snail, be forbidden, as we believe it is, then had the Hebrew writer no true standard whereby the fitness or unfitness of things for the food of man could be estimated. In the savoriness of this distinguished mollusc the modern Israelite might surely see a special dispensation from above in *its*—or shall we say in *his own*—favour.

Ideas of cleanness and uncleanness were not limited in the Levitical code to things in view of their fitness or unfitness for the food of man?

Far from it; and the very first subject we now find referred to is the Purification of Women after child-bearing. Strange to say, it is enacted in this ancient code that the woman who has fulfilled the very highest and holiest of her functions by the law of God is to be held unclean for forty days if the fruit of her womb have been a man-child, for two weeks and yet three score and six days if it have been a maid. On what ground the distinction here noted was based we are not informed. When these the days of her purification were accomplished, the woman was to bring to the priest a lamb for a burnt-offering, and a pigeon or turtle dove for a sin-offering. The lamb having been sacrificed in the usual way, and the birds killed by having their heads pinched off, and their blood wrung out at the foot of the altar, she who had never been unclean in the sight of God was proclaimed to be clean in the sight of man.

We have a remnant of this superstition in the ritual of the Roman and Anglican churches?

We have : The woman among ourselves who has

borne a child is required to present herself in the church she frequents within a limited time after her delivery, there to give thanks to God for her escape from the perils of child-bearing, and so to have a sort of passport from the priest for showing herself again in public. Thanks to God the mother could, of course, give privately in her own chamber, in conformity with an injunction given elsewhere, and with even more of propriety than in the face of the world. The modern observance is, in fact, the old Jewish rite of purification in disguise, and might now, as it seems, be advantageously dispensed with. It is retained, however, as one among the other means possessed by the clergy for upholding their influence over the female mind, which, nevertheless, in its more delicate and sensible manifestations, secretly revolts against the custom, and would gladly ignore it were it not for usage and requirement. In Roman Catholic countries where the rite is rigidly enforced at a very early period after the lying-in, and the mother is accompanied by her infant, it is known to be attended at certain seasons of the year,—the spring and early summer months, when the Cathedral and great church retain the temperature of winter, and feel like the tomb—by the most disastrous consequences, to the children in especial. Numbers of these are lost through the chill they receive by being laid on the cold steps of the altar, whilst the mother is on her knees at her prayers before it, and the priest is muttering his incantation in the dead and to her unknown tongue.

What is to be said about the *perils* of child-bearing, the reason given or excuse made for the retention of a Jewish rite in Christian lands?

That their extent is greatly exaggerated. The married woman, with all the appended risks, appears to have a better life than the spinster at every age. The rite of the "Churching of women" will die out of use

as our women are better educated, as they learn to know and interpret the laws of nature by the lights of the age in which they live, and so become more self-reliant and independent of priestly guidance than they are.

So much in so far as the Mother is concerned—what as regards the Child?

If a male, according to the latest Hebrew legislation, the flesh of his foreskin was to be cut off.

By way of improving God's handiwork?

Though the reasons that have been assigned for the practice are several, this is not among their number. The rite of Circumcision, as we have seen, is first mentioned in connection with the covenant which God is said to have made with Abraham when he had shown his readiness to make a burnt-offering of his only son. But whilst the legend of Abraham is now believed to be of relatively modern invention, the rite of circumcision is known to have been in use among peoples having a polity and well advanced in civilisation—Egyptians and Phœnicians notably—whilst the Hebrews were still nomads among the heights and hollows of Mesopotamia, or wanderers over the steppes of Lesser Asia in search of better quarters and settled homes in more fertile lands. There is good ground for concluding that the rite of circumcision is of relatively recent introduction among the Israelites. That it was unknown through the whole of the earlier periods of their history seems certain. We do not learn that Esau and Jacob were circumcised; neither do we read of Jacob submitting his numerous progeny of sons to the rite. It is never referred to as having been in force during the reputed long sojourn of the Israelites in Egypt; and that it was neglected during the whole of their forty years wandering in the wilderness is positively stated. Save where it is introduced, to give colour apparently to the impossible story of the slaughter of the Sechemites by Simeon

and Levi, circumcision is not again spoken of in the Old Testament until we come to the Book of Joshua. But the reference to the rite in the age of Abraham is now seen as an invention of the post-exilic Jehovistic scribe, author of the Book of Genesis, inventor of the mythical tale of Abraham and his son Isaac.* Circumcision was, in truth, only made imperative when bigotry and intolerance, exclusiveness and stringency in ritual observance, with Jehovah as peculiar God of the Jews of Jerusalem, had gained the day over El-Elijon, Chiun, and Baal-Molech of the Hebrew people, and when freedom of intercourse and intermarriage with neighbouring tribes came to be denounced as sin and a desertion of Jehovah. The most reasonable interpretation of the rite of circumcision is that it was substituted for the sacrifice of the first-born, and only introduced in relatively recent times. The God of Increase, to whom *all* was due, was finally put off with the offering of a small but significant part instead of the whole.

The Jewish custom of circumcision, still enforced, cannot, in the eye of reason, be held as other than a barbarous, needless, cruel, and improper rite?

It is most assuredly nothing else; and as it is both peculiarly painful and not unattended with danger to the life of the child, so can it be done in conformity with no ordinance of God, who gives not life at one moment coupled with a command that entails the risk of losing it in the next through the ill-advised interference of man.

In this case—danger to the life of the child—there must have been an understanding in the olden time which authorised the omission of the rite in families where it had once proved fatal?

* See Bernstein's 'Origin of the Legend of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob,' one of Mr Scott's Series.

Such an understanding we believe now at least exists in the unwritten code of the Jews ; so that there may be true sons of Israel un mutilated and even as they come from their mother's womb. The customary mutilatory rite, consequently, can be no more necessary to constitute a member of the church of God according to the enlightened Jehovism of the modern Jew, than in the eye of reason is the sprinkling with water indispensable to constitute a member of the theistic community whereof Jesus, the son of Joseph, was the founder, and of whose doctrine Paul of Tarsus is mistakenly accepted in these days as the chief exponent.

Various sanitary ordinances were also in force among the Jews of old ?

Many, and more especially having reference to the disease called leprosy, which must have been so much more common in former times (if it were the terrible disease we now know among others by the name) than it is in the present day. Now we have small-pox—not to speak of the other greater kind—scarlet fever, measles, whooping-cough, catarrh and consumption of the lungs, typhus and typhoid fever, &c., waylaying us through the earlier and middle passages of our lives in lieu of the dreaded Jewish leprosy. Against these formidable diseases we enjoin continence, cleanliness, vaccination, ventilation, plentiful supply of water, wholesome food, and temperance. Suffering from their attacks, instead of the priest and the meaningless and unavailing mummery of the Jew against the leprosy which invaded his dwelling as well as his person, men in the present day are content, under the eye of the enlightened physician, diligently to use such means of prevention and cure as the medical science of the day recommends ; to give God thanks when they or theirs recover from their sicknesses, and to bow the head and resign themselves to the inevitable when their dear ones are

taken from them, finding solace mainly in the assurance that all had been done in reason to avert the ill when it befalls. Prayers for the stay of pestilence and the recovery of the sick have been more and more assuming the practical form of an application under knowledge and experience of the measures that have been found influential in warding off and curing disease; as God is now known to give no heed to prayers for the recovery of the sick, but often to crown well-considered efforts to this end with success, so would it seem right and reasonable henceforth to abandon the prayers, but ever more diligently to use the means.

There are, further, many ordinances bearing on cleanness and uncleanness both of men and things, with ceremonial prescriptions—generally sacrifices, sprinklings with blood, anointings with oil, and washings with water—as means of purification?

There are very many such, but founded, for the most part, on fancies, childish, indifferent, out of keeping with the nature of things, and utterly powerless to the ends proposed. These, therefore, need not detain us further than to suggest that being what they are, they cannot be from God. We do in these days, and most properly, rely on soap and water, whitewash, chlorine, and ventilation as the means of disinfection and purification ordained of God, and not on the slaughter of bullocks, rams, lambs, goats, and turtle doves, with sprinklings of their blood on the altar and objects proposed to be made clean. How the person or thing that was besprinkled with blood and oil, or even with water having the ashes of a red heifer diffused in it, could have come to be looked on as cleansed or purified, rather than befouled, passes comprehension in the present day, almost as much as it does to conceive how such procedures should still pass current in the world as having had their root in ordinances from the God of reason for the guidance of mankind.

Besides the rites commanded to be observed, and the offerings to be made by individuals in reference to cleanness and purification, and to certain special visitations, there are other general ordinances bearing on the community at large ?

One in particular of a very extraordinary character, and not easily reconcilable with the interpretation usually put on the Jewish theological system as monotheistic in its essence—that, namely, which is ordered by way of atoning for the sins of the whole congregation of the children of Israel on the tenth day of the seventh month of the year.

The rite prescribed for this occasion is special and not a little extraordinary ?

Aaron the priest,—cautioned again by Moses the leader not to be coming at all times into the holy place behind the veil,—having divested himself of his gorgeous attire, and donned the simple linen apparel of the sacrificator, of which we have a reminder in the surplice of our clergy, is now to enter the sanctuary, there to ask counsel of Jehovah, doubtless. Emerging from thence, and having sacrificed a bullock for himself and his house, he is to take two goats and a ram for a sin-offering. These he is to present before Jehovah at the door of the Tabernacle, and then to cast lots on the goats, “one lot for Jehovah, the other for Azazel.”

Azazel! who or what is Azazel ?

This is a question that has sorely exercised the theologians who persist in ascribing pure monotheism to the Israelites at all periods of their history as a people. Azazel must, however, have been regarded by them as a Divinity, and is here plainly put on a level or footing of equality with Jehovah: one of the goats fell by lot to Jehovah, the other to Azazel.

The goats were to be dealt with differently ?

The one allotted to Jehovah was sacrificed in the usual way, part being presented as an offering of a

sweet savour to the God, and the rest sodden and eaten by the priests in the holy place. On the head of the goat allotted to Azazel, on the contrary, Aaron was to "lay his hands, confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them thereby on the goat." This done, he was to send the animal away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness, where, laden as he was now conceived to be with the sins of the people, he was either to be left to perish miserably, or being led to the top of a height, he was to be cast down and killed at once.

These seem strange proceedings on the part of a people, the self-styled Elect of Jehovah, and our adopted teachers in religion?

Not more strange than barbarous and absurd! As if the sins of a people could be transferred to a goat, or the great God of the universe be propitiated by the lingering or more sudden death of aught that had come into life in harmony with his laws! If one goat was slain in the usual way by pouring out its blood and sent as a burnt-offering of a sweet savour made by fire to Jehovah as the good principle in nature, the other was unquestionably driven forth to die and so to propitiate with its life another Divinity,—impersonation, we must presume, of the adverse aspect or evil principle in nature, which still plays so important a part in the theological conceptions of our clergy and the vulgar under the name of Satan or Devil.

Azazel, however, does not meet us here in any shape akin to the impersonation called Satan or Devil—the Bad God of the moderns?

Certainly not; neither is he to be confounded with the angelic personage of post-exilic times called Satan, who is mentioned in more than one place of the Old Testament. The ancient Israelites acknowledged no Devil in the modern sense: Their Satan was one among the angels or sons of God, and was the prover

of the steadfastness of mankind in good, not their tempter to do evil, and never the enemy and opponent of God. Azazel has just so much resemblance to the Typhon of the Egyptian system, the brother and *alter ego* of Osiris, the adverse as opposed to the beneficent aspect of the Nature-God, each in turn the vanquisher and the vanquished of the other, that he has been held to be the Egyptian divinity under another name. That Azazel may represent the same *idea* is admissible, and that the idea was entertained in Egypt need not be questioned; but Azazel may rather have been borrowed from Babylon. Whencesoever derived, he is, nevertheless, but another representative of the power that wrestles with Jacob on Peniel, that meets Moses on the way to the inn and seeks to kill him, that tempts David to number the people, that puts Job to the proof, &c. Or he is the Ahriman of the Zend-folks modified, and a direct legacy of the Babylonian captivity to the Jews, along with the Garden of Delight in Eden, the tree of life, the serpent, the seduction of the man and the woman by the reptile and their subsequent expulsion from Paradise, on which the whole of the dogmatic elements in the religious system of modern Europe repose.

The fall of the year was the season when the great festival of the later Jews, that of the Atonement, was celebrated, and the lots were cast on the goats for Jehovah and Azazel?

It was in the Seventh month of the Ecclesiastical year, the First month of the Civil year, and on the Tenth day of the month that this festival was celebrated, at the same season precisely as that in which the Egyptians kept their great feast to Typhon, the god of winter and the under-world.

This coincidence seems to throw light on the strange story of Azazel and the scape-goat as it stands in the sacred writings of the Jews?

It may help to do so, at all events. In the Seventh

month of the year, according to the later Jewish mode of reckoning, the autumnal equinox is attained and night and darkness begin their reign. In Egypt the Sun-God Osiris, having spent his power, is then feigned to die, being either torn in pieces by his brother and enemy, Typhon, or beguiled by him into a coffer and cast into the Nile. In Medo-Persia the scorpion—the sign of winter—is pictured gnawing the genitals of the vernal bull, and Mithra, the Sun-God, is seen plunging his sword into its body behind the shoulder. In Syria the Adonis comes down stained, as said, by the blood of the God whose name it bears, torn, emasculated by the wintry boar; and in Tyre and Sidon the women are found weeping for Tammuz dead! Azazel, in a word, is El-Israel or Jahveh as Nature-God in his adverse aspect; and the goat allotted to him is the proper propitiatory sin-offering of the Israelites to their Deity.

The Atonement festival for the sins of the people of Israel, it is to be observed, is unaccompanied, as first commanded, by the order for the payment of half a shekel of the sanctuary which every man over twenty years of age was required in another place and in after times to bring to the priest as a ransom for his life?

There is at first no mention either of money payment or of ransom: the ransom was effected through the goat, as the sin-offering to Azazel; the payment of the half-shekel must, therefore, have been added to the essential rite at a later date, as a means doubtless of maintaining the religious establishment of the country in the splendour to which it had attained during and for some time after the reign of Solomon: it was not wanted in the early times to which our text refers, when Aaron and his sons alone were servitors of the altar. But there can be little doubt of the festival of the Atonement now commanded being of relatively modern introduction. The festival

with which it was associated, and which it came in some sort to supersede, was that of Unleavened Bread, ordered in the olden time to be observed at the same season of the year. It was a Time and Season Festival among the Israelites, as among their congeners, the Semitic tribes around them, and their old masters the Egyptians.

Jehovah is now made to declare in the text as we have it that he will have his sacrifices brought to him nowhere but at the door of the Tabernacle ?

“Whosoever of the house of Israel was minded to present a victim for sacrifice, and brought it not to the door of the Tabernacle of the congregation to offer it to Jehovah, was to be cut off from his people.” Believed to have his dwelling-place there, there only could counsel be had of him through the priest or leader, and there only could the offerings and sacrifices meant for him be fitly presented.

It is not difficult to divine the purpose of this injunction—product as it certainly is of the latest Jehovistic legislation ?

It is obviously given to prevent the people from offering and sacrificing in other places than the Temple on Mount Zion, and to other gods than Jehovah—at Beth-El and Dan, for example, to Jeroboam's Golden Calves. “They shall no more offer their sacrifices unto goats after whom they have gone a whoring,” says the text. The people, it was purposed, would by this means be kept to the worship of Jehovah, of whom their fathers for so many ages had never even heard the name, and whom they, at the time the text was written, still meet us as so reluctant to acknowledge for their God. They were familiar enough with Baal and Astaroth, Queen of Heaven, the High places, Tophet and the valley of the sons of Hinnom; they had but lately been made acquainted with Jahveh as chief among the Gods. The English version, in which the Hebrew word for goats is ren-

dered devils, is unwarranted. The ancient Israelites had no devils, as we have said; but their God seems to have been worshipped under the form of the goat.

It would appear, if the record be taken literally, that it was not only the animals brought for sacrifice, but all that were slaughtered for food within the camp that were required to be presented at the door of the Tabernacle, and there received by the priest.

Had such an order ever been issued, and above all obeyed, we should have data for forming an estimate of the size of the encampment or congregation to which alone it could have been applied. The prescription, however, must be seen as in accordance with the views and requirements of much later times. The blood and fat being Jehovah's portions—to say nothing of the flesh which fell to the priests—measures must be devised by which the parts pertaining to each should be secured to him. The restrictions met with in regard to the place where sacrifice to be acceptable to Jehovah could alone be offered, increase in stringency as we advance in the history of the Hebrew people. El-Israel was content in early days with an altar of earth or of unhewn stones, that might be erected anywhere. The Jehovah of post-exilic times would only be served upon the brazen altar resting on the sculptured bull's heads which adorned the Temple of Jerusalem. At this shrine only was sacrifice of any kind that could be offered finally declared to be lawful; and with the consequence, that may or may not have been seen in all its extent at the time the ordinance was issued, of putting an end for ever to the shedding of blood as a means of worshipping or propitiating their God by the Jews: scattered over the face of the globe they could no longer show their fealty to Jehovah by cutting the throats of bullocks, sheep, and goats, or wringing off the heads of turtle doves before his shrine. Were the children of Israel ever to regain the power they once possessed with

Jerusalem as seat of their Empire, and the Temple as their place of worship, they might in consistency find themselves bound to return to the ordinances of their ancient ritual—to offer a lamb morning and evening as the daily food of Jehovah, besides the bullocks, rams, lambs, goats, turtle doves, and young pigeons for peace and sin and trespass-offerings as of old—a spectacle that would be not a little strange in the world as now constituted.

The ordinances touching the disposal of the blood are especially minute and stringent?

The blood was believed by the Jews to be the immediate seat of life—to be *The Life* in fact, and was that which was held especially sacred to Jehovah. Being so, belonging exclusively to Jehovah, it was forbidden to be made use of in any way by man: whosoever was guilty of eating blood was to be put to death.

Is the blood, then, really and in truth the life or the exclusive seat of the life of an animal?

It is not. It is no more than an integer in the factors whose sum is life: an animal dies instantly if struck by lightning, or if its spinal cord be crushed or cut as it emerges from the skull, without having lost a single drop of blood.

And is blood unwholesome, and so by God's own fiat unfit for food?

Not only is it not unwholesome but it is eminently nutritious. Prepared in various ways it has its place among other legitimate alimentary matters. The order against its use, therefore, never came from God, but is an invention of the Jewish scribes on mistaken physiological and religious grounds.

There may be another meaning hidden under the prohibition against eating blood so frequently repeated?

It was probably directed against the barbarous custom of eating portions of the raw flesh of the

victims offered to Baal and other Semitic gods, which prevailed in the religious rites of the old Israelites, and their congeners the Ammonites, Moabites, Edomites, and other inhabitants of Western Asia, still practised by some of the savage hill tribes of British India. The Israelites appear, in fact, to have thought that cookery of any kind might be dispensed with upon occasion, and that the blood was not really objectionable. After a fight with the Philistines in Saul's time, we learn that the people "took sheep and oxen and calves, and slew them, and did eat with the blood," *i.e.*, they ate the flesh raw (1 Sam. xix. 32); and this barbarous practice would have to be associated with the most solemn rite of the Roman Catholic Church, were it possible to believe that the Priest did verily by his incantation succeed in turning the cake and wine he manipulates into the body and blood of his God.

What may be said of the general character of the further ordinances that follow in the Book of Leviticus, delivered, as it is said from God?

That it is such as implies a community sunk in savagery and sensuality. The chapters in which the ordinances referred to occur are unfit to be read in public, and in private are always passed over by persons with any pretensions to culture and delicacy. They are probably fragments of very ancient documents and speak of abominations that cannot be perused through the eyes without something like contamination to the mind.

The whole of the precepts and prescriptions, however, have not this bad character?

By no means; amid much that is objectionable, that is not fitted for civilised man in all times, we still meet with many that are truly divine, interposed in all likelihood, nay, most certainly interposed by the relatively modern, more enlightened, and more refined editors of the ancient records they had in

hand; for if some parts of Leviticus appear to be founded on documents among the oldest of any made use of in the composition of the Pentateuch, others are undoubtedly from the hand of an Ezra or still more modern compiler, to whom the present fashion of its books is so essentially due.

It were good and edifying to note a few of the finest of these precepts?

This, for instance:—"Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart." And these:—"Thou shalt not bear a grudge against the children of thy people, but shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. The stranger that dwelleth with you shall be as one born among you—thou shalt love him as thyself." How opposite all this sounds to the injunctions elsewhere delivered to kill and despoil, to hold no intercourse with the stranger, &c., need not be insisted on. And then, instead of a commandment to borrow without any purpose of making return, we have such injunctions as these:—"Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment, in mete-yard, in weight, or in measure," &c.

Some of the ordinances, further, now met with are wholly opposed to the reasonable economical principles to which we have attained in these days?

"Thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field; neither shalt thou glean it, nor thy vineyard—thou shalt leave [the gleanings] for the poor and stranger," says the text. But he who ploughs and sows is alone entitled to reap; and if he leave an ear of corn that could be saved, or aught else of his harvest that might be gathered, he is guilty of improvidence and unthrift. The indiscriminate charity countenanced by the churches of the modern world, by that of Rome especially, and in some lands enforced by law, serves but to degrade communities, by fostering the ills that are sought to be redressed.

Some of the Levitical ordinances are not only

senseless but often opposed to much that has been found advantageous?

This, for example :—“Thou shalt not let thy cattle gender with a diverse kind, nor sow thy field with mingled seed, nor wear a garment of mingled wool and linen.” Now mules in some countries are found hardier and more serviceable than either the horse or the ass. Still as we know the mule incompetent to continue his kind, we see that God has put his veto in a fashion against the procedure by which the hybrid is obtained. As to the interdict against sowing with mingled seed, it is now often advantageously departed from; our pastures would not be what they are were they not sown with mingled seeds, and a year is constantly saved and the produce of the land increased by sowing the seed of one kind of grain or herb with another. So this injunction cannot be from God. As to the prohibition against wearing wool and linen together, this plainly attaches to the superstition that connected impurity with wool, leather, and other things derived from the bodies of animals; linen was in some sort sacred as being especially ordered for the priests' robes.

Some of the old Levitical ordinances have, in these days and to suit particular interests, been wrested from the meaning they plainly enough bear on their face?

This, for instance, and very notably: “A man shall not take a wife to her sister to vex her.”

The meaning of this does not seem far to seek!

Nevertheless, it has been forced from its obvious sense. Polygamy being authorised by the Jewish law of old, the text commands no more than that a man shall not have two sisters living with him at the same time as his wives.

But having lost a wife by death, he is not debarred from subsequently marrying her sister?

Most certainly he is not—there is no interdict of

the kind either expressed or understood in the text as it stands. The perverse ingenuity that has forced such an interpretation on the words of the commandment has given occasion to no small amount of social suffering among communities in which marriage with a deceased wife's sister is declared illegal, and the offspring of such unions are branded with bastardy—a crying injustice before God.

There is another ordinance here met with which may be said to have had injurious effects even to the present time ?

That which declares that the bond-maid who yields to a seducer is to be scourged, whilst her betrayer is to bring a ram for a trespass-offering to Jehovah, when "his sin will be forgiven him!" In modern society the seducer, the really guilty party, is still generally condoned, whilst the victim, whose fault is mostly compliance merely, is alone made to suffer. But how should a God of purity and truth have made a distinction in such a case, or rather have put the heavier penalty on the less guilty head? Or how imagine him requiring a ram in satisfaction for conduct in which lying and deception must mostly be presumed to play so great a part?

"A man or woman that hath a familiar spirit, or that is a wizard, shall surely be put to death—the people shall stone them with stones, their blood shall be upon them."

So read we in the book said to be composed under the immediate inspiration of God. But what might be understood by a man or woman "having a familiar spirit?"

There seems a natural proclivity in the mind of ignorant man to pry into futurity, to learn what time may have in store, and what fate will befall him; and a wizard, an inferior form of the Diviner, Seer or Soothsayer, was the person presumed competent to supply the information desired. They, in the present

day, however, who pretend to "look into the seeds of time and say what grain will grow," are regarded by the truly-educated as cheats, and by the magistrate, when caught in their cheating, are treated as vagabonds and impostors. But they continue to find prey among the ignorant and credulous, high as well as low. The fortune-tellers, spirit-rappers, *et hoc genus omne* of the present age, are the degenerate seed of the witches of Endor and Wizards of old, of the Seers, Sibyls, Pythian priestesses and Delphic oracles of the ancient world, and have their kindred in the rain-makers and medicine-men of savage life.

It were ungrateful and even improper to refer to all the Interdicts comprised in the Book of Leviticus. Some of the acts denounced as reprehensible and deserving of death cannot be understood by the general reader, but find their explanation in practices once accounted devotional in Palestine, and still prevalent as a religious rite among certain tribes that people India. Others, again, such as the injunction against making baldnesses on the head, are so childish that it were childish indeed to think of their ever having come from God. It is not uninteresting, however, to observe that the clergy of the Church of Rome, who follow so many of the old Levitical injunctions, do obvious violence to the one against making baldnesses on the head, by the extensive shavings of the scalp that are practised by the monks of some of the regular orders, and by the *Tonsure* or making bald that part of the head on which the savage Red Indian leaves a curl, the heathen Chinese a tail, and the Phrenologist who seeks to locate the organs of the mental faculties finds the convolution of the brain the outward manifestation of whose activity is arrogance and pride.

The Romish clergy must be held to do still more violence to nature than to this silly statute of the Levitical code by the state of Celibacy that is imposed on them ?

Surely : the Jewish Priest was a married man, and is here expressly enjoined to take a virgin of his people to wife ; he is only forbidden to have a widow, a woman divorced, or a harlot for his spouse. The Priest of the Church of Rome, on the contrary, is forbidden to marry at all. For those ends of policy and dominion, which are such paramount elements in the constitution of this Conspiracy against the rights and liberties of mankind, is celibacy forced on its ministers ; though this has not always prevented its Hierarchs—Popes, Cardinals, Bishops, and others of less degree from living in a state of concubinage and having families of sons and daughters under the less tender but still endearing names of Nephews and Nieces.

Jehovah, according to these ancient documents, would not be served by individuals deformed or imperfect in their persons, neither by the blind, the halt, nor the lame, by him who had a flat nose, or was splay-footed or broken-backed, or who had a blemish in his eye, or was scabbed, or who had been made imperfect through interference with parts essential to the constitution of an entire man. His Priests were not to be like those of Cybele and Attys, Gods of Nature in its state of decline. Jehovah was the God of Life and Increase, not of death and decay.

All this is either expressly said or plainly implied ; but a flat nose, a hunchback, and splay feet have nothing to do with the mind of the man. Socrates was surely a better sample of humanity proper than Alcibiades, with all his beauty of person, his self-assurance, and his ambition. God, the father of all flesh, could never have given any such commandments as those just quoted to mankind ; and those parts of the Hebrew Scriptures which enunciate them are, therefore, most certainly no expression of the will of The Supreme.

“Ye shall not round the corners of your heads, neither shall ye mar the corners of your beards,” says

another of these curious commandments here encountered?

Such injunctions were probably directed against practices that prevailed among some of the nations of antiquity. Young men on attaining the age of puberty had their heads, uncropped till then, shorn of their locks, and the hair, with that of the sprouting cheeks and chin, presented as an offering at the shrine of the God. The order may, however, have been directed more particularly against the priests of Baal, who were shorn so as to leave no more than a ring of hair round the lower part of the head, in imitation seemingly of the rays of the sun. Their heads must have been trimmed exactly like those of the monks in the regular orders of the Church of Rome. The learned Spencer, indeed, wrote his great classical work* with the special view of showing that the Mosaic legislation was mainly directed against the Idolatry in which his clear and scholarly vision enabled him to see that the early Hebrews as a people were sunk.

Ye shall make no cuttings in your flesh, says another of the commandments here enunciated.

In the worship of some Semitic and other ancient deities, whose rites were neither unknown nor unobserved by the Israelites of old, it was customary for the hierophants and others to slash themselves with knives and to offer their blood upon the altar, as well as to one another to be sucked from the wounds. Such barbarous practices were of course abominations to more enlightened times, and were consequently denounced by the modern Jehovistic reformers.

“Do not prostitute thy daughter,” &c. This is yet another of those extraordinary and not generally understood commandments, which have nevertheless a special and well known significance; for it is directed

* De Legibus Hebræorum Ritualibus Cap. I: Primariam Legis Mosaicæ rationem fuisse *Idolatriæ* Israeliticæ inhibitionem.

against one of the most abominable and demoralising of all the customs prevalent among the Semitic races of Western Asia. Maidens on attaining the age of puberty were held to perform a religious and indispensable rite, by betaking themselves to the temple of their God or Goddess, and there yielding themselves to the embrace of the man who addressed them, receiving from him at the time a piece of money which went into the chest of the temple. Such was the Confirmation undergone by the virgins of Babylonia, Assyria, and Palestine, in ancient times! No wonder that reformed Judæism rebelled against a custom so degrading and demoralising. Stringently denounced in the coarsest terms in this revised Code, we must needs conclude that the custom continued nevertheless to be observed among the Israelites to a late period in their history. Nature-Worship, in which promiscuous sexual intercourse was the leading feature, must have prevailed in Judæa even to so late a date as the reign of Hezekiah—or what were the Kadeschim, and those booths abutting on the temple that were ordered to be pulled down by that pious Prince, if they were not for the celebration of the rites through which consistent worship was believed to be paid to the Reproductive Principle in Nature?*

The Israelites believing themselves to be the peculiar people of their God Jehovah, he being held supreme over all the Gods of other peoples, and the rest of the world regarded as little better than accursed, naturally conceived a great dislike to strangers?

No doubt of this, though we have seen an inter-

* In an exhaustive Paper by the learned Heyne in the Göttingen Transactions, the custom already denounced by Herodotus as “*fœdissimum omnium institutorum*,” is shown to have been general over Western Asia. Comp. Heyne: *De Babyloniorum Instituto Religioso ut mulieres ad Templum Veneris prostarent*, in *Com. Soc. Reg. Scient. Götting.* 1805, p. 30, Sect. *historicæ*.

polated commandment to "love the stranger," who, nevertheless, was never other than a despised alien or a slave in Israel. No stranger was on any account to partake of the meats presented to Jehovah; neither was aught from the hand of a stranger to be offered at his shrine. The Jewish woman living with her parents, or wedded to a Jew, was allowed to eat of them; but wedded to a stranger, were she even the daughter of a priest, she lost her privilege,—her marriage with the stranger cut her off in so far from her people. Marriages with strangers, indeed, were absolutely prohibited by the latest legislation. The history of the Hebrew people, nevertheless, shows that the law against intermarriage with strangers must have been of the most recent introduction:—That it was not observed until after the age of Solomon, and more than one of his successors, is certain. Sarah's objection to a daughter of Heth as wife for her son Isaac is an invention of the post-exilic writer of the mythical tales of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, introduced to lend countenance to the views of his day and the party he represents. Moses, as we are told, had a Midianite for his first wife and an Ethiopian for his second; and Kings David and Solomon, no-wise particular in their selections, had wives and concubines in crowds of all and sundry their neighbours and allies,—proof enough that the law was as little observed as it was assuredly unknown in their day.

Commandments for the celebration of the feasts of Jehovah occupy a large space in the Levitical section of the sacred books of the Jews?

Besides the Sabbath, or seventh day of every week, so specially ordered to be kept as a day of rest in the Decalogue and elsewhere, but so little observed, as it would seem, through the whole course of Jewish history even to the age of Nehemiah, there were many other days and times commanded to be kept holy, generally as feasts, but on one particular occasion at

least as a solemn fast and day of humiliation. The day of the new-moon or first day of each month, like the seventh of the week, was one of the regular holy days; on it no work was to be done, and extra sacrifices were to be offered. The fourteenth day of the month Nisan, or day of the full moon of the vernal equinox, was celebrated as the Pascha or Passover of Jehovah, a feast which we have ventured, in opposition to the usual interpretation, to connect with the passage of the sun from the lower into the upper hemisphere, or from the winter to the summer. On the fifteenth day of the same month fell the feast of unleavened bread, when a sheaf of the grain-harvest was to be waved before Jehovah, and no food was to pass the people's lips until this ceremony had been performed. Fifty days after the Sabbath of the fifteenth day, the feast, which by and by came to be called the Feast of Pentecost, was celebrated. On this occasion it was that "meat-offerings"—pastry made with oil and spiced with frankincense and salt—were the order of the day; and—practice unusual—the bread now presented was to be leavened—a direct contradiction of another ordinance in which Jehovah is made to declare that he will not have his sacrifices offered with leaven. Leaven, like honey, having a principle of fermentation within itself, was reckoned among things corrupt, unclean, and so unfit for presentation to the God. At the Feast of Weeks, or Pentecost, as many as seven lambs,—one, doubtless, for each of the seven Sabbaths comprised within the fifty days prescribed, one young bullock, two rams, and a kid of the goats as the sin-offering, were to be added to the meat or farinaceous offerings, and burnt [in part] on the altar as sacrifices of a sweet savour to Jehovah.

These festivals belonged to the commencement of the relatively modern ecclesiastical year, and were celebrated at the epoch of the vernal equinox; but

they were not held of the same importance in later times at least as those that took place in the seventh month, the beginning of the old civil year, and observed at the epoch of the autumnal equinox, when the sun sinks from the superior or summer signs to run his course through the six inferior or winter signs. The first month of the year, held holy at all epochs in the history of the Israelites, became exceptionally so to them when they had been made acquainted with the signs of the zodiac, and tinctured with the more recondite Sabæism of their congeners and conquerors, the Assyrians and Chaldæans?

This was so very certainly: As the seventh day of the week was Chiun's or Saturn's day, still goes by the name of the Roman God, and is yet made more of a holiday among ourselves than any other day of the week, so was the seventh month of the ecclesiastical year among the Jews especially devoted to the great God of Times and Seasons under his new name of Jehovah.

Jehovah is made by the Jewish writer to give Moses particular instructions for the celebration of the festivals connected with this month?

"Speak to the children of Israel," are the words, "and say: In the first day of the seventh month shall ye have a Sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation, a day on which no servile work is to be done, and no act performed other than the sacrifice of an offering made by fire to Jehovah."

What possible significance may have been attached to the blowing of trumpets?

The sound issuing from a trumpet was fancifully likened to the ray of light that dispels the dark; and as this seemed to drive out the night, so was the clangour of the trumpet held to end the old year and bring in the new. The instrument used on this great occasion, too, was special; it was none of the silver trumpets on which alarms and calls were blown in

the camp and field, but a ram's horn—the identical horn, said legend, of the ram caught in the thicket that was sacrificed by Abraham instead of his son Isaac!—representative, more probably, of the horn of the emblematical equinoxial ram. And, curiously enough, and it may be in connection with the mythical tale referred to, the chapter of The Book that is read on New-Year's Day in Jewish synagogues is the one in Genesis in which the story of Abraham and Isaac is told.

The festival of the first day of the seventh month, however, is not the only one, nor yet the most important, of those ordered to be observed in the seventh month?

The tenth day is to be specially set apart as the Atonement day of the year. On this great day the people are enjoined to do no manner of work, but to "afflict their souls. The soul that was not afflicted, or that did any work on this day, was to be cut off from among the people." On the fifteenth day, again, the first fruits of the earth were to be brought in and offered before Jehovah; for the grain harvest had long been gathered in, but the trees were now dropping ripe fruit, and the vintage had begun. Along with these offerings, so appropriate to the autumn, the people were further to bring boughs of thick trees, and palms, and willows of the brook; and were further to leave their houses and for seven days to dwell in booths, in remembrance, as it is said, of the sort of shelter their sires had had in the wilderness when fleeing out of Egypt.

The last must have been a commandment difficult of observance by the population of a great city like Jerusalem?

Not only difficult, but as impossible in any literal sense as it must have been for the children of Israel, in their flight from Egypt, to find shelter of the sort in the desert amid which they are said to have wan-

dered so long. There were no boughs of thick trees nor willows of the brook to be had in the waterless wilderness.

It would be difficult for the population of Jerusalem, even in its present shrunken state, did they quit their houses, to find boughs of trees to make them booths?

It would indeed; for the country around Jerusalem is now treeless, as it must have been also long before its destruction by Titus. In the times in which the legend arose on which the Order is founded, however, the land, we must presume, wore a different aspect, and was covered with shrubs and trees of a larger growth. How otherwise could the large supplies of fuel have been had that were wanted for the usual, to say nothing of the extraordinary, sacrifices, when not one or two, but as many as twelve or fourteen bullocks, the same number of lambs, a couple of rams and a goat were ordered for burnt-offerings in the proceedings of a single day! Whence could the fuel have come that was required for mere domestic purposes, when the city was miles in circumference, and its inhabitants a hundred thousand or more in number?

The country around Jerusalem, treeless at the present time, and the deserts amid which the ruins of Babylon and Nineveh, Palmyra and Baalbec now stand, could not assuredly have presented any such aspect in ancient times, when these great cities were the seats of Empires, and, with the lands around them, must have teemed with millions of busy men?

Such a conclusion is inevitable. A populous city in the midst of a desert is an impossibility.

To what, then, may the ruin of these States, which in former ages were so powerful, and supported a numerous and warlike population, be ascribed?

To the curse of God, say Theologians;—stricken with barrenness by reason of the wickedness of their

once inhabitants. Politicians, again, who happily are not always theologians, have maintained that it was due to misgovernment and the ravages of war. But misgovernment scarcely affects the masses, and all experience shows that a few short years suffice to efface the damage done by the most ruthless invasions.

The present desolate condition of these countries must therefore be owing to physical causes, to none that are either moral or political in their nature; neither need it be ascribed to change of climate consequent on cosmical causes ?

It probably depends on no cause more remote than simple denudation and exposure of the surface through destruction of the native growth of trees and shrubs which inevitably begins wherever men congregate in masses, and make themselves homes in towns and cities. Countries in the geographical position of Assyria, Babylonia, and Palestine, denuded of their leafy screens, no longer attract the rain that is indispensable to fertility; an uprush of trees and shrubs being at once the cause and the consequence not only of its own existence, but of the possible existence of the pasture lands and corn-fields that furnish man and beast with their food. The rainfall growing less and less as denudation of the soil proceeded, and the heights and slopes were stripped for firing, the soil at the same time became loosened and was washed away by the storms of winter; the levels then ceased to yield their increase in adequate proportion to the labour bestowed on them, dearth and depopulation followed, and man's dominion came to an end.

It was no curse of God, then, that brought the once powerful Empires of Assyria and Babylon to their fall ?

God curses nothing that is done in consonance with his eternal laws. It is man's short-sightedness

and ignorance—"Ignorance, that negative curse of God"—alone that has made lands desolate which once were populous, prosperous, and powerful.

If we have regard to the repeated commandments to rest and the denunciations of work on their Sabbaths and holy-days, we must conclude that the Israelites looked on labour as a curse, and on idleness as a blessing—to be idle, with them, it may be said, was to be well employed?

There need be no question of this. In the early part of the Book of Genesis we find labour imposed as a punishment on the Man for his transgression of an arbitrary commandment, and the evil teaching there set forth has had more or less of an evil influence on the world even to the present day. But the necessity of working for the supply of his wants is one of God's best gifts to man, as one of the great of our kind has said; and truly, the industrious are the only happy, the idle ever the unblest. To the worker the day is still as much too short, as to the idler it is too long. He who does not do work of some kind advantageous to himself or the community, has no title to live; he might be effaced without loss to the world.

The power of man to endure labour whether of body or mind, however, is limited?

Surely it is; excess in either kind leads to disease and death; and so is rest in due measure even as necessary as work to the well-being of the man. The busy heads and hands that make Capital—the accumulated fund of industry and thrift—to fructify; who have no respite from toil and no more in the end than the pittance of meat and drink that keeps soul and body together are ill repaid; they have a title to much more: to such participation in the proceeds of their industry and ingenuity as gives leisure for thought, and admits of aspiration to the intellectual life that lies beyond mere animal existence.

The name of Jehovah we have already seen was a name most holy—so holy that among the Commandments of the Decalogue one is devoted to forbidding its vain or unnecessary utterance. It could not be pronounced by a son of Israel without sin nor by a stranger without blasphemy. Hence the tale we here encounter of the son of the Israelitish woman by the Egyptian father, who is said to have blasphemed the name of Jehovah, and who, as Jehovah himself commands Moses, is brought forth of the camp and stoned to death. The unhappy man had taken the sacred tetragramma J.H.V.H. in vain—*i.e.*, he had uttered the proper name of the modern Jewish God—irreverently it may have been—and for so doing he must die.

It would almost seem as though it was the name Jahveh alone which it was death to utter?

There is, indeed, a nice and not uninteresting distinction now made between cursing Elohim—God, and blaspheming the name of Jahveh—the Lord; *Elohim* being the generic title for God or the Gods, *Jahveh* the proper and ineffable name of the Jewish Deity. “Whoever curseth his Elohim shall bear his sin; he who blasphemeth the name of Jahveh shall surely be put to death,” says the text (xxiv. 15, 16). The Jews, it would seem, might take God or the Gods to task, as we have seen Moses doing on the eve of the Exodus, when his God had not done all in conformity with his wishes, had sent him on a bootless errand, had threatened to break out on the people for their rebellions, &c.; whilst there was another God, the God of the Priesthood, to wit, against whom no word might be murmured without life being paid as the forfeit.

“The man who cursed his God, it is said, was to bear his sin:” what was the meaning attached to this?

It is given in the text. He who cursed God was

to bring a kid of the goats to the priest, to have it slaughtered at the door of the Tabernacle, sent as an offering of a sweet savour made by fire to Jehovah, and so find himself quit of his sin.

Such a commandment cannot surely be from God ?

Most certainly it cannot, but it may from man ; and meeting us as it does beside the context, we have information of a kind that has not always escaped the late Jehovistic expurgators of the Hebrew Scriptures, the purpose of these men having been to present their countrymen as acknowledging and worshipping no God but Jehovah alone.

In holding the name of their God so holy the Jews appear to have but imitated other peoples ?

One of the names of the Egyptian God, Hermes—*Thoth*, was held of such sanctity that it dared not be spoken aloud ; and he who uttered the proper name of the Queen of Heaven,—the Moon-Goddess, was put to death.* The Israelites in very many respects were in truth exactly like other heathen peoples.

The Jews were not at liberty to cultivate their land as they liked ?

As each seventh day was to be a Sabbath of rest to man, so was every seventh year to be a Sabbath of rest to the land. For six years they were to crop their fields, to dress their vines and fruit trees, and get out of the soil all it would yield ; but they were neither to plough, nor to sow, nor to reap on the seventh year. They were not even to gather aught the land produced of itself in the year of the Sabbath !

The seventh, and the year succeeding it, must, in this case, have been verily and indeed a fast-year, as well as a rest-year ?

Had these years not been otherwise provided for miraculously : “ If ye shall say : What shall we eat

* Movers, *Die Phœnizier*, I., 541.

the seventh year; behold we shall not sow nor gather in our increase; then I will command my blessing on you in the sixth year, and it shall bring forth fruit for three years; and ye shall sow the eighth year, and eat yet of old fruit until the ninth year."

Has not God by his own preordained ordinance, and man himself in his name, declared that "unless ye sow, neither shall ye reap," and that the sowings of one year do not suffice for two years?

No question of this—such is the great God of nature's eternal law.

Any such commandment as that quoted above could never, therefore, have been dictated by the inspiration of God?

Most certainly not. Each year's provision in temperate lands falls within the year, and is less or more abundant in consonance with meteorological conditions which vary within certain limits, and are in no wise under the control of man. But as God by his law has said that if we do not sow neither shall we reap, so may we feel assured that God did never by any miraculous interposition of the kind set forth, lead man into the sin of lying idle for a year, and as reward give him the produce of two years for the labour of one. In the sweat of thy face—or of thy brain might have been added—shalt thou eat bread, said a truly inspired man, possessed of a wholesome belief in the sanctity as well as the necessity of labour.

Something may, nevertheless, be said for giving the land an occasional rest?

Had the order to let the land lie fallow even oftener than once in seven years been unaccompanied by the grounds adduced for the practice, it would have been less unreasonable than, at first sight, it appears. Lands made to bear the same crops for a succession of years become exhausted, and cease to yield their proper increase; they only recover in some measure by being left fallow; but this must be

for more than one year in the seven prescribed. We have no evidence, however, that such a law as the one in question was ever followed, nor any account of the land yielding as matter of course on the sixth year double the produce it had borne in any preceding year. We have even positive assurance, indeed, that the order to let the land rest on the seventh year, as well as the one for the observance of the weekly Sabbath, was unknown at so late a period in the history of the Hebrew people as the year 445 before Christ; for we find Nehemiah complaining that in Judah he saw the people treading their winepresses, lading their asses and bringing corn, wine, grapes, figs, and all manner of country produce into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day (Nehem. xiii. 15). In the very book that engages us, moreover (Levit. xxvi.), we discover Jehovah threatening the people with setting his face against them for their neglect of his statutes. "I will scatter you among the heathen," he is made to exclaim, "and will draw out a sword after you, and your land, lying desolate, shall rest and enjoy her Sabbaths, because *it did not rest* when ye dwelt upon it." The commandment to let the land rest, therefore, came from the Reformed Jehovistic party, whose influence could not have culminated until after the Babylonian captivity. As the statute must have been unknown, so was it never observed till then—if perchance it was ever really observed by the remnant who returned under the leadership of Nehemiah—which is very questionable.

The rest prescribed was to be in the seventh year?

Doubtless to accord with the sacred number seven, which had a farther extension; for every fiftieth year, the year that succeeded each series of seven, was to be observed in an especial manner as a Jubilee. The trumpet was to sound, liberty was to be proclaimed throughout the land, and every one, if he chose, was to resume possession, upon certain terms, of any land

or other property he had disposed of or pledged in the course of the lapsed fifty years. He had but to return the price, or a certain portion of the price he had received, in exchange, the amount being determined by the number of years that had run between the date of the pledge or sale and the year of the Jubilee. The land was in no case to be held as alienated for ever; "For the land is mine, sayeth Jehovah." And so it is in truth, and cannot by natural right be held save in trust for the behoof of all born upon it—it can belong to no man to do with absolutely what he likes. But such a statute as that of the Jubilee year, with all its conditions, could never have been, and certainly never was, acted on in Israel. Like the seventh day of rest in the week, and the seventh year of rest to the land, the seven times seventh year of the Jubilee is a post-exilic ordinance contrived, in all likelihood, against those who were laying field to field, and turning into hunting grounds the lands that were wanted to grow food for the community.

Such laws, whether observed or not, still point plainly enough to settled times, a policed state, and agriculture as the chief industry of the people?

And consequently could not have been dictated by Moses to a horde of wanderers amid the trackless, waterless, herbless, treeless, lifeless wilderness.

There is another statute now encountered which has long and properly been ignored or set at nought by the children of Israel?

That against usury: "Thou shalt not give thy money upon usury," says the text. This is so obviously unjust, that we may safely conclude it never came into the writer's head through the inspiration of God. He, who by thrift and industry accumulates capital, and finds himself possessed of more than he needs for living and carrying on his

business, but which another can use to profit, is as fairly entitled to share in the profit that then accrues as if he were himself the immediate agent in the increase. Capital would never be accumulated could it not be used and turned to farther profit; and, without capital, industry would be paralysed, society made unprogressive, and all the comforts, elegancies, and refinements of life become impossible. Capital, therefore, has the very foremost title to protection by the State. But, as we have already hinted, it has its duties as well as its rights; and it cannot be consonant with even-handed justice that the capitalist alone should go on adding gain to gain, luxury to luxury, superfluity to superfluity, whilst the instruments of his prosperity make no advance in aught that sweetens, adorns, raises, and ennobles life.

There are several beautiful, charitable injunctions also met with in the Book of Leviticus which mark the late period of its composition?

“If thy brother be waxen poor,” says one of these, “and have fallen into decay with thee, then shalt thou relieve him; yea, though he be a stranger or a sojourner among ye; and, if he be sold to thee, thou shalt not compel him to serve as a bond-servant, but as a hired servant shall he be with thee until the year of the Jubilee, when he shall depart, both he and his children with him: my servants which I brought out of Egypt, they shall not be sold as bond-men.” The law, as here announced, is therefore at utter variance with the one on the same subject on which we have had occasion to speak in our commentary on Exodus (p. 207). Bond-men and bond-women, however, there were to be; but of the heathen round about, or the native inhabitants of the land; of these were bond-men and bond-maids to be bought; and they were to be slaves for the term of their lives. “Ye shall take them for an inheritance and a

possession for your children after you—they shall be your bond-men for ever.”

Slavery, therefore, in its most unmitigated form is here presented as commanded by Jehovah, even at the late period when the text we are discussing was composed?

The terms in which the “domestic institution” is sanctioned are explicit; but the modern world, despite of the approval put into the mouth of God, and being, as said, an integral part of his revealed will to man, has declared that of all the unjustifiable institutions that have ever existed in the world slavery is the most indefensible. The more advanced among the policed peoples of the earth have abandoned it in every shape, from serfdom or ascription to the soil, upwards; and though it still lingers among the least enlightened and progressive peoples of the world, it is doomed, and must, by-and-by, be abandoned by all. It may be very long, however, before slavery dies out from among the dark and yellow-skinned races of mankind.

The provisions in the legislation connected with slavery are exceptionally favourable to the Israelites?

As might have been expected. Did one of them fall poor and sell himself to a stranger sojourning in the land, he might be redeemed at any time on certain equitable terms. If not redeemed the Israelite who had sold himself into slavery was, in any case, to go out free, both he and his children, in the year of the Jubilee—a provision of which we found no trace in the older statutes of Exodus any more than we found any mention of a year of Jubilee.

Like favourable ordinances now also make their appearance in regard to the redemption of beasts, houses, and lands, and notably, and in striking contradiction to the older legislation—even though they may have been vowed to Jehovah: things devoted to Jehovah, it is now said, may be redeemed; but of

old, "none devoted, which shall be devoted of men, shall be redeemed, but shall surely be put to death."

Among the most frequently repeated injunctions in the Hebrew scriptures are those against making molten and graven images?

The later Jewish writers must have felt the aversion which cultivated men naturally experience against any attempt to give shape or semblance to the supersensuous entity they conceive and call God or Jehovah:—"Ye shall make you no idols nor graven images, neither rear you up a standing image, neither set you an image of stone in your land to bow down to it," says the writer, speaking in the name of his God. But the interdict here encountered plainly implies that both molten and graven images were made, standing images of wood and stone (phallic emblems) set up, and all alike bowed down to and worshipped by the people.

When we read the Hebrew Scriptures with the eyes of the understanding, and without prejudice, we see that the commandments against idolatry in various forms must have been called for because of the prevalence of idolatrous practices in the land of Judæa, not among neighbouring tribes and peoples only, as so often said, but among the children of Israel themselves, and farther, that such commandments can only have come from writers who lived in relatively recent times—during, and perhaps still more commonly after, the Babylonian captivity. From the beginning until very far on in their career as a people, the Israelites appear never to have been without images or idols of some sort, pillars of stone and of wood, as symbols of the gods they owned and sought to propitiate. We have the record of the Patriarch Jacob setting up the stone he had had for a pillow at Beth-El, the house of El, the God he worshipped, pouring oil upon it, and so consecrating

it to his divinity. In so-called Mosaic times, again, we have Cherubim commanded by Jehovah himself with faces looking towards one another, and with wings to cover the mercy seat, on which there can be little doubt the image of the God himself or his Symbolic presence was enthroned. We have, farther, the golden Calf of Aaron, and the brazen Serpent of Moses; emblems authorised by the priest and the leader, to the latter of which incense continued to be offered in Jerusalem down to the reign of Hezekiah, whilst to the former adoration was paid at Beth-El and Dan in the neighbouring realm of Israel to the very end of its independent existence. To conclude, we have the Stone columns of Baal, and the Wooden shafts of Aschera—the *grove* and *groves* of our English version—as objects of ceaseless denunciation by the prophets and Jehovahists of the most recent times. These pillars were notoriously simulacra of the active and passive reproductive principle in nature, prime element in the religious conceptions of pre-historic ages, and objects of worship with the Israelites as with their congeners, the other Semitic tribes around them, well nigh to the end of their days as a people.

Besides their greatest Divinities, the Israelites had certain household Gods—Teraphim, Idols—usually of small size, such as those must have been which Rachel stole from her father Laban; but sometimes also of larger dimensions, gilded or overlaid with brass, and then called Ephods, of the kind, doubtless, of the one owned by King David, the man according to God's own heart, addressed by him by the name of Jehovah, and consulted as an oracle in cases of emergency or danger. Kind David's Ephod must indeed have been of the full life-size, for we read of its having been placed on a certain occasion in his bed with a rug to represent his shock of hair by his wife Michal, when his life was sought by the watchers of

Saul. We have already had occasion to refer to the object called *Eduth*, that is ordered to be kept in the Ark of the Covenant, as possibly something altogether different from the Tables of Stone on which God is said to have written his most special Commandments, and to ask whether it was not rather an Image of the God himself, or a figure symbolical of the God in his attribute of Generator.

From what has just been said it would seem that there is ground enough for abandoning the Idea that the Israelites were ever in any sense save their own a chosen people, the originators of the great conception of the ONENESS OF GOD, destined to hand down this truth to the modern world, and to be the teachers of morals and religion to mankind?

The Idea of the Oneness of God is the outcome of the finer minds among peoples that have long passed the period of unreflecting barbarism—it has no place in the religious conceptions of savages. The Dyaus of the Vedic people, the Zervane Akarene of the Zends, the Brahma of the Hindoos, the Zeus of the Greeks, the Jupiter, Deus Optimus Maximus of the Romans, and the All-Fadir of the Teutonic races, may all be said as truly to express the principle of Supremacy of One among the Gods or of One God as the Jehovah of the later writers of the Jews. Of God conceived as One and Ubiquitous, as we may admit that he was by the more advanced minds of Judæa in its best days, the mass of the people of Israel seem never at any time to have had a notion. To them Jahveh or Jahveh-Elohim was never more than the greatest among the Gods, the particular God of their country; in the same way precisely as Zeus or Jupiter was the chief of the Pantheon to the populace of Greece and Rome, and as God is head of the celestial hierarchy to that largest section of the Christian world which owns the Pope of Rome as God's vicegerent on Earth.

Have we not positive testimony to the fact that the worship of their God, under the form of the Bull, was the cult of the Hebrew people up to and after their separation into the two States of Judah and Israel or Ephraim ?

When Jeroboam rebelled against his father Solomon and rent the realm of Israel from Judah, he, to keep his subjects from looking to Jerusalem as the Religious and so as the Political Metropolis of their race, is said to have taken counsel and made two Calves of Gold which he set up in Beth-El and Dan, saying to the people : "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem ; behold thy Gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." Appointing priests, offering sacrifices, and ordering all as we can only understand things to have been ordered heretofore in the Capital of the united Kingdoms, he furnished his Israelites with the means of worshipping at home instead of abroad the God they had been wont to address ; strengthening himself thereby in his now independent position, doubtless, but also giving us in these distant days to know that the religion of the ancient Hebrews was not always Jehovism or the worship of one God, as commonly said and believed, but Idolatry, such even as prevailed among the whole of the Semitic tribes—Phœnicians, Syrians, Edomites, Moabites, and others—inhabiting Palestine and the neighbouring lands, and of the same blood as the Hebrews themselves.

We have already seen covenants, contracts, or bargains on various occasions made between Jehovah and his people ?

We have—in connection with the vow which Jacob makes at Beth-El especially ; and here, again, some 300 years or more after the date referred to in Genesis, Jehovah is made to say : "If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, then will I give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her

increase, &c. . . . and I will walk among you and will be your God, and ye shall be my people, &c. . . . But, if ye will not hearken unto me . . . but will break my covenants, I also will do this unto you: I will even appoint terror over you, consumption and the burning ague; ye shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it; your land shall not yield her increase, &c.; I will send beasts among you; I will bring a sword upon you . . . and ye shall be delivered into the hand of the enemy; and ye shall eat the flesh of your sons and the flesh of your daughters; and I will destroy your high places, and cut down your images . . . and will not smell the savour of your sweet odours. I will bring your land into desolation, and your enemies shall dwell therein, and I will scatter you among the heathen. Then shall your land rest and enjoy her Sabbaths . . . because it did not rest when ye dwelt upon it; and ye shall perish among the heathen, and they that are left of you shall pine away in your enemies' land," &c. &c.

All of which is to be interpreted ?

As an exposition of the state and kind of Religion in fashion among the Israelites at the time the text was composed, and as prophecy after the event;—these denunciations having been written when the Hebrew people, both in Ephraim and Judah, had already been invaded and spoiled, had suffered siege within their cities, and been carried away captive by Egyptians, Assyrians, and Babylonians; all of them peoples better policied, more powerful, and so verily and in fact, more favoured, in one sense, than themselves, but so much less favoured in this: that they bred neither poet, archæologist, nor historian with the daring that could make God the mouth-piece of the thoughts, the imaginations, and the likings of man—with the Genius, in a word, that has given the song and the story of Israel as an eternal legacy of fascination to the world.

But did the sinners, the rebellious, and negligent people, sorely tried and terribly punished, repent—what then ?

Then should Jehovah remember his covenant with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob—he would not wholly cast them off, neither would he utterly destroy them.

Is an engagement implying ?

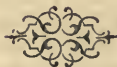
That a remnant through the clemency of the Sovereign of Chaldæa and Medo-Persia had already returned to their country, and there regained something of their former state and prosperity, though nothing more of their political power.

Of the Book of Leviticus, in general, we are therefore to conclude ?

That whilst it contains certain fragments having the stamp of a higher antiquity upon them—the substance of these being for the most part contained in the Book of Exodus,—the bulk of Leviticus is in truth of the most recent composition. The sacrificial laws, which it is the more especial purpose of the Book to enunciate, and the greater number of the ordinances, referring to civil and domestic matters, which it propounds, could not have been thought of save in a state of society possessed of the means and appliances of settled life in towns. It is certain, indeed, that these laws were never in operation before the Epoch of the Second Temple—that they were generally known and observed at any period indeed, is open to question. The Book, as a whole, appears to be of still more recent composition than Deuteronomy, usually regarded by Biblical critics as the most modern Book of the Pentateuch. It cannot, therefore, date from further back than the time when the second detachment of the Jewish people returned from their captivity in Babylon, under the leadership of Nehemiah, 440 before Christ. The learned Dr

Kuehnen, indeed, does not hesitate to ascribe the Book of Leviticus to Ezra, the latest editor and largest contributor to the Pentateuch, where he is not the author literally of the work as we have it.*

* Compare Kuehnen: "Die fyf Boeken van Moses," 12mo, 1873.



THE BOOK OF NUMBERS.

ON the first day of the second month, in the second year after quitting Egypt, Moses, says the record, receives orders from Jehovah within the Tabernacle of the Congregation of Israel and in the wilderness of Sinai, to number the people: "From twenty years old and upwards all that are able to go forth to war in Israel, thou and Aaron shalt number them." And this, with the aid of a man from every tribe, accomplished, the sum of grown men over twenty years of age able to carry arms is reported to be six hundred and three thousand five hundred and fifty, in addition to whom, the Levites, twenty-two thousand adults in number, have to be reckoned; they, as exempt from bearing arms, not being included in the tale of able-bodied males.

Six hundred and three thousand five hundred and fifty grown men, implies a like number of women, and at least as many infirm and aged persons and children under twenty,—an aggregate of something like three millions of souls?

True! And then comes the question, how a family of seventy persons, all told, descendants of the twelve sons of one father, should have so multiplied during even the longest term assigned to the sojourn of the Israelites in Egypt, as to have become a people numbering nearly if not even more than three millions of souls! All history, all experience shows that single families never increase in any such measure; their

members get scattered abroad and lose sight and knowledge of one another. Among the yeomanry of England there are some who can speak positively of their forefathers who lived in the Saxon times, hard upon a thousand years ago; but none of them boast of having peopled the Hundred, much less the county or the country, in which they and theirs have dwelt from time immemorial. Of the upper nobility of England, again, Dukes, Earls, Barons, more than four hundred in number, there are but ten who trace their ancestry back to the 14th and 15th centuries; and the Howards, Hastings, Seymours, Stanleys, Talbots, &c., now show but as a poor minority amid the Smiths, Taylors, Whites, Browns, Johnsons, Thomsons, &c., of the commons. If we observe this fact in modern times, and under circumstances the most favourable to increase and longevity, we may be sure that the same law obtained in days when Jacob is reputed to have lived. Population could indeed have made no such rapid progress in the old world as it does now among peoples policied, industrious, and commercial. Famine and pestilence appear to have been matters of regular periodical recurrence in ancient times, and must ever and anon have given a serious check to the increase of the human family.

The numbers as they stand in the Hebrew Scriptures must therefore be much exaggerated?

If there ever was a *flight* and *escape*, or a *bringing out with a high hand* from Egypt, of the kind recorded, the numbers could, by no possibility, have exceeded a few hundreds, men, women, and children, all told. There may, however, have been an *expulsion* on a considerably larger scale, in what must be held as pre-historic times, however, in so far as the Israelites are concerned. The mythical tale of the Exodus as we have it in the quasi-historic records of the later Jews, from the coming of Jacob into Egypt, the sojourn of the Israelites there for more than four hundred years, and

their flight or expulsion from thence, is founded in all likelihood on information obtained from the writings of Manetho, Symmachus, and others, which speak of the invasion of the territories of the Pharaohs by an Arab tribe denominated Hyksos or shepherds; the dominion of this tribe over the country for a lengthened period of time, and their expulsion from the land by one of the native princes effected by a force he had organised in Nubia, to which the Pharaohs or old rulers had retreated in the days of their adversity.

The exaggeration as regards the numbers of the Israelites who are reported to have fled from Egypt seems to be made manifest by what is now said concerning the numbers of Levites devoted to the service of the Tabernacle?

Set down as they are at Twenty-two thousand able-bodied men; a number greater of itself than any that could have broken up from quarters in the land of Goshen and moved but a mile away in a single night, with no more in the shape of baggage and supplies than the dough that was in their kneading troughs! The tale of the flight refers to times when Aaron and his sons suffice for the duties of the Tabernacle.

A fourth of the gross number of Levites, now reported, whose sole business it was to take down, pack up, and carry a Tent or Tabernacle of no more than very moderate dimensions, would have been in each other's way rather than helpful in getting through the mere porter's work required of them.

So may it be fairly said; but there is something of still greater weight against the tale as it stands than even the extravagant number of fighting men and Levites reported?

The fact that the Levites did not exist as a Caste, having special duties, for long ages after the days of Moses. They do not once make their appearance in King David's days; and there are several occasions

during his reign, when, had they existed, their services would certainly have been required.

Yet do we find various charges in the Book of Numbers delivered, as said, by Jehovah to Moses concerning the Levites ?

They are ordered to be presented to Aaron, to wait on him and his sons in their priestly ministrations, and to hold themselves devoted to the outside service—for as yet they had no part in the inside service—of the Tabernacle. They certainly were not priests or ministers of the altar at the time the legend took shape or the document was written which the compiler of this part of the Pentateuch had before him as his authority. It is not until much later in the history of the Israelites that we meet with Levites as ministrants in properly religious rites. They appear rather to have lived long among their countrymen in poverty and contempt; and this would not have been the case could they have aspired to the priestly office as a right, amid a community so zealously observant of religious duties as the Jews.

Jehovah, however, is now made to declare that he had taken the Levites from among the children of Israel in lieu of the first-born of their sons and daughters, his old requisition ?

“On the day that I smote the first-born of Egypt,” says the text, “I hallowed unto me all the first-born of man and beast. And I, behold I, have taken the Levites instead of the first-born of the children of Israel; therefore the Levites shall be mine.” A statement from which we have another and a strong assurance that the conclusion already come to respecting the regular sacrifice of the first-born of their sons and daughters by the ancient Israelites is correct. Up to a certain period, the date of which is not exactly known but cannot be very remote, the first-born of man and beast were certainly and as matter of course passed through the fire or presented as

burnt-offerings to El-Elohe Israel, whom, as their King (Melek, Moloch), the Hebrews, until he was superseded by Jehovah, acknowledged for their chief Divinity.

This substitution of the Levites for the first-born is very probably a still more modern contrivance than circumcision for setting aside the sacrifice of the first-born of man, that had at length become intolerable to a more advanced age; ingenious, moreover, as not doing away with the initiatory rite first substituted, but superadding a payment in money—five shekels of the Sanctuary—when it was performed.

The substitution of the Levites and the fee for the circumcision and presentation to the priest must have been found far more advantageous to the chest of the Sanctuary than the olden sacrifice of the first-born to the God?

Five shekels of the Sanctuary (which the writer is at the pains to inform his reader are twenty gerahs, the shekel at the time he wrote having become a coin of the past), as price of the redemption of the first-born of their sons and daughters, must have amounted to a very considerable sum in times later in the history of the Hebrew people than those referred to in the text.

The God of the Israelites, according to their sacred writings, could not abide the presence of the sick and ailing in his Sanctuary; no more would he be served by the hunchback, the flat-nosed, and the splay-footed?

“Command the children of Israel,” says the text, “that they put out of the camp every leper, and every one that hath an issue, and whosoever is defiled by the dead, both male and female, that they defile not the camp in the midst whereof I dwell.” But civilised men have verily shown themselves more humane than the Hebrew God, as he is here portrayed; for

they have everywhere erected houses of reception for the unfortunates among them who are the victims of accident and disease, or who, coming into the world imperfect in their organisation, are idiots in mind or cripples in body,—deaf, dumb, blind, halt, and lame.

When a man or woman had committed a sin or done a trespass, he or she was encouraged to confess the sin or trespass, and required to make reparation for what had been done amiss by returning the principal with the addition of a fifth of its value to the party wronged?

This is not the first time we have had *confession* of sin or trespass recommended in the Jewish scriptures. How much the principle involved has been extended, and how much abused, under the Christian dispensation as interpreted, is known to all. It is to be particularly noted, however, that the confession here required is acknowledgment of guiltiness for a material trespass, such as theft, for which compensation could be given; it has no reference to moral delinquencies or to private affairs. The confession of the Israelite, moreover, was to be made to God, and in public, that right might be done,—never to a priest, and in private, as an element in a system of espionage in which the priest is tool and the end is power over the minds and bodies of the people. “Make confession to the God of Israel,” says Joshua to Achan, when he had appropriated part of the spoil (Josh. vii. 19); “Make confession to Jehovah your God,” says Ezra (x. 11); “Every tongue shall confess to God,” says the great apostle of the Gentiles (Rom. xiv. 11). It is not confession to man, therefore, that is required, or that can be amerced at the price of so many Pater-nosters and Ave Marias, of fasting, or other penance. Achan paid for his crime with his life; and, but for the interference of his friends, Jonathan had done the same, though his sin

was no more than dipping his rod in honey and eating against orders when he was an hungered. Might not the old Jewish law requiring compensation from the thief to the party robbed or defrauded be advantageously restored in modern legislation?

In illustration of ancient Israelitish ideas of the way in which God is credited with the administration of affairs among them, what we find now said of the Ordeal of Jealousy deserves particular notice?

Did a man become jealous of his wife on any ground, good or bad, he was to bring her before the priest with an offering—the tenth of an ephah of barley meal. The priest was to set her solemnly before Jehovah, to uncover her head and put the offering of jealousy into her hand, he having in his hand “the bitter water that causeth the curse,” and say: “Be thou free from this bitter water that causeth the curse if thou hast not gone aside to uncleanness with another instead of thy husband. But if thou hast gone aside and be defiled, then Jehovah make thee a curse and an oath among the people, when Jehovah doth make thy thigh to rot and thy belly to swell.” To which the woman was to assent and say Amen, Amen! The priest was then to write down the curses and to wash off the writing with the bitter water which the woman in turn was to drink.

The consequence of which, as said, would be?

“Then shall it come to pass,” continues the edifying narrative, “that if she be defiled the water that causeth the curse shall enter into her, and her belly shall swell, and her thigh shall rot; and if she be not defiled, then shall she be free.” In other words, if the woman were innocent no harm would come of the draught; but if guilty, then would she be poisoned.

To produce any such effects as those described,

the bitter water must have been a rather powerful brewage?

Anything that is said of its preparation however would have left it harmless enough; for by the text as it stands, some of the dust of the tabernacle is all that is ordered to be put into it; and this could have had no such deleterious effects as those described. The power of making the drink life or death to the woman therefore lay with the priest. The true mode of preparing the bitter water of jealousy has not been left to us by the Jehovistic editor; but it must have been a decoction of some such poisonous bitter as the Indian fig (*Strychnos nux-vomica*), when it was meant to prove fatal; as it was mere water with a little dust diffused in it when it was to prove harmless. The poisonous decoction was doubtless that which was exhibited in cases where the guilt of the woman was notorious, the water with the dust being that administered in instances where general report or more particular inquiry spoke her guiltless: the administration of one or other of the drinks being thus left to the discretion of the priest,—a dangerous power to be confided to the hands of any man, and open to terrible abuse. Not one woman in a hundred, however, though innocent as infancy, could possibly have appeared otherwise than guilty under the terrible ordeal to which she was subjected. But Trial by Ordeal, though sanctioned by the Code of the Israelites, given them as is still believed by God, is now discarded by civilised communities and looked on as a thing of the past.

Not of any very remote past however?

No; for it was one of the legacies left by the Jews to their Christian successors, which long held its own, and only fell into discredit when natural science was born and men began to distinguish between physical and moral laws and consequences; when it was seen that strength and skill with the

weapon always carried the day when the trial was by wager of battle, and that poison, fire, and deep water made no distinction between guilt and innocence.*

There is a law referring to persons styled Nazarites ?

The Nazarite was one who for some cause or other "separated himself to the Lord" for a season, abjuring the society of his kindred and community, abstaining from certain meats and drinks—from the fruit of the vine and its products, wine in particular, letting his hair grow, coming near no dead body, were it even that of his father or mother, &c. When the days of his separation had run, he presented himself before the priest with an offering in his hand—no one was ever to appear before Jehovah empty-handed—viz., two lambs of the year, a male and a female, a basket of unleavened bread baked with oil, and a drink-offering. His head was then shaved at the door of the tabernacle, and the hair, along with certain small portions of the peace and sin offerings he had brought, was burnt upon the altar. After these proceedings, held solemn enough doubtless in by-gone days, meeting us now as childish and absurd, though presented with the stamp of divine commandments upon them, the Nazarite was held purged of his vow, and at liberty to return to his home and mix with his people, to indulge in his usual meat and drink, and proceed with his old avocations.

The Nazarite vow is another of the legacies in

* The slow rate of human progress where science and letters have no part in the daily life of man, may be judged of from the fact that the Mahommedan physician's prescription in the present day is still in many cases of the kind we find formulated among other particulars in "the Trial of Jealousy," it may be more than three thousand years ago! He writes a few lines—often a verse of the Koran—on a slip of paper, washes off the writing with a little water, and administers it as medicine to the patient!

modified form that has come down to us from the Jews?

Notable in more respects than one, in having given, among others, the inspired writers of the New Testament an occasion for floundering in their exegesis. In Roman Catholic countries, children at the present day are occasionally "vowed to the Virgin" for a number of years; in which event they are clothed in white or light blue: they are separated to the Virgin Goddess by their parents as the Jews of old separated themselves to their God Jehovah. But the Jewish Nazarite was not a child; and we have still adult Nazarites, of a sort, both male and female, among us. The men and women of the age we live in who look on the Pope of Rome as God's vicegerent on earth, who now "go into Retreat," or separate themselves from the society of their fellows for a season, have passed the period of childhood and its simple ways. When they have been living too fast, in short, or have been pursuing courses which their better nature in calmer moments does not entirely approve, Roman Catholic ladies and gentlemen are wont occasionally to go into "Retreat." There they live in solitude, meditating, it is to be presumed, on their sins and shortcomings, praying much, fasting vigorously, wearing a hair shirt, and giving themselves the "discipline" or cat-o'-nine tails, perchance, at intervals, and so on. After a process of the sort continued for a week, ten days, or a longer time, according to the amount of peccadillos to be disposed of, they emerge more thoughtful and sober, it is to be hoped, than when they went in, though not always fortified against the proclivity to fall back into the old objectionable but pleasant courses, and so making occasional renewals of the retreat and the discipline requisite.

The idea of "separation to God," however, has had a much wider extension than any implied in

these vowings to the Virgin and temporary retreats from the pleasures of the world ?

The monastic system of modern Europe had assuredly no other parentage than the Jewish Nazarate. In this cruel, absurd, and now indefensible system, able-bodied men and women ignorantly, ungratefully, and irreverently repudiate the boon of present being they have from God, and set up claims to pleasant things of their own imagining in a life to come ; to be won, too, by such doings as fasting, praying, the renunciation of the first duties of manhood and womanhood, and the abnegation of all that gives worth and nobility to life. Monks and nuns in short would wring from God by their self-inflicted miseries something he may have in store, indeed, but has not given, to the misuse of the life he has seen fit to bestow.

The law of the Nazarate is followed immediately, and somewhat incongruously, as it seems, by the fine sentences in which Moses is instructed to bless the children of Israel ?

Sentences out of place where they stand, detached undoubtedly from their context, but appealing to the religious sense of mankind now as they must have done in the days of higher culture than those of Moses when they came from the mind of the unknown writer :—“The Lord bless thee and keep thee ; the Lord make His face to shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee ; the Lord lift up His countenance upon thee and give thee peace !”

The Tabernacle set up and sanctified in the way and manner described in the Book of Numbers, the Princes of Israel, as they are called, bring offerings of great value for the maintenance and service of the Sanctuary ?

Six covered wagons, each drawn by two oxen ; twelve chargers or salvers, and the same number of bowls or basins, of silver ; twelve spoons of gold

full of frankincense; twenty-four bullocks, sixty rams, sixty goats, and sixty lambs—over two hundred head of cattle for sacrifice!

How can we believe that a party of men, women, and children in flight from slavery, a wandering horde in the wilderness, only kept from perishing outright of hunger and thirst by miraculous interpositions, should have princes at the head of tribes able to bring such costly presents as covered wagons and draught oxen, vessels of gold and silver by the dozen and victims by the score—bullocks, sheep, and goats for the altar?

How, indeed! Could the tale, by the utmost stretch of the most complacent imagination, be credited, the children of Israel must truly have borrowed from the Egyptians more extensively than it seems possible to conceive them possessed either of the power or the will to lend. But the tale is the composition of a priestly Scherazade whose fancy has outrun his discretion, and who must have lived some considerable time after the age of Solomon, when the Jews, by their dealings with neighbouring nations and a term of peace, had become more familiar with the sight of gold and silver than they could have been when they were bondsmen in Egypt or errant wanderers in the wilderness; their best possessions then being the weapons in their hands with which they had to keep their heads and win them settlements in lands more fertile than the desert or the steppe; home, as we believe, of their nomad fathers as of themselves in earlier times. The salvers, it is thought, were for receiving the flesh, the bowls for catching the blood of the victims.

The enumeration of the costly contributions of the Princes completed, we are informed by the writer that when Moses went into the Tabernacle to speak with Jehovah, "he heard the voice of one speaking

unto him from off the mercy seat that was upon the Ark of the Testimony." What is to be thought of such a statement ?

That it is as childish as it is absurd ; and that he who made it could have had no reasonable conception of God—the all-pervading essence of things and phenomena, ubiquitous and so limitless, without form, therefore, not compact of organs like a man, and never making use of speech as means of intercourse with aught *Of which* and *In which* he *Is*. It is through his understanding alone ; by study of his own and his fellows' intellectual, moral, and religious nature ; the properties of things and the laws of the universe, that man is privileged to learn something of the will and the behests of God.

The intimations which Moses is now said to receive from Jehovah do not strike us in these days as of particular significance ?

They do not, more especially the first of them, to this effect : " Speak to Aaron and say : When thou lightest the lamps, the seven lamps shall give light over against the Candlestick."

God give directions about the lighting of lamps !

So say these ancient writings, whose author certainly lived not in classical times, when it was said : *Nec Deus intersit nisi dignus vindice nodus*. The next announcement of Jehovah's will, however, is of more importance ?

Truly ; for it refers to the consecration of the Levites to Jehovah in lieu of the first-born of the sons and daughters of Israel. " Take the Levites," says the text, " and cleanse them ; sprinkle water of purifying upon them ; let them shave all their flesh, and wash their clothes, and so make themselves clean. And thou shalt offer them for an offering ; for they are wholly given unto me from among the children of Israel ; instead of the first-born of Israel have I taken them unto me."

These words, as we have already said, point conclusively to the ancient custom, now to be foregone, of sacrificing the first-born to their God by the Israelites. These the old Divinity had in smoke as a sacrifice of a sweet savour made by fire; but the live Levites were not to be made use of in this way?

They were immediately made a gift of by Jehovah to Aaron and his sons, to do the service of the Tabernacle, and make an atonement, it is said, for the children of Israel, that there be no plague among them.

Reiterated and very particular instructions are, further, given for the celebration of the Passover?

It was to be strictly observed by all and sundry, by the clean and those at home on the fourteenth day of the first month, by the unclean and those on a journey on the corresponding day of the second month; in no case, under no pretext was its observance to be foregone; he who did so was to be cut off from his people. There was ever to be one ordinance for the stranger, and for him who was born in the land; the stranger being thus put on a footing with the native Israelite; a stretch of liberality greater than is commonly to be found in the Hebrew scriptures; declaratory, moreover, beside what is said of the Levites, and the provision made for the settled Jew of later days who happened to be from home or on a journey, of the relatively recent date of the writing.

Certain extraordinary phenomena, meant to be regarded as miraculous, are spoken of in connection with the Tabernacle, the dwelling-place of Jehovah?

On the day in which it was set up "a Cloud," it is said, "covered it, and at even there was upon it, as it were, the appearance of fire until the morning." In their subsequent journeyings, the lifting or falling of this cloud was the signal to the Israelites to move or to halt. As long as the cloud abode upon the Taber-

nacle they rested in their tents; when it was taken up, whether it was by day or by night, they journeyed. In the Exodus we had a pillar of smoke to guide the wanderers by day, a pillar of fire to guide them by night; and the Desert-Caravans of the present time are said still to proceed during the night with a blazing pot of fire in their front, which of course would show as a column of smoke were it carried in the day. The desert, doubtless, was traversed in the time of the writer as it is now; but the customary and natural is turned by him into the supernatural as a sign of the peculiar favour in which Jehovah holds his chosen people.

Neither the pillar of smoke by day nor that of fire by night, however, appear to have been implicitly trusted by Moses to show the way, as we imagine they might have been—the intimations he has had from their institutor considered?

So much must needs be inferred when we find him by and by in parley with Hobab the Midianite—a native of the desert, familiar with its tracks and above all with its wells—and entreating him to go with them as their guide. From the tenor of the conversation reported, we must presume, indeed, that Hobab had already been acting as scout. “We are journeying,” says Moses to him, “unto the place of which Jehovah said: ‘I will give it you.’ Come thou with us, and we will do thee good.” But Hobab declines. “I will not go,” says he, “I will depart to mine own land, and to mine own kindred.” To which Moses rejoins: “Leave us not, I pray, forasmuch as thou knowest how we are to encamp in the wilderness, and thou mayest be to us instead of eyes.” But whether Hobab yields to these entreaties and goes with the Israelites as their farther guide or not we do not learn, though it seems likely that he did; for he is referred to later on in the story (Judges iv. 11), and called “the father-in-law of Moses.”

Jehovah shows himself at all times, as we know, excessively annoyed by the murmurings of the people?

And makes them often smart for their pains; as at Taberah, where it is now said, "the fire of Jehovah [Query, the Khamseen of the desert] burned among them and consumed even those that were in the uttermost parts of the camp." But Moses prays to the irate God, and the fire is quenched. Not so the murmurings of the people; for immediately after, having been informed that "a mixed multitude among them fell a lusting," we learn farther that "the children of Israel wept again, and said: Who shall give us flesh to eat? we remember the flesh which we did eat in Egypt freely, the cucumbers and the melons, the leeks, the onions and the garlick; but now our soul is dried away; there is nothing but this manna."

Such complainings will be sure again to excite the anger of Jehovah?

As they do indeed, and of Moses also; though his displeasure is rather with Jehovah than with the famishing horde he has under his command. When he hears the people weeping throughout their families, every man in the door of his tent, he remonstrates with Jehovah, and says: "Wherefore, Lord, hast thou afflicted thy servant, and wherefore layest thou the burthen of all this people upon me—have I conceived them? have I begotten them, that thou shouldst say unto me: Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth the sucking child, unto the land which thou swarest unto their fathers? Whence should I have flesh to give unto all this people? for they weep unto me, saying, Give us flesh, that we may eat! I am not able to bear all this people alone; it is too heavy for me; and if thou deal thus with me, kill me I pray thee out of hand, and let me not see my wretchedness."

Jehovah will surely be offended with this cry of agony from the leader?

Yet is he by no means offended; on the contrary, he here, as elsewhere, may be said to acknowledge the reasonableness of Moses' remonstrance, and comes to his aid now in the same way as we have had Jethro do already (Exodus xviii. 17). "Gather me seventy men, of the elders of Israel," says Jehovah, "and bring them into the Tabernacle; and I will take of the spirit that is upon thee and will put it upon them, and they shall bear the burthen of the people with thee. And say thou to the people, Sanctify yourselves against the morrow, and ye shall eat flesh; for ye have wept in the ears of Jehovah, saying, Who shall give us flesh to eat? for it was well with us in Egypt. Therefore will Jehovah give you flesh; and ye shall eat not for one day or for two days, but for a whole month, until it come out of your nostrils and it be loathsome to you, because ye have despised Jehovah which is among you, and said, Why came we forth out of Egypt?"

There is surely no slight incongruity and inconsistency in this paragraph: Jehovah has heard the starving people weep, and had compassion upon them; he will give them to eat, therefore, yet in such wise that the food shall prove loathsome to them. But the inconsistency, though in another direction, does not end here, for Moses now questions Jehovah's power to keep his word: "The people," he says, "are six hundred thousand footmen, and thou hast said I will give them flesh that they may eat for a whole month; shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together to suffice them?" An exceedingly bold address assuredly from the leader to his God, familiar though the footing be on which they stand to one another; but not taken in umbrage by Jehovah, who only replies: "Is Jehovah's hand waxed short? Thou shalt see whether my word shall come to pass unto thee or not."

Supplies then we may presume arrive?

In the shape of a flight of quails, exaggerated in its proportions, of course, a natural incident being made to assume a supernatural aspect. There went forth a wind from Jehovah, says the text, and brought quails from the sea, and let them fall by the camp, a day's journey on this side and on that, and in such quantity that they lay two cubits high upon the face of the earth! The people, therefore, have plenty to eat. But, strange to say, and by way of improving upon his resolution, already imparted, to make the food disgusting, we are now informed that whilst the flesh was yet between their teeth, the anger of Jehovah was kindled against them, and they were smitten with a great plague!

The writer's conception of the way in which Jehovah deals with his people is not a little extraordinary?

It must, indeed, be so esteemed when he makes his God give the famishing folk to eat with one hand, but makes the food disgusting, and smites them through burning and pestilence with the other! But Deity in the ancient world, when not, as was usual, conceived of under the guise of a personal *Duality*—the idea current at the present day, when not carried on as it is by some to the extent of a *Trinity*—was always believed to present two aspects, one propitious, another adverse. If El-Elohe-Israel or El-Schaddai was the friend of the Patriarchs, and promised to make their seed as the stars of heaven in number, he also plagued them sorely at times, had them slain to him by thousands, sent fiery serpents among them, ordered the heads of the tribes to be hung up to him before the sun, and was ever and anon threatening to break out on them and consume them all in a moment.

The seventy of the Elders of Israel, commanded by Jehovah, are now gathered together round the Tabernacle when Jehovah "comes down" in a cloud, takes

of the spirit that is on Moses, and puts it upon them, "and it came to pass that when the spirit rested on them, they prophesied and did not cease." But there remained two men in the camp, Eldad and Medad by name, on whom the spirit rested, and who went not out to the Tabernacle, but prophesied in the camp. This being reported to Moses, Joshua, the son of Nun, said to him: My Lord forbid them; but Moses, in opposition to all we should have expected, replies: Would God that all Jehovah's people were prophets, and that Jehovah would put his spirit upon them!

This is different from everything else we have hitherto met with in the Hebrew scriptures?

There we are told that Jehovah will not have even incense raised to him by any fire but his own, nor have service done him by any one not of the seed of Aaron! The two men named, it is to be observed, are over and above the seventy commanded, and the passage in which they are mentioned has no connection either with that which has gone before or that comes after. It must, therefore, be an interpolation, is so considered, indeed, by the best authorities, and is believed to be from a late hand, written at a time when something of charity—we dare hardly say of toleration—had come to mingle with the religious conceptions of the Jews.*

Of this council of seventy and its consultations with Moses we may expect to hear much as the narrative proceeds?

Curiously enough, however, it is not again even once referred to, any more than the knot of "able men, men of truth, such as feared God," whom Moses, by his father-in-law Jethro's advice, is said to

* Prof. Dozy has a disquisition on Eldad and Medad, whom he finds playing a part in Arabic story. They were, as he opines, *outside*, not Jewish, prophets. See his very interesting work, 'Die Israeliten zu Mekka.' S. 172.

have taken to himself to help him in the administration of justice. The second tale is probably a copy or repetition of the first, and both appear to have been contrived to give the sanction of antiquity to the much more modern Jewish Sanhedrim with its seventy members; for it is not until after the era of the exile that we hear of any council of the kind; and when Jehoshaphat institutes the Sanhedrim as the supreme court of judicature in Jerusalem it is spoken of as a Novelty and Innovation unknown before.

Besides the murmurings of the vulgar, Moses has farther to bear with the complaints and misconstructions of his own family and kindred?

And herein we meet with another of the simply human and natural incidents that take us out of the region of legend and fancy and give their character of historical truth to so many parts of the old Hebrew records. Miriam the sister and Aaron the elder brother of Moses, become jealous of his authority and speak seditiously against him, taking exception to his wife as an Ethiopian, but letting the truer grounds of their discontent appear in what they immediately say concerning the familiar footing on which he, more than they or any among themselves, stands with Jehovah:—"Hath Jehovah, indeed, spoken only by Moses," say they; "hath he not also spoken by us? And Jehovah heard it." On which "he speaks suddenly to Moses, and Aaron, and Miriam, saying:—Come ye three into the Tabernacle of the Congregation," where, having "come down in the pillar of the cloud," he delivers them a lecture and informs them that whilst to prophets in general he would make himself known in visions and dreams and dark speeches, with his servant Moses he would speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, so that he should behold the similitude of his God. 'Wherefore then,' proceeds the narrative, "were ye

not afraid to speak against my servant Moses? And the anger of Jehovah was kindled against them and he departed."

This is an extremely materialistic exhibition, and little in keeping with much that has gone before—the coming down, the talking mouth to mouth, and the seeing the similitude of God may apply to things human, but can have nothing in common with the Supreme. Jehovah's anger, however, will be displayed against Aaron and Miriam in some notable way?

Miriam, it is said, "became leprous, white as snow;" but Aaron is not punished at all. He apparently is too exalted a personage to suffer disgrace, even for wrong doing: he is above the reach of the even-handed justice which we in these days believe that God dispenses to all alike for aught done against his true commandments. Aaron, however, who is here, as elsewhere, depicted as a weak man, now expresses sorrow for what he has done; and, grieving over the leprous state of his sister, Miriam, he entreats Moses for her, and says, "Alas, my Lord! I beseech thee lay not the sin upon us wherein we have done foolishly and have sinned; let her not be as one dead-born, of whom the flesh is half consumed when he cometh out of his mother's womb."

Moses hearkens to his brother's prayer; cries unto Jehovah, saying, Heal her now, O God, I beseech thee! and receives an answer in rather extraordinary terms?

Extraordinary, indeed, when conceived as coming from God: "If her father had but spit in her face, should she not be ashamed seven days? Let her be shut out from the camp seven days, and after that let her be received in again."

The objection to the wife of Moses as an Ethiopian might lead to the conclusion that the writing is of the most recent date; for there scarcely appear

objections among the Israelites to wives of all and sundry their neighbours, until after the days of Ezra and Nehemiah. And then the statement that God spoke mouth to mouth with Moses, and appeared to him in bodily form, is in direct contradiction with all the most emphatic teaching of the Old Testament. Moses himself, in his final address to the Israelites, is particular in reminding them that they *saw no similitude* when they were spoken to out of the fire on Horeb, and *therefore* are they to make no graven images to corrupt themselves. The leader, moreover, is informed by Jehovah himself, when he asks to see His Glory, that "no man shall see his face and live." (Exodus xxxiii. 20.) But this again, we are not to forget, is still in contradiction with other parts of the Hebrew scriptures, where we read of Jacob "seeing God face to face." (Gen. xxxii. 30), and of God giving him His own title, Israel, instead of his proper name, Jacob. From all of which we conclude that that which is contradictory never came from God.

Approaching the promised land, Jehovah orders Moses to send out spies to survey and report upon it, what the people were who dwelt therein, &c.

This is done forthwith, a chief of each tribe being chosen for the duty. The spies return after forty days' absence, and report the land—figuratively, of course—as flowing with milk and honey; in plain terms, as extremely fertile; and they bring back fruit of various kinds as samples of its produce, a cluster of grapes among others of such size that it has "to be borne upon a staff between two!" But the people who dwell in the land are strong; they have walled cities very great; and children of Anak, men of vast stature, are seen among them; so that all the spies except Caleb and Joshua are afraid, and spreading an alarm throughout the camp, the people are terror-stricken, more than ever discontented,

murmur anew against their leaders, and threaten to make themselves a Captain of their own and return into Egypt. Caleb and Joshua, however, speak them fair; bid them not to fear the natives of the land, "for Jehovah," say they, "is with us, and they are bread for us—fear them not." But this does not quell the rebellious spirit; the mutiny even becomes general, so that the "Congregation of Israel bade stone them—Moses and Aaron—with stones, and would not be pacified."

Jehovah will of course be much displeased by this rebellious behaviour of the people?

The glory of Jehovah, it is said, appeared in the tabernacle to the multitude, and Jehovah says to Moses: "How long will this people provoke me; how long will it be before they believe me for all the signs I have showed amongst them? I will smite them with pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they." But Moses will not be exalted; he will not have Jehovah depart from his word to Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and their seed, and transfer his favour to himself. He therefore pleads bravely for the people, and tells Jehovah roundly that if he does not keep his promises "the Egyptians shall hear of it! For they have heard," he continues, "that thou, Lord, art among this people; and if thou shalt kill them as one man the nations which have heard the fame of thee will say: Because Jehovah was not able to bring them into the land which he sware to them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness. Pardon I beseech thee the iniquity of this people!"

The placable man! The angry God! But Jehovah is pacified?

"Though ten times provoked," he says, "he will pardon them yet again." And this he does—after a fashion; for he declares that he will not suffer one of all the grown up generation then alive save Caleb

and Joshua to see the land which he swore to their fathers: "your little ones will I bring in," continues the story, "but as for you, your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness, and your children shall wander therein forty years until ye be wasted."

This certainly is not the unconditional forgiveness which might have been looked for from the first clause of Jehovah's address, as set down for him by the writer?

It is not indeed. Forty years of life in the wilderness, their carcasses being left there to dry up and to decay in the end, was a heavy penalty for feeling afraid and murmuring at the prospect of unanticipated danger. And, then, *all* surely could not have transgressed in the way reported; and even after the lapse of forty years there must have been many alive who were but twenty when they left Egypt, and so but sixty when the years of penance were completed. But forty was a sacred number with the superstitious Jews, and events must be made to square with it in every case: Because the spies had been forty days searching the land, *therefore* were the rebellious people to wander forty years in the wilderness,—“for every day a year shall ye bear your iniquities and feel my displeasure,” says the text, “though it has but just made Jehovah say that tempted even ten times, he would forgive them yet again.”

The report of the spies which spread such terror through the camp of the Israelites, when it is spoken of as “an evil report and a slander upon the land,” does not seem quite fairly characterised in the narrative?

The report, on the contrary, is found to be true enough as regards the population and their towns; and how could the land be slandered that was reported as flowing with milk and honey, and was shown to produce clusters of grapes of such magnitude as to require two men to carry a single bunch

upon a staff between them! In spite of all that is said of murmurings and faint-heartedness moreover, and the threat of the people to make themselves a Captain and return to Egypt, we are now informed that they take heart of grace, rise up early in the morning, get them up into the top of the mountain and say: "Lo we be here and will go up unto the place which Jehovah hath promised;" a resolution not a little inconsistent with what has just gone before; added in all likelihood to the older narrative by the modern writer, for the sake of giving him an opportunity of letting the people know that unless they are implicitly obedient to their rulers—spiritual and temporal—they would assuredly meet with nothing but disaster. Moses, accordingly, instead of encouraging them in their later and more manly resolution is now made to say: "Go not up; for Jehovah is not among you." He himself will have nothing to do with them; but keeps quiet in the camp with the Ark of the Covenant beside him. The people presume to advance, nevertheless; but fallen upon by the Amalekites and Canaanites dwelling in the hills, they, as they are disobeying orders and have no support from headquarters, are discomfited and "smitten even unto Hormah."

Misfortune we should rightly expect to wait on action unauthorised or positively forbidden by the leader. But it was not always because of their disobedience of orders or unauthorised proceedings and murmurings that punishment befel the children of Israel?

The very heaviest penalties were often exacted in the olden time when men worshipped "the God of the malignant Star," for contravention of the most indifferent ordinances; a notable instance of which is immediately met with in the case of the man who was found gathering sticks on the Sabbath, Chion or Saturn's day. This unfortunate individual, brought

before Moses and Aaron and the congregation, is put in ward until Jehovah is consulted and his pleasure known. Interpreted by his ministers the sentence is not doubtful, for he says to Moses: "The man shall be surely put to death; all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp." "And they brought him out and stoned him with stones and he died, as Jehovah commanded Moses."

A terrible penalty for an act so little reprehensible in itself! But can we as reasonable beings believe that the God of Nature ever gave such orders to mortal man?

Impossible! Nor indeed is it said that the God of Nature did. It is Jehovah the peculiar God of the later Jews who is credited with the atrocity. El-Schaddai, Isra-El, Chiun, or Baal-Saturnus, God of the ancient Hebrews, though he is represented as dealing arbitrarily enough at times with his chosen people, never ordered death as the penalty for gathering sticks to make a fire on his holy day. The tale is an invention of a priestly writer in relatively recent times to frighten the superstitious vulgar into the most rigid observance of his commandment to rest and do no work on the Sabbath day.

The last, the most reasonable, the most humane of all the Jewish teachers in a still later age of the world had views about the sanctity of the Sabbath day other than those of the writer before us?

He said that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath; that man was Lord of the Sabbath; showed in practice that all acts done in it which involved no moral offence were lawful, and that one day of the week was as sacred as, but not more sacred than, another to his God; who, consequently, could not have been the Divinity embodied by his countrymen in their ideal of Jehovah.

With a sudden transition from a matter so terrible as an order to put a hapless man to death for pre-

paring to make a fire—to warm some drink, it may have been, for an aged father or mother, or a sick wife or child—we come to one so trivial as a commandment direct from Jehovah to the children of Israel “to put fringes on the borders of their garments, and on the fringe a ribband of blue.” To what end is this addition to their gaberdines made?

That it might serve as a reminder to them of their duties to Jehovah their God: “That ye may look upon it and remember all the commandments of Jehovah and do them.” The order is interesting in so far as it may serve to bring sticklers for the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch to understand that writing, if not quite unknown to the Hebrews of the age to which Moses is referred, could have been little practised by any class, and must have been perfectly illegible to the vulgar. Hence the device of the fringes and ribbons.

Which, however—were the garments of the children of the desert ever ornamented with fringes and ribbons—and this is very questionable—did not prevent Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, of the tribe of Levi, with On, of the tribe of Reuben, from gathering themselves together, with two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, against Moses and Aaron, and saying to their Leader and Priest: “Ye take too much upon you; wherefore lift ye up yourselves above the Congregation of Jehovah?” But the rebellion is short-lived; for Moses, when he hears the words, falls upon his face—before Jehovah, we must presume—and addressing Korah as ringleader, and his company, he tells them that to-morrow Jehovah will show who are his, and who he has chosen to come near him. “This do,” he proceeds, “take your censers and put fire therein, and come before Jehovah to-morrow, and it shall be that the man whom Jehovah doth choose he shall be holy; ye take too much upon you, ye sons of Levi; seemeth

it but a small thing unto you that the God of Israel hath separated you from the congregation of Israel to bring you near to himself to do the service of the Tabernacle, and seek ye the priesthood also—what is Aaron that ye murmur against him ? ”

Having addressed himself thus more particularly to Korah and his followers who have murmured against Aaron, he now turns to Dathan and Abiram, who seem to have challenged his own authority, reproaching him with having brought them into no land that flowed with milk and honey, to kill them in the wilderness, instead of giving them an inheritance in fields and vineyards. “Wilt thou put out the eyes of these men,” say they; “we will not come up.”

Moses will be very wroth with them for this ?

Of course he will. He prays Jehovah to have no respect to their offering of incense; and, to show that they have no real ground of offence against himself, he adds: “I have not taken an ass from them, neither have I hurt one of them.” Rebellious in some respects they are submissive in others; though they “will not come up,” as they say, they take their censers as commanded, and ranging themselves before the door of the Tabernacle on one hand, Aaron with his censer, we must presume, takes his stand on the other. The Glory of Jehovah now appears to the congregation, and Moses and Aaron are ordered by Jehovah to separate themselves from the rebels “that he may consume them in a moment.” The Leader and Priest fall on their faces before Jehovah, and say: “O God, God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin and wilt thou be wroth with all the congregation ? ” But Jehovah is wroth, and takes no heed of their prayer. Moses and Aaron and the congregation of Israel separate themselves from the rebels, and Korah, Dathan and Abiram, with their wives, their sons, and their little children are left standing before the doors of

their tents. Moses then proceeds to say : "Hereby ye shall know that Jehovah hath sent me to do all these works, for I have not done them of my own mind. If these men die the common death of all men, then Jehovah hath not sent me ; but if the earth open her mouth and swallow them up with all that appertain to them, and they go down quick into the pit, then ye shall understand that these men have provoked Jehovah. And it came to pass, as he made an end of speaking, that the ground clave asunder that was under them, and opened her mouth and swallowed them up, their houses and all that belonged to them, their wives, their sons and their little ones—all went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed on them and they perished."

Thus are the ringleaders disposed of ?

They and all immediately belonging to them have "gone down quick into the pit," but a fire from Jehovah is the means evoked to consume the two hundred and fifty, their associates, who offered incense. The censers of these sinners are gathered by Eleazar, the son of Aaron, and are made into broad plates for a covering of the altar, "to be a memorial unto the children of Israel that no stranger which is not of the seed of Aaron is to come near to offer incense before Jehovah."

This story has a suspicious look of recent composition ?

So much so, that there can be little question of its referring to times when the Levites at large thought themselves strong enough to aspire to a position higher than that of mere servitors of the priests ; and this was not until a very late date in the history of the Jewish people. The tale must be from the pen of an opponent of their claims,—a stickler for the right of succession to the priesthood in the line of Aaron alone, which we know was not adhered to in later times.

The people are bold enough now, as they have shown themselves on other occasions, to take exception to the summary execution that has been done on Korah and the rest; they murmur against Moses and against Aaron, and say, "Ye have killed the people of the Lord?"

But they take nothing by their discontent; for the wrath of Jehovah is aroused against them anew; the cloud covers the Tabernacle; the glory of the Lord appears, and Jehovah bids the leader and the chief to get up from among the congregation, that he, in the usual phrase, may consume them in a moment. Moses, in alarm, and to avert the anger of his vengeful God, bids Aaron "hasten to take a censer, with fire and incense, and go quickly to the congregation and make an atonement for them, for there is wrath gone out from Jehovah,—the plague is begun!" Aaron does immediately as he is ordered, and makes an atonement in the way prescribed, standing, as said, "between the living and the dead;" but with little effect, it would seem; for, though the plague is now reported as stayed, it was not before "fourteen thousand and seven hundred, beside them that died about the matter of Korah," had fallen victims to its violence. Jehovah's anger was not to be appeased by smoke.

We do not find that the earth nowadays opens and swallows up people who do not approve of all that their rulers take upon them, or who make ignorant and unreasonable demands on their leaders?

We certainly do not, or we should be witnesses daily of strange sights.

Did it, presumably, ever do so?

Never.

And does fire leap out from heaven at the word of command of an angry chief and consume people by the hundred?

It does not.

Did it ever do so ?

Never.

How do we venture to speak thus positively on such a matter ?

In virtue of our unswerving faith in the changeless nature of God and the laws which are his essence, as well as of the knowledge we possess of necessary connection between causes and effects. Grumbings against authority bear no relation to the pent-up volcanic forces on which earthquakes and cleavings asunder of the ground depend, nor to the electrical disturbances of the atmosphere that lead to lightning strokes and conflagrations.

Carefully perused, not a little confusion is apparent in the mythical tale of the seditious movement of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram ; but this concerns the Bible harmonist rather than us. We would only observe that the destruction of the two hundred and fifty "by fire from Jehovah" is of a piece with the way in which Nadab and Abihu died, and has a suspicious look of sacrifice ; and then the infliction of the plague that killed "fourteen thousand and seven hundred of the people" for merely murmuring, seems out of all proportion to the nature of the offence. Is it possible that Moses, as on another notable occasion, bade his supporters take their swords and consecrate themselves to Jehovah by slaying every man his brother, his neighbour, and his friend ? Let it be noted, farther, that the reason definitively given for the doom of the two hundred and fifty is not the rebellion in the camp, but the objection Jehovah makes to be ministered to by any who are not of the seed of Aaron : the brass plates for the covering of the altar, which are made out of the censers of the slain are "to be a memorial to the children of Israel that no stranger which is not of the seed of Aaron come near to offer incense before Jehovah."

Assuming that no such miraculous interferences

as those now particularly referred to ever took place, we may imagine a motive for the invention of such a story as this of Korah's rebellion and its consequences,—the gaping of the earth, the fire from heaven, and the pestilence,—because of the discontent of the people and the refusal of some of their chiefs to obey the summons of their leader?

It is not far to seek. The tale was probably grafted on some account of a seditious movement in the olden time, to show the Many of the writer's day the propriety of keeping in the places which Providence, in modern phrase, had been pleased to assign them. They were, in fact, to venture on no act save at the bidding of their masters, and not even to express discontent with aught done by their superiors. The story is a myth,—a Narrative invented to cover an Idea.

Lustrations or cleansings play an important part in the ceremonial enactments of the Jews?

A very important part indeed; and water, as the great physical purifier as well as fertiliser, appears to have been believed at an early period of human history to possess certain mystical or moral cleansing qualities also. It had to be prepared, however, among the ancient Israelites, for special occasions in certain ways, before it was held endowed with the higher mystical properties presumed to be then required, and the supersensuous virtue of "the Water of lustration" was imparted to it, as believed, in a very extraordinary way. A red heifer, without spot or blemish, was directed to be killed beyond the camp; her blood to be brought in and sprinkled seven times before the tabernacle of the congregation, and her skin, her flesh, and her dung to be burnt without the camp,—portions of cedar wood and hyssop and a scarlet cord being thrown into the fire during the process of cremation. When reduced to ashes, these were to be collected and laid up in a

clean place, and running water being added to a portion of the ashes in a proper vessel, the water of purification was complete.

Running water must have been rather difficult to procure in the wilderness of Sinai ; but passing this, it will be interesting to know how the water of purification was to be used ?

With a little of it the persons and things held to be unclean,—they or the things that had touched a bone, a dead body, or a grave, among other particulars specified,—were to be sprinkled, the sprinkling being repeated on the third and seventh days ; after which, if it were a person, he was to bathe his body and wash his clothes, and, eventide having come, he was to be accounted clean.

The sprinkling could have had little to do with the cleansing ?

But the bathing and washing of the clothes all the more—physically, that is to say ; for the effect of the sprinkling could only have been moral or magical. Such observances, however, it is plain, must have been impossible to sojourners in the desert, where water is so scarce that there is rarely enough even for small caravans to drink, and never any for bathing and washing. The absurd commandment for the preparation of the water of purification from the ashes of a red cow, worthy of the Shaman of a savage Indian tribe, assures us that though it bears the stamp of old and barbarous times, it is totally inapplicable to the Israelites whilst they were wanderers in the wilderness. It may be a legend derived from one or other of the native tribes of Palestine whom the Hebrews dispossessed ; or it may be the Israelitish version of an Egyptian office in respect of Typhon, to whom red-haired cattle and red-haired men were the proper sacrifices. Besprinkling with water consecrated to the God in his adverse aspect, may have been held assurance against his malign

influence ; in the same way as the people of the south of Italy at the present day wear amulets to insure them against the assaults of the Evil Eye.

Yet is the formula for the preparation of the water of purification delivered in the text as an immediate communication from Jehovah ?

It is surely impossible that reasonable men and women in the present day should believe that any ordinance so obviously foolish in itself, as well as incompetent to the end proposed, can ever have come from God. How, indeed, should the sprinkling of a little water, having the ashes of a red-heifer diffused in it, cleanse man, woman, or thing from either physical or moral impurity ? And, then, is he who touches a bone, a dead body, or a grave, really and truly unclean ? Physically, he may be defiled in a greater or less degree, and require to wash his hands ; but when he closes the eyes and reverently composes the limbs of the dead, or visits and perchance kneels on the graves of his kindred, he performs a pious act, and stands pure before God.

We immediately come upon another childish and impossible story, obviously invented for the glorification of the Levitical caste, connected with certain rods which Jehovah commands Moses to order the chiefs of the several tribes to deliver into his hands ?

On these rods, says the story, Moses is to write the names of the chiefs,—“Every man’s name upon his rod,” and lay them in the Tabernacle before the Testimony ;* “and it shall come to pass,” proceeds the narrative, “that the man’s rod whom I shall choose shall blossom, and I will make to cease the murmurings of the children of Israel against you.”

The rod of Aaron, of the house of Levi, is the one which blossoms ?

* Hæduth, Heb. Surely not the *Law*, as generally understood, but the Image or symbolical representative of the God.

Of course it is. When Moses goes into the Tabernacle on the morrow, "Behold, the rod of Aaron, for the house of Levi, was budded;" nay, not only budded; it had bloomed blossoms and produced almonds!

In a single night?

So it is said; although we see God in nature giving the almond tree, not days nor weeks only, but months in which to bloom, to break into leaf, and to perfect its fruit,—the shoot, moreover, getting life all the while from the trunk and root of the tree.

The man whose rod blossomed was the man chosen by Jehovah?

So it is said. The murmurings of the people were henceforth to cease, and the blossomed rod being brought before the Testimony, besides being kept as a token against the rebels was to serve as a reminder to Jehovah (the God of the Jews always requiring refreshers of his memory!) that he was not again to visit the people with pestilence: "Thou shalt thus," says the record, "quite take away their murmurings from me, that they die not." But Aaron and the house of Levi had already and on other grounds been chosen by Jehovah as his own; and as the shoot of no tree will now under any circumstances bud, bloom, and form fruit in a day, so may we safely conclude that it neither could nor did so in the days of Moses. To which conclusion we add, by way of corollary derived from a critical survey of the whole of the context, that the tale of Aaron's rod which blossomed is another invention of the writer to exalt the Levitical caste, and to impress on the people the duty not only of obedience to their rulers but of peculiar submissiveness to their priests, proprieties indeed when the ruler and the priest are worthy, but neither to be begotten nor deserved by conjurors' tricks, in seeming, not in any real, violation of the laws of nature, which, let us

never be weary of repeating, are of the very essence of the Godhead and therefore changeless.

The Israelites it is said come in the first month [of the second year] into the desert of Zin, and reach Kadesh, on the borders of Edom, where a noteworthy incident occurs?

The people are distressed for want of water, and Jehovah has apparently forgotten his promise to take from the people all farther cause for discontent, of which Aaron's blossomed rod was to be the guarantee, for we still find them murmuring against Moses and chiding with him for having led them out of Egypt to perish in the wilderness. But Moses, as we know, is like Hermes, provided with a wonder-working rod, which again comes into play, and we have a repetition of the mythical tale already met with in Exodus, which tells of water struck from the rock: "Hear ye now, ye rebels," says the leader upon this occasion, "must we fetch you water out of this rock?" Forthwith he strikes the rock with his rod and water flows from its flinty bosom. But no rock either in the wilderness of Sin by Sinai nor in that of Zin on the borders of Edom ever yielded water at the word of command or the stroke of a rod. It is only by digging in the dried up watercourses of the Wadis or Valleys of the Desert that water, more or less brackish but generally potable, is to be obtained, the fact which doubtless has supplied a foundation for the stories of Moses striking the rock with his rod and bringing water from its bosom.

Moses, singularly enough, and not very fairly as it seems, is now made responsible for the people's murmurings and rebellious behaviour, which were to have ceased, as just said, with the laying up of Aaron's rod before the Testimony; he is even told that he is to suffer for their sins. Addressing the leader and the priest, Jehovah says: "Because ye believed me not to sanctify me in the eyes of the

children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them." Aaron it is true may have erred, and that even oftener than once; but we never read of Moses having done otherwise than as commanded. He has reasoned with Jehovah, indeed, upon several occasions, and shown him what the Egyptians would say of him did he abide by his threat to forsake or do evil to his people, but he has never gone contrary to orders. At Kadesh the horde is evidently in great straits: "Would God, say they, we had died when our brethren died before Jehovah! Wherefore have ye made us come up out of Egypt to bring us in unto this evil place? It is no place of seed or of figs or of vines or of pomegranates; neither is there any water to drink." We might almost imagine that Moses had had an altercation with Jehovah here, and perchance spoken out somewhat too freely. The text at all events appears to be imperfect. What we have is probably a fragment of a narrative longer and more complete, for we learn at its close that "the water is called the water of Meribah (strife) because the children of Israel strove with Jehovah, and he was sanctified in them," a sentence from which the word *not* must have dropped out if we are to make sense of it beside what is said in a preceding verse, where Jehovah's displeasure with Moses is made to rest on the ground that the leader had *not sanctified him* in the eyes of the children of Israel. The text as it stands therefore is not consistent with itself?

It certainly is not; but we shall find more—much more—made of the matter now under discussion, first in respect of Aaron, and then in respect of Moses, than its gravity beyond other matters of the same sort might seem to warrant. Meantime the Israelites are at Kadesh, and Moses sends messengers to the king of Edom, with whom he claims kindred,

as well he might, the Israelites and Edomites being children of the same stock and using dialects of the same tongue. Moses' envoys are to say, "Thus saith thy brother Israel: Let us pass I pray thee through thy country; we will go by the highway, and pay for all we require." But the claim of kindred is not acknowledged by the king of Edom, who says, "Ye shall not go through; and came out against him with much people and a strong hand; so that Israel turned away from Kadesh and came to Mount Hor."

Almost within sight of the promised land, but refused a passage through his territories by the Edomite king, Moses, as we read, receives at the same time an important and most extraordinary communication from Jehovah?

He is informed that Aaron is now to be "gathered to his fathers," *i.e.*, he is to die. "He shall not enter into the land which I have given unto the children of Israel," says Jehovah to him, "because ye rebelled against my word at the water of Meribah." The text must needs therefore be imperfect, as hinted, for of any such rebellion, whether on the part of Aaron or of Moses, on the occasion named we have not had a word. "Take Aaron and Eleazar his son, and bring them up unto Mount Hor," continues the narrative, "and strip Aaron of his garments and put them upon Eleazar his son; and Aaron shall be gathered unto his people, and shall die there."

This is very extraordinary! But Jehovah's orders are obeyed by Moses?

They are, and without a word either of remonstrance on the one part or of explanation on the other. The three men go up into Mount Hor in sight of all the congregation, and there, as we are told, "Moses stripped Aaron of his garments and put them upon Eleazar his son; and Aaron died there in the top of Mount Hor, and Moses and Eleazar came down from

the Mount." In so few words is the death of the high priest Aaron recorded.

Moses and Eleazar will doubtless give a more particular account of the business in which they have been engaged to the heads of the houses or the people at large, and speak of the way and manner of the high priest's end when they return to the camp ?

They speak no word, however ; none is required of them ; none was needed ; all must have been already aware of what was to happen when the party set out for the Mount, and of what had been done when the survivors returned.

What, then, was to happen ; what are we to presume had been done ?

Something which people who close their eyes against the obvious meaning of words, legitimate inferences from plain statements of fact, and the knowledge we now possess of the religious rites and customs of barbarous peoples, are greatly averse to admit.

And this may be ?

That Aaron, already devoted to Jehovah, in face of a great difficulty and now seen as the most appropriate and influential propitiatory offering that could be made to the God, was solemnly sacrificed on Mount Hor by Moses his brother and Eleazar his son.

There is not a word in the text, however, of any act of the kind having been consummated ?

There is none left to us for our better information certainly. Any record that ever existed of the solemn sacrifice enacted, for so doubtless if it were done at all was it considered, has either been kept out of his narrative by the relatively recent compiler of the Book of Numbers, or expunged by its still more modern editor. It must have been seen that so portentous a deed as the sacrifice of his priest to Jehovah, in the *ideal* formed of God by the writer

and his contemporaries, bluntly related, would have shocked the sense of the age of Hezekiah, when the text as we have it, if not exactly put together, must have received a notable, though perhaps by no means a final polishing and expurgation. The terms in which the death of Aaron is recorded, it is not unimportant to observe, continue even to the present day to be so toned down that little of the horrible in the nature of the transaction is left to reach the mind of the reader. In our English version, for example, the congregation of Israel "see that Aaron is *dead*;" in the more recent translation of Isaac Leeser* they "see that he is *departed*;" *dead* would have been too plain a word for the modern Jewish writer. The reason given for the death of Aaron at this particular moment, as we have said, has no foundation in fact. Aaron had not rebelled against Jehovah at the waters of Meribah. It was the children of Israel who there, and because they were athirst, are found murmuring against their leader and priest. Nor is there a word in the narrative that lends countenance to the belief that Aaron's death was in the course of nature. He must have been heart-whole when he ascended Mount Hor overlooking the land of Edom, habited in his official robes and having the gold plate engraven with the words HOLY TO JEHOVAH bound by the sacrificial fillet upon his brow; there divested himself of the insignia of his office, and completed the contract he had made with his terrible God by yielding up his life. It seems impossible, in the face of all we know, to come to any other conclusion than that the death of Aaron was sacrificial; a conclusion corroborated, were that required, by the interpretation always put upon the death of Christ: the First and the Last High Priest must alike give themselves as sacrifices for their peoples. Why, therefore, should

* 'The Twenty-four Books of the Holy Scriptures.' Philad., 1856; Lond., reprinted 1865.

the sacrifice of Aaron to the Hebrew God shock the sensibilities of the present age, when the death of Christ is thought of with complacency and looked on as the final act required to reconcile a sinful world to an offended God.*

Refused a passage through Edom, but turning round by Mount Hor, and approaching the territories of the Canaanites, Arad, their king, hearing by his spies of the advance of the Israelites, musters his forces, attacks them, defeats them, and takes some prisoners?

On which Israel vows a vow to Jehovah, and says: "If thou wilt indeed deliver this people into my hand, then I will utterly destroy their cities;" in other words, Israel will hold Arad and his Canaanites *Cherem* or devoted in the highest degree; he will destroy them root and branch, men and women, old and young, goods and chattels, slaying everything that lived with the sword, burning every lifeless thing with fire.

God the compassionate, the merciful, as pious Mussulmen say, does not surely listen to this savage vow?

No, truly; but El-Elijon, Chiun, or Jahveh-Molech, tutelary God and King of the old Israelites, does; the terms are too tempting to be declined. According to the text, "Jehovah hearkened to the voice of Israel, and delivered up the Canaanites; and they (the Israelites) utterly destroyed them and their cities, and called the place Hormah—Destruction." But the account of this victory, or rather of the series of victories implied in the ruin of *cities*, must be a fabrication; for we forthwith find the Israelites retreating from Mount Hor by the way of the red-sea (?), and murmuring as usual against their leader. The name Hormah of itself arouses

* See farther, Ghillanij, *Die Menschenopfer der alten Hebræer.* S. 714 et seq.

suspicious that the skirmish with Arad, now reported as a victory, is but another and improved version of the affair with the Amalekites and Canaanites, in which, instead of smiting and pursuing their enemies, and calling the place Hormah, to signalise the discomfiture of these, they were themselves the "smitten and discomfited, and pursued even unto Hormah." King Arad would seem, in fact, to have been victorious; Jehovah was, therefore, conceived by the Israelities to have been adverse to them, and to require propitiation by promises of many victims, or much slaughter of the enemies of his chosen people: "If thou wilt indeed deliver, &c., then I will utterly destroy, &c." How long will it be before men consent to make use of their reason as well as of the jelly and nerve expansion that conveys impressions of light to the mind! Or be there two Gods, one of the Jews, another of reasonable men? By no possibility can there be a personal God with such opposite and incongruous attributes as Delight in destruction, and Delight in mercy.

Beaten back by the natives of the soil, "the soul of the people is much discouraged because of the way;" and they now speak not only against Moses but against their God: "Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness," &c., say they. But they are punished in a singular way for their presumption?

They have "fiery serpents" (saraf) sent among them, which bite and cause the death of many.

An extraordinary scourge! Though poisonous snakes abound in certain parts of the world, and are known to be extremely destructive to the people, they are nowhere so common as to be seen in numbers together, and singly they rarely attack individuals, unless molested or trodden on in their lairs amid the forest and jungle. It is not easy for us to conceive a host of cobras or lance-heads guided by

God making an attack upon a township or encampment?

Such a thing is never seen in the present day, and, as certainly, was never seen in any earlier age of the world. But passing the extraordinary and unnatural in the character of the visitation, the means taken to stay it are still more extraordinary and unnatural. In marked contravention of his first purpose, and anxious, as it would seem, to redress the mischief done, Jehovah now orders Moses to make a Serpent of Brass, and set it on a pole; "and it shall come to pass," says the story, "that every one who is bitten when he looketh upon it shall live."

Moses ordered by his God to make an image of a serpent in brass! Who then is the God who says: "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth"?

The text before us does not say. Moses is there ordered to make a serpent of brass; the Decalogue says: "Thou shalt make no likeness of anything in heaven or earth."

How reconcile commandments so contradictory?

How, indeed! Unless by the obvious and easy way of concluding that all the written commandments we have are Man's not God's, and that neither Moses, nor his age, nor they who for ages came after Moses, had ever heard of the Decalogue. Moses, however, according to the text under review does as he is ordered. He makes a serpent of brass, and sets it aloft upon a pole so as to be seen of all; and "it came to pass that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived."

The connection between the bite of a poisonous snake and the sight of a brazen serpent upon a pole is not very obvious?

No; but in ancient times the serpent had a higher

significance than he has now. In Egypt the serpent was the symbol of Kneph, the healer, the God in his benign aspect; and we still see it twined about the staff of Æsculapius, one of the forms of the Sun-God, the dispenser of light and life. And then we know that as serpent-worship prevailed in Jerusalem so far on as the days of Hezekiah, we conclude that it prevailed among the Hebrews as among other barbarous peoples before his time. The curt notice we have of the serpent in the wilderness must be from one of the old legends made use of by the compiler of the Book of Numbers; possibly not understood by him, or—and this is the more likely interpretation—inasmuch as there was a brazen serpent upon a pole to which the people of Jerusalem in the writer's time continued to burn incense, so a reason must be found for its presence in the temple of Jehovah beside the chariot of the Sun. A story was wanted which should take the brazen serpent destroyed by Hezekiah from the sphere of religion proper, without running counter to the love of the marvellous and the respect for antiquity that inhere in the nature of man. The brazen serpent consequently was no Fetish which had been an object of religious worship to their forefathers, and was even looked on in the same light by themselves, but an instrument which Moses had made for the cure of those bitten by the poisonous snakes sent by Jehovah among the people, to punish them for their murmurings and disobedience whilst they were still wanderers in the wilderness.

Somewhat better informed in these days on the nature and properties of things than were the Jews of old, and ever looking for something like congruity between effects and causes, *we* feel as well assured that the sight of a brazen serpent on a pole will not stay the deadly effects of a venomous serpent's bite, as we are that the mere sight of meat and drink will not stay hunger and quench thirst?

True ; but the Jews of old were not so far advanced in logic and notions of matters meriting belief ; though it were a question not altogether irrelevant, did we ask : Whether we ourselves had so far advanced in knowledge of the fitness of things as to have got beyond the influence of this tale of the brazen serpent ? That our fathers a few ages back were not, is certain ; and that the clergy and the mass of those who follow their teaching are still in no better case, must indeed be admitted when we ever and anon hear the “lifting up of the brazen serpent in the wilderness” referred to in our pulpits as a type foreshadowing the greater “lifting up” that took place at a later period in the history of the children of Israel. Old superstitions die hard ; and the tree and the serpent are among the very oldest of the forms in which the *supersensuous* that is conceived by man was *personified*, and made symbolical of Deity. Having fashioned a God for himself, inwardly if not always outwardly in his own likeness, he then approached the image he had made with prayers and offerings to conciliate favour and bid for success in his undertakings.

The people led by Moses now, or shortly after their late victory—or shall we say defeat?—make another, and as it turns out a more successful attempt to penetrate the promised land ?

They come to Beer—the well, whereof Jehovah spoke to Moses, saying : “Gather the people together, and I will give them water ;” and so overjoyed are they by the unwonted sight of this indispensable commodity in something like abundance, we may imagine, that they break out into song : “Spring up, O well ; sing ye unto it ! The princes digged the well, the nobles of the people digged it with their staves.” And here, too, may we find the well-head of the tales wherein we are told how water was struck from the rock by Moses’s staff or Aaron’s wonder-working rod.

Advancing from Beer, the Israelites come to Bamoth, to "the vale in the land of Moab," and to Pisgah that rises above the level of the wilderness. From hence they send messengers to Sihon, king of the Amorites, as they had done to Arad, king of Edom, asking leave to pass through his territories?

Which Sihon not only refuses, but, like Arad, gathering his people together, he attacks the wanderers. He is defeated, however, and smitten with the edge of the sword. His lands and towns are overrun and taken possession of by the Israelites, who then advance against Og, king of Bashan. He too is smitten at the battle of Edrei—"he and his sons and all his people, until there was none left alive!"

This must have been a great triumph, for we immediately find Israel advanced into "the plains of Moab, on this side Jordan, by Jericho," to the no small dismay of Balak, the son of Zippor, at this time king of Moab. He takes a new and unusual course to withstand the invaders?

Less confident apparently than his neighbours Arad, Sihon, and Og, in the use of carnal weapons against the invaders, Balak sends messengers "with the rewards of divination in their hands to Balaam, the son of Beor," a soothsayer of Mesopotamia, of great repute, we may presume, informing him of the invasion of his territories by a people who had come up out of Egypt, and desiring the Seer to come to him and curse them, for they were too mighty for him.

Balaam obeys the summons of Balak?

Not at once. He desires the messengers to tarry over night, and he will give them his answer in the morning. But Elohim—not Jahveh—visits Balaam in the night, and inquires of him,—as if he needed the information—what the men were who tarried with him? Informed on this head, and farther on the purport of their errand, Elohim forbids Balaam

to go with messengers to Moab, or to curse the people who had come up against it, so that they return with a refusal from the Seer to their master.

But Balak is not satisfied with Balaam's refusal to come to him and curse his enemies ?

By no means ; he sends again to the diviner, "messengers more in number and more honourable, with promises of much honour and reward," if he will but come and curse the invaders.

Balaam now yields ?

The drama carried on so far, he does ; for Elohim has been with him in the night as before, and having changed his mind, as it would seem, now bids him rise and go with the men ; charging him at the same time only to speak the word that is imparted to him, "The word which I shall say unto thee, that shalt thou do." So Balaam rises in the morning, and saddling his ass, he sets out with the princes of Moab, the messengers of Balak. Singularly enough, however, and again in contradiction to the orders just delivered, we are now informed that : "Elohim's anger was kindled against Balaam because he went ; and the 'angel of Jehovah (it is no longer Elohim) stood in the way for an adversary against him ;'" not seen of him, however, but by the ass, which, clearer of vision than her rider, as it appears, "saw the angel of Jehovah standing in the way and his sword drawn in his hand."

How in the name of all that is reasonable could the writer know that the ass saw the angel of Jehovah standing in the way with his sword drawn in his hand ?

We cannot tell—we are not informed. Had the ass but used the gift of speech with which anon she shows herself possessed, she might have saved herself some ill usage from her master ; for seeing the way barred by the angel, she turns aside, and being smitten once and again by her rider, she at

length lies down under him. Then is Balaam's anger greatly roused, and again he smites the ass with his staff; on which Jehovah, says the text, "opened the mouth of the ass and she said unto Balaam: What have I done to thee that thou hast smitten me these three times?"

Balaam is much amazed, of course, by such an address as this from his ass?

Not a whit; but speaking to his brute as he would to his serving-man, he replies: "Because thou hast mocked me; I would there were a sword in my hand, for now would I kill thee."

And the ass?

"Said unto Balaam: Am I not thine ass, upon whom thou hast ridden ever since I was thine own unto this day? Was I ever wont to do so unto thee? And he (Balaam) said: Nay."

This is very wonderful, surely, and very edifying! But what more?

Jehovah now opens the eyes of Balaam, and he sees the Angel with the drawn sword in his hand, on which he bows his head and falls on his face to the ground. The Angel then reproaches him with his cruelty to his faithful ass: "Wherefore hast thou smitten thine ass these three times," says he, having kept count, as it appears; "behold, I went out to withstand thee, because the way thou goest mislikes me, and the ass saw me and turned from me, and unless she had turned from me, surely now also I had slain thee, but let her live."

But Balaam had been ordered by Elohim to take the journey towards Balak?

So we are informed; but Jehovah as well as Elohim must have changed his mind a second time, and so sent his angel—or rather come down himself—to withstand the Seer in his expedition.

What comes next in this extraordinary interlocutory between the Angel of Jehovah, the man, and the ass?

Balaam excuses himself to the angel, and should by rights have asked pardon of the ass, which he does not, but says to the angel: "I knew not; that thou stoodest in the way against me; now, therefore, if it displease thee [that I have come thus far], I will get me back again."

The angel of Jehovah, or rather Jahveh-Elohim himself, having first commanded the diviner not to obey Balak's summons, then ordered him to go with the messengers, and next opposed his going in so unwonted a manner, will now and for very consistency's sake bid him return on the way he had come?

On the contrary, the angel bids him go on with the men, only repeating the injunction already laid on him, that he was but to speak the word that would be put into his mouth.

This is all extremely inconsistent; and the check by the way is farther shown to be needless, inasmuch as no new instructions are given to the Seer?

It is so indeed; but the inconsistency and non-necessity are the least remarkable of the many remarkable things that meet us in such a narrative, particularly when we are told that we are to receive it as set down under the inspiration of God. Balaam, however, now feels himself at liberty to go with the princes of Balak; and, proceeding on his way, is met by the king in person in a city of Moab on the borders of Arnon. Balak reproaches Balaam with his refusal to come to him in the first instance. "Am I not able to promote thee to honour?" asks he; to which the Seer replies: "Lo, I am come to thee;" but he adds that he has no power to say anything of himself; only the word that Elohim puts in his mouth will he speak. So Balak brings him to the high places of Baal, where sacrifices are offered to that God. Balaam, however, will have special altars prepared and more solemn sacrifices made. Seven altars, on which seven bullocks and

as many rams are presented to *Elohim*, after which he has a word put into his mouth, and takes up his parable forthwith, saying: Balak, the King of Moab, has brought me from Aram out of the mountains of the East, saying: "Come, curse me Jacob, and come, defy me Israel? How shall I curse whom *Elohim* hath not cursed, or how defy whom Jehovah hath not defied? Who can count the dust of Jacob, and number the fourth part of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my end be like his."

These words, it is not difficult to see, can only have been put by the writer into the mouth of the Mesopotamian soothsayer, for the greater glorification of the children of Israel—the Jews of his day. But Balak, we may presume, is nowise satisfied with what Balaam has just said?

Naturally enough he is not; having brought the wise man all the way from Aram out of the mountains of the East, the old habitation of Terah, the father of Abraham, to curse the invaders of his country, he now prays him to come first to the top of Pisgah, and next to the top of Peor, where altars in the same number are raised, and sacrifices on the same magnificent scale as before are offered, always in the view of trying whether from these more lofty sites it might not be possible to wring a more favourable answer from the God—a curse against the foe to their discomfiture, instead of a laudatory harangue to their glorification. But all is in vain: Balaam is faithful to the part assigned him, and says truly, albeit in utter contradiction with all that precedes, "that God is not a man that he should lie, neither the son of man that he should repent; hath he said and shall he not do, or hath he spoken and shall he not make good? Behold," he continues, "I have received a commandment to bless, and He hath blessed, and I cannot reverse it. He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath He seen perverseness in Israel;

surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel. Behold, the people shall rise up as a great lion; he shall not lie down until he eat of the prey and drink of the blood of the slain."

Bloodthirsty intelligence, truly! But all of these words cannot have been inspired by Jehovah, whom we have seen again and again complaining of the perverseness of Israel, scourging them in various terrible and unheard-of ways for their backslidings, and even upon occasion only restrained by Moses from breaking out on them and consuming them in a moment. We may safely credit the writer with making the diviner say that Jehovah had seen no iniquity in Jacob, inasmuch as the Jews boast of their descent from the knavish herdsman of Laban, the deceiver of his father and the filcher of his brother's blessing. Balak, we find as we proceed in the narrative, is not yet satisfied that he can get nothing but unpleasant intelligence from the Seer whom he has brought from afar; so he carries him to yet another stance, where altars are built and sacrifices performed as before?

He does his best to persuade Balaam to speak more comfortably to him than he has yet done, but all in vain; for the soothsayer, from simple laudation, now proceeds to prophecy, and foreshadows events that at the date supposed still lay hidden in the womb of time. He first speaks to Balak of the future greatness and power of the people now swarming on his borders, then of their decline and fall, and finally of the ruin and extinction of those who had brought them low. Not only is Israel to triumph over Moab but over all the other neighbouring tribes—Edomites, Ammonites, Amalekites, Kenites, &c. "Out of Jacob," he says, "there shall come a star, and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel; out of Jacob shall come he who shall have dominion until Asshur appear and carry them away captive; to be followed by ships from Chittim afflict-

ing Asshur and Eber at once, and they perish for ever."*

Read with unprejudiced eyes, these prophecies have an unmistakable look of delivery after the events they pretend to foretell; and proclaim authorship of a much later date in Jewish history than the period referred to in the text. The Jews must have been already conquered and made captive, not only by the Assyrians, but by the Babylonians, and both the Assyrian and Babylonian empires have come to an end before the prophecy put into the mouth of Balaam, the son of Beor, could have been written. Balak, however, will lose patience with the obstinately conscientious diviner at last?

His wrath, it is said, is kindled against Balaam, and he bids him flee from his presence. So the Seer returns to his place without the honours that had been promised him, and Balak also goes his way.

And all this is delivered and is still accepted in sober earnest in the present day as the word of God to man; as matter profitable for instruction; as illustration of the way in which the world we live in is ruled by its Author! In consonance with the beliefs of his age, Balak, king of Moab, sends to Balaam the Seer of Aram in Mesopotamia, not merely, it would seem, and as was usual, to question him as an oracle concerning events to come, but by lavish promises of honour and reward to have him exert a certain magical or supernatural influence with which he was credited, for the discomfiture of the horde then hovering on his borders and terrifying his subjects by the cruelties they had committed against their neighbours the subjects of Arad, Sihon, and Og.

* The "ships from Chittim" were long a puzzle to Commentators, but have finally been shown by Hitzig to be referable to an expedition of the Greeks against Cilicia with a fleet from Cyprus, 710 B.C. See Von Bohlen's *Genesis* by Heywood, I. 214.

But has man any power of foreseeing and foretelling such coming events as are linked with contingency, —events that are not *necessities* in the nature of things?

He has no such power. He can predicate the rising and the setting of the sun and moon, and calculate the occurrence of an eclipse of either of these great lights to within the fraction of a second of time, not only for the next year, or the next score of years, but for the moment in the day of the year that will not dawn until a hundred, a thousand, or a hundred thousand years have come and gone; but he cannot foretell the wise or foolish thing that will be done by an individual or a people in the course of the next day. In virtue of accumulated experience, and his reasoning powers, man may, indeed, speak of events to come as *probabilities*, but he has no power to see them as *necessities*. Prophecy in the vulgar sense of *prediction* is a baseless imagination: No man can speak positively of the events that will occur in the moral or political world of to-morrow.

And has man, be he entitled prophet, priest, or king, any absolute power either to bless or to curse his fellow man?

He has none. Balaam said well when he declared that he could not curse that which God had blessed, any more, he might have added, than he could bless that which God had cursed; in other words: There is no available cursing of aught that is in conformity with, and no blessing of aught that is in opposition to God's eternal decrees, extant and made known as they are in the laws of nature. By the time the record we are engaged in reviewing was written the Israelites had both vanquished, and been vanquished by the Moabites, and in turn had vanquished them yet again—they had finally proved themselves the stronger; and by the same law of force or power, the law that makes the heavier body outweigh the

lighter, they had then fallen before Assyria and Babylonia.

What are we to understand by the phrase : Angel of Jehovah, of whom as *Deus ex machinâ* we find such free use made in the course of Balaam's journey ?

The words may generally be taken as expressing belief in the existence of certain supernatural beings, messengers between God and man,—a belief which appears to have originated with the great western branch of the Aryan family of mankind—the Zend-folks, inhabitants of Iran or Medo-Persia, which became known to the Jews in the later periods of their history, and through them continues to influence the masses among the policied peoples of Europe. It is notable that when an angel is spoken of in the Old Testament, it is always the Angel of Jehovah, the God of the more modern Jews, that is indicated ; it is never, in so far as we are aware, the Angel of Elohim—God in the abstract.

In the Hebrew Scriptures, however, the words Angel of Jehovah, as we have already seen, have often a different meaning ?

They are indeed for the most part to be read as signifying the Jewish God Jehovah himself ; as in the notable instance of the Man or Angel who wrestled with Jacob on Peniel, and of the impersonation we have just seen in conference with Balaam, during his journey, instructing him in what he was to say to Balak, and with the drawn sword in his hand barring the way he was going.

Have we any evidence of the existence of such supernatural beings as angels ?

We have none ; there is no such thing as a *supernatural* ; there is, there *can be*, nothing beyond nature. Such a conception, untenable at the present time, was possible enough in ages when heaven was looked on as a firmament in which God had his dwelling place, and from which he himself came

down occasionally to see how matters were going on below, or, delegating his authority to intermediate agents, sent special communications to his favourites or his foes among the sons of men. But God's sole messengers to man are men of nobler minds and purer lives.

And what are we to think of the poor ass, remonstrating in human speech with her rider ?

Of this we of course can only think as of a fable, no more to be received in any literal sense—and here it covers no *moral* sense—than the Apologues of Æsop, Lafontaine, Gay, Lessing, and Kriloff are to be taken as narratives of actual incidents. Articulate speech belongs to man exclusively of all animated beings, and is the outcome and creation of faculties with which he alone is endowed. Animals have nothing more than inarticulate, though varied, sounds expressive of a few primary sensations, appetites, emotions, or wants, such as love, fear, anger, pleasure, pain—nothing more; and though they learn to repeat and even to understand the language of man to a certain but still limited extent, they are impotent to communicate with him in his own speech, and in the way he holds intercourse with his fellow men and with them.

The ass did not speak to Balaam, then ?

Most certainly she did not.

Yet the text of the Bible says that she did, and the Bible is preached as not only containing the word of God, but as being the very word of God to man ?

It is so preached ; it is said to be so ; nevertheless the ass's speech to the soothsayer Balaam cannot possibly form any part of the true word of God to man, and must therefore be retrenched from so much of the text as might reasonably be viewed in this light. It must in fact be put beside the tale we have in the Iliad, where, of the horses of Achilles, Balius and Xanthus, Balius not only speaks Greek, but shows himself possessed of the gift of prophecy, for he tells

Achilles of the fate that is soon to befall him. The tale in the Bible, however, say our religious teachers, is to be received as part of a sacred record; that in our Homer as no more than the idle fancy of a heathen poet!

What conclusion, farther, may be come to concerning the prophecies which wind up the interview of Balaam with the King and Princes of Moab?

That they are, as already hinted, *prophecies after the event*. Balaam, in fact, shows himself acquainted with the history of Agag, vanquished by Saul and by him spared to live, but devoutly hewn in pieces before the Lord, by Samuel the prophet. The star of Jacob, of which he makes mention, is doubtless David, the man according to God's own heart of the priesthood both of older and newer times; and the carrying away captive by Asshur, and the coming of ships from Chittim to devastate both Asshur and Eber, refer undoubtedly to events that had come and gone some time before the writer of the 25th chapter of the Book of Numbers lived; the Assyrian empire having fallen before the power of Babylon; and Judah after Israel—latest representative of the ancient Eber—having in turn succumbed to Chaldæa, and been carried away captive.

There seems not a little incongruity in the exhibition of Balaam, a heathen soothsayer, as the apologist and flatterer of the children of Israel?

Not a little truly! But in the story of Balaam and his ass we have evidently the work of two narrators intermixed; and the Jehovist, supplementing what has been held the earlier narrative of the Elohist, or shall we rather say the legend from which both Elohist and Jehovist here drew as in so many other places, now finds an opportunity to do so in aggravated measure. He shows himself unable to resist the temptation of making the Mesopotamian soothsayer the mouthpiece of his own imaginations; for

it can only be the Jehovist who speaks in the name of Balaam in all which that worthy is made to say of the seed of Jacob. We do, however, catch a glimpse of the Seer as he was in reality, in the little the Elohist says about him. There he meets us as he must have been in fact; not overwhelmed by any sense of the greatness of Jehovah, constrained to speak words put into his mouth by the Lord, and no abettor of the doings of the children of Israel, but influential through the women of Midian in seducing the Israelites from the service of their God, Jehovah, to the worship of his own God, Baal-Peor! The last we hear of Balaam is in complete conformity with this presentation, for he is among the number of the slain in the battle with Midian, which follows immediately on those in which Sihon and Og were discomfited and killed. Balaam brought from the mountains of the east could have known nothing of Jehovah, God of the post-exilic Jews of Jerusalem, nor of the seed of Jacob as his chosen people.*

* The name of the Seer—Balaam—evidently from Baal, ever the great antagonist of Jehovah in the later Jewish story, might of itself suffice to excite suspicion that the whole tale in which he figures is a mythe. The God Baal is plainly enough pitted against Jehovah and the chosen seed, for the purpose of being made to sustain a signal defeat, and Balaam, his priest, may well be a man of straw set up to be confounded before the majesty of Israel. The incongruities, inconsistencies, and absurdities of the story leave us free in fact to relegate it to the region of the mythical and imaginary, all in seeing its end and object to be the exaltation of Jehovah above Baal and the glorification of the children of Israel over their enemies. The tale may possibly have been suggested by an incident in the war with Moab that was successfully waged by David, the tradition of which had reached the post-exilic scribe its author, whose fancy led him to mount his hero on the speaking ass, as Astolpho is mounted on the hippogriff by the Italian poet, and the Knight of the rueful countenance is set astride on Wooden-peg-the-winged by the Spaniard. To refer such an artistic composition as the tale of Balak and Balaam to the age of Moses is absurd.

Cursing by a Seer, soothsayer; or man of God, however, is still held of some account in the world?

Or what were the meaning of the curses or excommunications which His Holiness the Pope occasionally fulminates against those he hates or has in displeasure!

In flagrant contradiction, nevertheless, with the injunction of what must be held a higher authority?

Which says: Bless them that curse you, do good to them that despitefully use you.

Having obtained a footing in the plains of Moab, an elevated steppe or plateau, 3,000 feet above the level of the sea, and affording sufficient pasturage for flocks and herds, the Israelites appear to have settled there and made themselves at home; taken them wives and concubines from among the natives; shown themselves so little mindful of all the miracles said to have been done in their behalf by Jehovah in Egypt and the wilderness; and further, to have profited so little by the teaching of Moses and Aaron that they assist at the sacrifices of the Moabites, partake of the flesh of the offerings to their idols, and bow down to Baal-Peor, the God of the country. This seems very extraordinary?

So would it be were it not that the religion of the Moabites was either that of the Israelites themselves, or so like it that they found no difficulty in conforming to its rites. All we find said about the Cult of Jehovah in the Pentateuch is to be held as said of the religious system that was developed after the Captivity; it certainly had no existence in Judæa until the return of the remnant from the waters of Babylon, with Ezra, the Scribe, as a principal personage among them, and Nehemiah, the delegate of Cyrus, as Governor, at their head—Ezra, with scarce a shadow of doubt, the great preserver to his people of the legends of their race, inventor of many of the myths that pass for history, and redactor of the

Persian tale of Paradise, the Serpent, the Tree, and the forbidden fruit whose "mortal taste," in another sense than that of the poet, may truly be said to have brought on the world so much of the woe it has since endured on religious grounds.

The anger of Jehovah is reported to have been kindled against Israel for their evil doings in Moab?

And by him is commanded to be satisfied in a very singular and serious way: "Take all the heads of the people and hang them up before Jehovah against the sun, that the fierce anger of Jehovah may be turned away from Israel," says Jehovah himself to Moses; and the leader, making no intercession on this occasion with his angry God for the foolish people, orders the Judges of Israel forthwith to "Slay every one his men who were joined to Baal-Peor." That these barbarous orders were obeyed we need not doubt, although all record of the fact is wanting, the details having been suppressed: the heads of the people, chiefs or prime offenders, were doubtless crucified or hung up before the sun, and the others were slain: victims all of a kind believed to be acceptable to the God of the early Hebrew people. In spite of the crucifixion of the chiefs, and the slaughter of offenders by the Judges, which must have been somewhat indiscriminate, we hear of a plague inflicted on the people at large by Jehovah himself, in which twenty thousand are said to have died.

We have already had a parallel story to this, the same in almost every one of its incidents?

We have, in connection with the worship of the golden calf, which Aaron made for the people as the God, or Image of the God, who had brought them out of Egypt. The tale here appears to be a repetition of the one that has gone before. The crucifixion of the chiefs against the sun is, however, a new incident, but neither this, nor the butchery of the people,

if meant as a propitiatory sacrifice—and as such it must have been intended—had so much influence with Jehovah in inducing him to stay the pestilence as the individual act of Phinehas, the son of Eleazar. An Israelite, Zimri by name, having brought his paramour, Cozbi, a Midianitish woman, into the camp under the very eyes of the congregation, was followed into the tent he had entered (rendered Hurenwinkel, harlot's corner, by Luther) by Phinehas, armed with a javelin, who then and there thrust the man of Israel and the strange woman through the belly, so that they died. "So was the plague stayed from the children of Israel," says the text.

This was even as extraordinary and incomprehensible a remedy for the plague as the act itself appears to have been summary and unauthorised. Phinehas, we might have presumed, would be punished for the double murder he had done at a blow, in conformity with the law said to have been already given by Jehovah at Sinai, which says, Thou shalt do no murder; but Jehovah, on the contrary, is now represented as not only not wroth with the murderer, but even as well pleased with him for his deed. "Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, the priest," says Jehovah, according to the record, "hath turned my wrath away from the children of Israel, while he was zealous for my sake among them, that I consumed not the children of Israel in my jealousy. Wherefore say: I gave unto him my covenant of peace, even a covenant of an everlasting priesthood, because he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for the children of Israel."

Could we, as reasonable, moral, and responsible beings conceive such language to have been used by the God of the Universe,—granting, for an instant, that God ever spoke in human speech to man, a notion which every rational conception that can be formed of Deity forbids,—we should still venture to say that God

never used such words as these; never approved the murderous act of Phinehas; never gave Moses orders to hang up the heads of the people before the sun, and never sent a pestilence among them for yielding to the blind impulse which is an element in the nature of man to worship the Unknown and Unknowable Something he divines as existing, not only beyond himself, but beyond the world in which he lives. And what, in fine, can be said for the murder of a fornicator and his paramour accepted by Jehovah as an *atonement* for wrong doing by his chosen people!

What, indeed; save that it is in conformity with the ideas of ancient times, when human victims were held, of all others, the most acceptable to the Gods,—to the God of the early Hebrews in especial, if we are to conclude from this, and other narratives of a like kind that have come down to us.

May not the impressive approval of the deed of Phinehas, here ascribed to Jehovah, have had an evil influence on the world?

There can be little doubt but that it has. It were warrant enough of itself for the hot-headed zealot, and even for more sober-minded men in council assembled and with responsibility divided, to seek to propitiate God by putting to death those they called his enemies, as in so many instances they are known to have been their own.

Moses receives further orders from Jehovah (who has just made the Israelites pay so heavily for committing themselves with the Moabites), directed against the Midianites, who are not among the number of those he favours: "Vex the Midianites and smite them," says the text; a commandment which, we may presume, Moses is neither slow nor sorry to obey, although we have not the particulars at this moment of the way in which he set about the vexing and the smiting; for the narrative is suddenly interrupted by instructions to Moses and Eleazar

conjointly to take the sum of the children of Israel from twenty years old and upwards. The order seems given at this particular time for no sufficient reason—the apportionment among the tribes of lands still in the possession of others, the one assigned, being none—save that the writer may find occasion to say that with the exception of Caleb and Joshua, there was no man over twenty years of age now alive among them, who had been numbered at Sinai.

The numbers at this second Census, we may presume, will be found very much reduced ?

Strange to say, however, after forty years of wandering in the desert with all the attendant toils and privations, the number of able-bodied men now enrolled is found but 1,820 under that declared at Sinai. Had the tale of the *survivors* been given at no higher a figure, we should possibly have felt less disposed to question the truth of the statement, than we are when we find the number of able-bodied men over twenty now set down at 601,730 !*

Beside Caleb and Joshua, Moses the leader is still to the fore ?

As he is not to be excepted from the general doom, apparently, he is not named ; and shortly afterwards, indeed, he has the important intimation given him that he is now to die. “Get thee up into this mount Abarim,” says the text, “and see the Land which I have given unto the children of Israel ; and when thou hast seen it, thou shalt be gathered unto thy people, as Aaron thy brother was gathered.” Such is the curt notice the great leader receives of his approaching fate.

* To have had over 600,000 soldiers in the field, the Israelites must have been nearly as many as the Prussians in the reign of their late king, when the available military force of the country, with every able-bodied man a soldier, was 700,000,—300,000 standing army, 400,000 reserve, but all trained and available at a day's notice.

This seems hard measure after all the toil and trouble he has endured ; scarcely in conformity, either, with the terms of the promises made him at first, or with all we know of his deservings in his subsequent career ; the reason assigned by Jehovah for his resolve not to suffer the leader to set foot in the land of Canaan, viz. : that he had rebelled against the commandment of Jehovah at Kadesh in the desert of Zin, by the water of Meribah, and failed to sanctify him there—being anything but satisfactory. We have seen indeed, that in so far as the text informs us, Moses did *not* rebel against Jehovah at Meribah. Jehovah would not surely have had Moses at Meribah hang up the heads of the people before the sun to sanctify him there as he did when the Israelities bowed down to Baal-Peor and committed themselves with the daughters of Moab at Shittim ?

We might almost conclude that his not having done so was the real offence ; any other laid to his charge being utterly groundless. There was murmuring, indeed, and serious discontent among the people at Meribah, because of the hardships and the thirst they were enduring ; but the leader had been true to his charge ; and we do not see that he had then been so free in his expostulations with Jehovah as on many other occasions, and so perchance have given ground of offence.

We do not learn that Moses expresses any surprise at the intimation he receives of his approaching death, or makes any remonstrance against the doom decreed him ?

He expresses no surprise and makes no remonstrance. Brave and unselfish, as he is ever finely pictured by the writer, he thinks not of himself ; he is only solicitous that the unreasonable and unruly multitude he has led thus far should not be left like sheep without a shepherd when he is gone. On his own petition consequently, and by Jehovah's com-

mands, he brings Joshua, the son of Nun, in face of the congregation before Eleazar the priest, who is to "ask counsel for him after the judgment of the Urim before Jehovah, and to give him a charge in their sight." In other words, Joshua is now to be instituted as leader of the Israelites, after consultation of the instrument of divination upon the breast of the priest, and the imposition of his hands by that functionary.

Moses' work, however, is not yet done; after another interruption of the narrative by a particular specification of the festivals to be observed, and the offerings to be made to their deity by the children of Israel, Jehovah's portion—the ancient Israelites imagining that their God required to be fed as well as themselves—being a lamb in the morning and another in the evening, day by day, throughout the year, with bread in proportion to the flesh, and a measure of wine to crown the repast; besides these daily offerings as food for the God, there were others in especial to be made on the weekly sabbaths; on the first or new-moon day of each recurring month; at the feast of the Passover, in the first month of the year—epoch of the vernal equinox; at the feast of the Atonement, in the seventh month—epoch of the autumnal equinox, and so on. But the Midianites, though we have lost sight of them for some time, are not forgotten: "Avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites," resumes the irate Jehovah to his servant Moses; "afterwards shalt thou be gathered to thy people."

Moses obeys the orders of Jehovah?

And that with alacrity: "Arm some of yourselves unto the war, and let them go against the Midianites, and avenge Jehovah on Midian," says he to those about him. A corps of twelve thousand men is forthwith told off for service, and goes against the enemy; Phinehas, the slayer of Zimri and Cozbi, so

much approved by Jehovah, being of the number, having "the holy instruments (what were these?) and the trumpets to blow in his hands."

The Israelites prevail?

They slay the five kings of Midian, and Balaam the son of Beor, the Seer, who we should have imagined they ought rather to have spared, because of his refusal to curse and do them evil,—to say nothing of the blessing he had bestowed on them and the good presumed to be attached to it. They slay all the men, take all the women of Midian and their little ones captive, and appropriate the spoil of their cattle, their flocks, and their goods,—they make a clean sweep, in a word,—and having burned the cities and the goodly castles of Midian, they return in triumph to the encampment with the prisoners and the spoil.

They will be joyfully received by Moses and lauded for their prowess?

On the contrary; he is wroth with the officers of the host, and says to them :—" Have ye saved all the women alive? Behold, these caused the children of Israel, by the counsel of Balaam, to trespass against Jehovah in the matter of Peor; now, therefore, kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman that hath known a man; but all the women children that have not known a man, keep alive for yourselves."

What a horrible order! And is it conceivable that the man who was capable of giving it could have been seen by God as a fit and proper person to lead and make laws for the children of Israel?

God is not a person looking to fitness or unfitness in individual men, or making election of this or of that in furtherance of ends, but the Sum and Substance of the Forces and Things of the Universe,— Cause, Order, and Being, in One of all that is and of all that comes to pass. Moses' order was his own, given in conformity with his estimate of propriety

and in consonance with the usages of the age in which he is believed to have lived. In ancient times the more youthful of the female populations of conquered countries and captured towns were usually spared as prizes for the victors, by whom they were taken as concubines or slaves,—concubines while yet youthful, slaves when fallen into years. Μῆτιν ἄειδε Θεά, &c. ; we know what woes were brought upon the Grecian host by the leader's arbitrary appropriation to himself of Achilles' prize, the fair Briseis! It was only when a person, a city, or a district was declared *Cherem*, or *Devoted* to Jehovah, that there was indiscriminate slaughter of all and sundry by the Israelites. In the instance before us, indeed, Moses appears to have strained the law relating to things devoted, when he ordered even the virgins to be spared: all ought of right to have been put to death. But we forthwith find, in the way in which the spoil taken is ordered to be apportioned, that means are not omitted to reconcile the God to the partial violation of his law:—he is to have his share of the booty. "Divide the prey taken, both of man and beast, into two parts," says the text; "one between them that went out to battle, and one between all the congregation. And levy a tribute to Jehovah of the portion of the men of war which went out to battle, one soul of five hundred, both of the persons and the beeves, the asses and the sheep; take it of their half and give it to Eleazar the priest for a heave offering of Jehovah." Passing other particulars as of less interest to us here, we find Jehovah's share of the virgins saved from slaughter set down at Thirty-two; and the question immediately presents itself: What was Jehovah to do or to have done with them? "Give them for a heave offering of Jehovah," says the record. But the giving of victims to the priest was the prelude to their sacrifice before the altar; and *heave* and *wave* offerings were of parts of the carcass—notably the shoulder

and breast, the cheek and maw—which became the perquisite of its servitors. The caul, the fat of the kidneys, the rump, and, above all, the blood were Jehovah's portions; and these, when the blood had been poured out and sprinkled, were necessarily sent to him in smoke, as a sacrifice of a sweet savour made by fire. If the ritual were observed in the case of the thirty-two virgins before us—and when we call to mind the religious rites of the policied but barbarous men that peopled Asia-Minor and the shores of the Mediterranean in ancient times, among all of whom we know that human sacrifices were essential elements in the religious service, why should we doubt that it was?—we can only conclude that we have another instance of a human sacrifice on a not insignificant scale to the terrible Deity whom the early Israelites had for their God and King. The thirty-two virgins that fell to Jehovah could not even have had the two months' grace accorded Jephthah's hapless daughter, like her "to bewail their virginity upon the mountains," and then, "forasmuch as Jehovah had taken vengeance on their enemies," to "have done unto them according to the vow that had been vowed," as "was the custom in Israel:" they must have gone immediately through the fire, like the Gileadite's daughter, as a thank-offering to the God for the victory just achieved.

After the "crowning mercy," as Moses might have designated his victory over the Midianites, had the phrase for a signal defeat and slaughter been thought of in his day, and the exaggerated amount of booty said to have been secured, the captains of the force engaged make their report to the Leader?

And say that they have taken the sum of the men serving under them, "and there lacketh not one man among us." Whence we might infer that the massacre of the unhappy Midianites—combatants and non-combatants, males old and young, and every woman of adult years—must have been perpetrated

in cold blood and by some treacherous movement on the part of the assassins ; for how should thousands, hundreds, or even units of grown men, with or without weapons in their hands, have suffered themselves, their women and their children to be butchered like sheep, without retaliating upon so much as one of the blood-thirsty crew let loose upon them ! This addition to the tale, made doubtless still farther to enhance the show of Jehovah's care for his peculiar people engaged in the work of their mission, seems to take it out of the category of things possible, and leaves us free to conclude that, though the Israelites may have been victorious and the Midianites vanquished, the victory and the defeat were accompanied by no such atrocities as those recorded.

There is a statement made soon after that confirms a conclusion of the kind ?

The district into which the Israelites had now come was fertile in pasture lands, and being so seen by the tribes Reuben and Gad, who are said to have had "a great multitude of cattle" (in spite of their forty years' wandering in the waterless and herbless wilderness, in some few parts only of which can a camel or a goat find the scantiest possible subsistence !), they petition Moses for leave to settle there. "The land," they say, "is a land for cattle, and thy servants have cattle ; wherefore let this land be given to thy servants for a possession, and bring us not over the Jordan."

Moses agrees to their petition ?

Not at first, though he yields at last ; he even reproaches them with want of stomach for the higher enterprise—the conquest of the land of Canaan—that now lies before them. But they satisfy him that they will not be wanting in aid to the rest of the assembly in the warlike work still to be done. "We will build sheep-folds here for our cattle," say they, "and cities for our little ones ; but we ourselves will go ready armed before the children of Israel

until we have brought them unto their place, and our little ones shall dwell in fenced cities, *because of the inhabitants of the land ;*" who, consequently, had not *all* been slain, as reported.

Within sight of the promised land, however, the orders which Moses is now said to receive from Jehovah are very stringent as regards the dispossession and the slaying or the driving out of the native inhabitants, accompanied by an intimation that if this be not effectually done those let remain shall be pricks in the eyes and thorns in the sides of the Israelites ; "moreover, it shall come to pass," continues the text, "that I shall do unto you as I thought to do unto them."

This left the chosen people with little inducement to be merciful ?

Mercy is out of the question when men go with a commission from God, as they believe, to murder and to steal, and could leave the inhabitants no chance of coming to terms with the invaders, even for sufferance to live and be their slaves.

Besides the commandments to exterminate and take possession, the chosen seed are further ordered to be zealous in destroying the Pictures, the Images, and the High Places or Altars of Sacrifice of the native inhabitants ?

The raid upon Palestine by the early Hebrews for settled homes in better lands is constantly conjoined by the Jehovist authors of the Pentateuch and other books with commandments to be zealous for the honour and glory of their God, Jehovah, over all the other Gods of the tribes or peoples they invaded,—commandments that led in more modern times to the Crusades and Religious Wars that have deluged the world with blood ; to the persecutions for conscience sake that drove the best and noblest of some of the fairest of European lands from their homes, and left few but the bigoted, the intolerant, the incompetent, and immoral to possess the soil and continue the

kind. But better, surely, far better, the worship of a stock or a stone, significant still of the Unknown Power that brings the sweet interchange of day and night, and seed-time and harvest, that gives a life to live and a death to die when the ills inseparable from sickness and old age have taken away its worth from life, than fealty to the ruthless impersonation of themselves whom the children of Israel had so long for their God and King!

In anticipation of entering on possession of the promised land, the Israelites now receive certain additional instructions of a political or social complexion, which, as having long influenced and still continuing to influence European practice, are not without interest to us?

Among the number of these they are ordered to provide certain cities as refuges for persons who had been guilty of slaying, whether of "malice prepense" or by hap-hazard, in which they might abide in safety until their guilt or innocence could be inquired into and truly known;—a wise and merciful provision in days when prisons seem to have been unknown, and the nearest of kin to one slain—the avenger of blood as he was called—was bound in duty to seek out and slay the slayer. Deliberate murder, proved by the testimony of witnesses more than one, is surely to be visited with the penalty of death:—no satisfaction is to be taken for the life of a murderer. He, even, whose misfortune it had been to kill another by accident, were he met by "the avenger of blood" beyond the precincts of the city of refuge to which he might flee or had flown, at any time before the death of the high priest in office when the deed was done, might be slain by the avenger, without his being held guilty of murder. After the death of the high priest only, was he who had slain a man by accident or in self-defence at liberty to return to his home protected by the law. This, too, is one of the legacies that reached us from

the Jews. In ages not long gone by, the Christian church was a sanctuary for the *murderer*, where he might be safe, at least for a time, both from private vengeance and public justice; and it is but yesterday since the *debtor* found a sort of restricted liberty within certain *rules*, or districts, recognised by law, among ourselves.

Inheritance among the ancient Israelites appears to have gone among the males of the family exclusively; but Brothers were held bound to provide a maintenance for Sisters. In case the family consisted of daughters only, the inheritance did not pass to the male or males next of kin; the daughters were then treated on the footing of sons. In anticipation of the division of the territories of Canaan, we even find the daughters of Zelophehad provided with possessions in land like the rest; and, in immediate connection with them, apparently, ordinances to prevent the possessions of the members of one tribe from passing by the marriage of female heirs into the hands of members of another tribe?

Ordinances that have had a deteriorating influence on the physical, and through the physical on the moral and intellectual constitution of our kind. Daughters possessed of an inheritance must by the Jewish law be given in marriage to one of the tribe of their father, and even, as the law was interpreted, and where this could be done, to a blood relation. The daughters of Zelophehad, we consequently find married to sons of their father's brother, their cousins, the blood of near-akin being thus made to mingle with kindred blood. But such unions, in virtue of a law antecedent to all human legislation—an eternal law of God—mostly entail degradation in greater or less degree on the issue; and if the intermarrying be persisted in a second or a third time, lead inevitably to the extinction of the family. Were marriages between the children of brothers and sisters to be declared illegal both for Jews and Christians,

there would be something like the reason that is wholly wanting to the interdict against marriage with a deceased wife's sister; and the number of weakly, nervous, foolish, idiotic, and insane people in the world would be less than it is. Wealthy Jewish families in particular suffer much by the intermarriage of cousins or relations in the first degree, so common among them. They might surely have discovered by this time that the preservation of the wealth of a family to its own members was not the sole object to be thought of in matrimonial alliances, and that money was not all that was wanted to make a happy home.

What, to conclude, may be inferred with regard to the authorship and composition of the Book of Numbers?

Carefully and critically read it is seen to be in the main a compilation of many smaller collections of ordinances, reduced to writing in some cases in earlier, in others in much later times; sometimes, moreover, of legendary and traditional matter put into shape by one among the most recent of all the Jewish writers—a priest, a Levite very certainly. The Book could not have existed in the form in which we now possess it until some time after the return from the Babylonian captivity. The contemporaries of Nehemiah—440 B. C.—were certainly unacquainted with the Thora or so-called law of Moses; and it is not unsafe to conclude that instead of dating from the age of Moses and the Exodus, the Book of Numbers was not put together, and did not undergo final revision, until about 400 years before the commencement of the Christian era.*

* Compare particularly Dr S. Davidson's admirable 'Introduction to the Old Testament,' 3 vols, 8vo, Lond., 1862, and Dr Kalisch's learned and exhaustive 'Commentary on Leviticus,' Parts 1 and 2, 8vo, Lond., 1867-72.

THE
BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY.

THE Book of Numbers left us with the Israelites advanced into the plains of Moab and encamped in front of the Jordan, over against Jericho. There, according to the Book that is now to engage us, Moses addresses the people in a long harangue?

In which we find little that is not already familiar to us from the preceding books of the Pentateuch, though the information given is ever and anon varied in particulars and supplemented in parts. The style, moreover, changes; the writer now speaking in the first person, singular, and in the name of Moses. He recapitulates briefly the history of the Tribe he leads, from the day in which Jehovah spoke to them out of the fire on Horeb, reminding them of all that had been done for them in Egypt against Pharaoh, and of much besides that had befallen them in their journeyings through the wilderness. He speaks of their latest victories over Sihon, King of Heshbon, and Og, King of Bashan, whose territories had been successfully over-run and possessed, and concludes by hinting at the work still to be done before the true land of promise, the land that flowed with milk and honey, can be called their own.

In the discourse now addressed to the Israelites we find certain limitations to the more general instructions previously given regarding the way in which the inhabitants of the lands about to be invaded are to be dealt with and their territories occupied?

The people are now told that they are not to look on all and sundry of the tribes they encounter in their progress as their enemies, whom they are required to spoil and to kill. They are particularly forbidden to meddle with the Edomites, the children of Esau, their brethren, who dwell in Seir; neither are they to distress the Moabites, nor the Ammonites; the lands of these peoples having been given to their brothers, the children of Lot.

From what we now know it appears that on the like grounds they might properly have been ordered to molest none of the native inhabitants of the land of Canaan, or Palestine proper?

True; for if similarity of language demonstrates identity of descent, the Edomites, Moabites, Canaanites, Phœnicians, and Israelites were all in truth one people; and the social customs and religious systems of the tribes, who spoke the language, seem also, in every essential particular, to have been the same.

The Israelites must therefore have been a Nomad tribe of the great Semitic family of mankind, whose home, a short while before their settlement among the peoples already in possession of Palestine, lay to the east and south of the Jordan and Dead Sea?

There are many detached statements in the Bible that lend much greater countenance to such a conclusion than to the Magnificat of their Exodus out of Egypt. Jehovah, we now learn incidentally, for instance, took the children of Israel for his inheritance, not because they were *a great and powerful people*, as they must needs have been had they come against Palestine in arms six hundred and odd thousands strong, followed by a multitude of non-combatants more than two millions in number. For they were, it is said, "*the least of all the peoples.*" Instead of the reiterated accounts we have of their bringing out of Egypt "with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm," we are further informed in

another place that Jehovah "found them in a desert, in a waste and howling wilderness;" and may truly be said to have had pity upon them for their miserable plight, "starving and athirst," instead of encumbered with flocks and herds, "even very much cattle," and boasting possession, besides, of gold and silver in profusion, precious stones, and dyed stuffs, of every rainbow hue, for the decoration of the Tent, the dwelling-place of their God. Joined by a party of their countrymen escaped from the slavery in Egypt, into which they had been carried or sold at an earlier date, the Nomad Hebrew tribe, we may imagine, made raids on others of the neighbouring cognate tribes — Horites, Amorites, Amalekites, &c., tenants of better watered and more fertile lands to the east of the Jordan than those over which they had been wont to roam, and obtained a footing among them—not without violence and bloodshed, doubtless, but with nothing of the indiscriminate slaughter which Jewish writers seem to take so special a pride in recording. Increasing in numbers and in strength under the influence of more favourable material circumstances, and still pushing northwards and westwards, they fell in with the more advanced agricultural tribes,—the Canaanites and others, occupants of Palestine proper, came to blows with them for possession of the soil, and succeeded at length in establishing themselves among them. Such, as we divine it, when detached from the historical expulsion of the Hyksos, may be the foundation of the Legend of the Exodus from Egypt, and the invasion of Palestine by the forefathers of the Jews. The tale of the Exodus as it stands, and of almost all that follows it for centuries, is certainly wholly mythical—an idea in the dress of history.

This, however, is pure speculation?

Legitimate, nevertheless, where there is so little of reliable fact to rest on, and that little made the

ground of superstitious beliefs, erroneous conclusions, and the apology for reprehensible deeds; in the absence of all historical data it is permitted us to speculate on the probable origin of Legend and mythical Tale.

The Israelites according to the record were wanderers in the wilderness for forty years?

So it is said, and for how many more neither legend nor written story says a word. Of the forty years named, indeed, we have an indifferent account of marchings and countermarchings during a period of some two years only; the history of the people through the remaining eight-and-thirty years is as complete a blank as that of the four hundred and odd years they are said to have sojourned in Egypt. It was on the first day of the eleventh month of the fortieth year, according to the story, that Moses spoke to the children of Israel in the plains of Moab; but to have spent eight-and-thirty years in getting from Kadesh Barnea to the Brook Zered bounding, and Mount Pisgah overlooking, the land of Canaan seems absurd—the journeyings thus far, from Rameses in Egypt, with proper provision made, might all have been accomplished as it seems within two years had the numbers of the Israelites who fled been to the full as many as reported. But Forty we know was a sacred number with the Jews; and assumed as expressing an indefinite length of time, it seems to have been thought necessary to parade it in this place. The people had often been rebellious on their toilsome marches, particularly at Kadesh, where they even murmur “against their God,”* and must be punished

* Geiger, *Urschrift and Uebersetzungen, &c.*—Not “in their tents,” as we have it in the English version. It was against God that they murmured. Dr Geiger’s restoration of the text makes that plain which otherwise had remained obscure, where Moses tells the people that Jehovah *was wroth with him because of them.*

for their misconduct. The adults among them who had left Egypt, with the exception of Caleb and Joshua, are not to be suffered to set foot on the land that flowed with milk and honey. Instead of advancing at once against the Canaanites, they are therefore made to turn back from Kadesh into the wilderness, and, to complete the mystical term Forty, are doomed to wander for eight-and-thirty years, hither and thither, to stations which very probably never existed out of the imagination of the writer. Forty years were possibly assumed as sufficient to get rid of the murmurers against their leader and their God, whom hunger and thirst, hardship and disease, and Jehovah's occasional outbursts of anger, with fire and pestilence as his agents, had left alive.

Many of the able-bodied men, twenty years of age, and fit to carry arms when they left Egypt, must however have been alive after the assumed term of Forty years' wandering in the wilderness had expired. Another explanation of the lengthened sojourn in the desert were therefore desirable?

And may probably be found by assuming that the Israelites, for the *indefinitely long period of time here expressed by the number Forty*, were in reality all the while at home, roaming over their native territories south and east of the Jordan and Dead Sea; less fertile than the lands westward of the river and lake, though in earlier ages they may have worn another aspect than that they now present, when the hillsides may have been clothed with stately trees, the valleys been green with herbage, and the now dried-up water-courses have sparkled with rivulets and streams.*

In our discussion of the Decalogue as given in Exodus (xx.), we have already had occasion to advert

* See what is said on the present arid and treeless state of so many of the Eastern lands that once were populous, at page 304, *et seq.*

to certain variations in that document as set forth in the Book that now engages us (Deut. v.). The Decalogue need not therefore detain us here; we would only supplement what has been said by a sentence from the work of an able and pious predecessor in liberal exegesis: "It is remarkable that the contents of the two tables, written by the finger of Elohim, should not be in identically the same words in Exodus and Deuteronomy. It might have been expected that Jewish scrupulosity would have insisted on *verbatim* fidelity to such sacred documents, sculptured in stone by the hand of Deity."*

The interesting papers of Mr Croll, and the exhaustive work of Mr James Geikie, 'On the great Ice Age,' enable us to speak with something like absolute assurance on the causes of those climatic changes that have certainly occurred in the northern hemisphere of our globe to latitudes as low as those of Babylonia, Assyria, and Palestine. If the trunks of trees and remains of plants that only now live in temperate and even sub-tropical lands are found as far north as the arctic circle under thick-ribbed ice, we may feel well assured that countries now desolate through heat and drought may well have had climates in former ages of the world that made a vigorous vegetation not only possible, but necessary in the nature of things. The valleys of the Caucasus that now present none but insignificant glaciers still show by the abrasion and scoring of the rocks which bound them that they once brimmed with vast icy streams; † and the cedars of Lebanon, rooting as they do in *ancient moraines*, ‡ proclaim the fact that the Libanus too must once have poured frozen torrents from its

* 'The Pentateuch,' with Notes critical, practical, and devotional, by the Rev. Thos. Wilson, M.A. Cantab. 4to. London: Trübner and Co.

† Freshfield, 'Travels in Caucasus and Bashan.'

‡ Hooker, J. D., in 'Nat. Hist. Review' for 1864.

heights over the levels of Samaria and Canaan. The Dead Sea itself, like Loch Lomond and the Norwegian Fiords, may possibly be due to the *scooping influence* of glacial action continued through countless ages of the world.

Victorious over Sihon, King of the Amorites, and Og, King of Bashan,* as we have seen already in the Book of Numbers, the Israelites are now told by Moses that they are to go in and possess the land promised to their fathers, but that he himself is not to be suffered to cross the boundary. "I besought Jehovah at this time," says the modern writer in the name of the ancient legendary leader, saying: "O Jehovah God, what God is there in heaven or in earth that can do according to thy works and according to thy might; let me I pray thee go over and see the beautiful land beyond Jordan—the beautiful high land and Lebanon!"

This is an extremely natural desire, most happily expressed by the writer in the name of Moses. But will Jehovah be induced by the flattery so plainly insinuated—to say nothing of the reasonableness of the request—to yield to the petition?

* The mention of Og, King of Bashan, and his bedstead of iron, still to be seen at Rabbah of Gilead in the days of the writer, ought not to be passed by unnoticed; for the story of the Giant and his mighty bed are among the items that initiated our modern biblical criticism. Quoting Aben Ezra's reference to this tale, Spinoza, "father of our philosophy, father also of our biblical criticism," observes:—"The parenthesis about the bedstead—'Is it not in Rabbath of the children of Ammon'—clearly proves that he who wrote this portion of Scripture lived long, very long after Moses; for such a style of narrative belongs only to one who speaks of things of the most remote antiquity, and who uses remnants of things past as testimonies to the accuracy of his narrative." The Ammonite city of Rabbah was only attacked and taken by David more than four centuries after the presumed age of Moses (2 Sam. xii. 29).—See Spinoza, 'Tract. Theol. Pol.,' chap. viii., Eng. Vers., page 172.

Jehovah will not be influenced by his favourite on this occasion ; and the terms of the reply are in perfect keeping with the purely human character of the colloquy. "Jehovah," says Moses to the people, "was wroth with me because of you ; he would not hear me, and said to me : Let it suffice thee ; speak no more unto me of this matter. Get thee up to the top of Pisgah and look to the West and the North and the South, and behold the land with thine eyes ; for thou shalt not go over this Jordan. But charge Joshna and strengthen him, for he shall go over before the people, and cause them to inherit the land which thou shalt see."

Can we in reason, with our larger knowledge of Nature, its changeless laws, and the *idea of God* to which we have at length attained, believe that any such colloquy as this ever took place between the man Moses and the Being we postulate and call God ?

It is impossible to do so ; the tale is a myth, the product of an age when Jehovah was believed to be one among many Gods,* to have the children of Israel as his peculiar favourites among men, his will to be knowable by Lots, Urim and Thummim, Ephod or Teraphim, divining cup and oracle, the entrails of victims and the flight of birds, whilst his countenance and assistance were to be secured by the destruction of life through the shedding of blood, and the foul smell of burning fat and flesh.

After his historical survey and summary, Moses goes on to admonish the people under his command ?

Saying : "Hearken, O Israel, to the statutes and the judgments which I teach you, that ye may live ; ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish aught from it."

This injunction seems somewhat at variance with the views of those among our modern teachers who

* "What God in heaven or earth can do according to thy works and thy might."

accept the Hebrew Scriptures as the Word of God to man, and yet acknowledge advances in the religious ideas of the Jewish people and the character of the doctrine taught—the teacher being all the while understood to be God himself as inspirer of the precepts successively delivered? *

This is the case, unquestionably. But Moses' admonition precludes either addition to or subtraction from the ordinances he is specially commissioned to make known : all change, in other words, is forbidden, and all progress thereby made impossible. Yet progress is the law of God : what were man did he not advance—had he not advanced ! The inhibition put into the mouth of Moses, false in principle, mischievous in practice, therefore never came from God. And who shall gainsay advance among the Israelites from the days when their God claimed the first-born of man and beast as his own, and had all that opened the womb sent to him in smoke as sacrifices of a sweet savour made by fire, and times when the prophets of Judah denounced the immolations and burnings that went on in Tophet and Hinnom as horrors to Jehovah?—from the age when Abraham was held to have shown a pious spirit in his unquestioning readiness to make a burnt-offering of his only son, and that in which Micah exclaims, "Wherewith shall I come before Jehovah, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old, with thousands of rams or rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth Jehovah require of thee, but to

* Comp. Lessing, 'Education of the Human Race;' and Temple, Bishop of Exeter, 'Education of the World,' in 'Essays and Reviews.' There is a serious difficulty, however, in this idea of *advance* for whosoever accepts the Hebrew Scriptures as immediate Revelations from God.

do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God!" (Micah vi. 6, et seq.)

As motive for implicit obedience, Moses reminds the people particularly of what had been done by Jehovah's orders to the men who followed Baal-Peor, when their chiefs were hung up or crucified in the face of the sun, and the judges slew every one his men who were known to have been gathered to this obnoxious divinity: "Take ye, therefore, good heed," he continues, "lest ye corrupt yourselves and make you a graven image the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female, or of any living thing—bird, beast, fish, or creeping thing; for ye saw no similitude on the day that Jehovah spoke to you in Horeb out of the fire." The people are farther—and it is not unimportant to note the fact—cautioned against lifting up their eyes to heaven, lest, seeing "the sun and moon and stars, even all the host of heaven," they should be led, through false notions of virtues inherent in them and influences proceeding from them, "to worship and to serve them, which Jehovah thy God hath divided to all the nations under the whole heaven." Cautions and reminders all of these, from which we conclude?—

That they are directed against modes of religious observance with which the Jews, even in the late days of the writer, were still familiar, more deeply impressed on them, doubtless, in the formulated shape which became known to them during their Babylonian captivity. And no wonder: for they were no other than those which they and their fathers, even into the backward night of time, had been wont to follow. The Semitic race, at one period of their evolution, were certainly worshippers of the Sun, Moon, and Stars, and brought their oblations to the Generative or Reproductive Power inherent in nature at large, but dominated as they believed by the orbs of heaven. The Sun we know to have been everywhere typified

in the ancient world by the Fire of the Altar; the Generative Power by its universally-accepted symbol, the Phallus or Ioni-Linga, of which, as male and female, the representatives among the Israelites were the stone pillar, Matzebah, and the wooden shaft, Aschèra. These are the objects, translated grove and groves in our English version, for which the Kadeschim, or prostitutes attached to the Temple, wove hangings, and which are so repeatedly ordered by the Jehovist prophets and reformers of Judah to be broken in pieces or cut down and burned to ashes.

The last clause of the verse above quoted having reference to worship of the sun, moon and stars, might perhaps with propriety be held to have a more particular significance than at first sight appears?

When read with unsealed eyes it seems to say that Jahveh-Elohim had given one or other of the starry host of heaven as their tutelary God to the several peoples of the earth, and the children of Israel were to pay adoration to no star but the one assigned to them. The God of the Israelites was emphatically Jahveh-Zabaoth,—Jehovah chief of the starry host; and we are not left in doubt as to the particular star that had been given to them, this being no other than the planet Saturn, which, under a certain similitude, the precise nature whereof is unknown to us, but which, called Chiun or Kewan, was the God worshipped by the Hebrew people at one, and that we may conclude a very long, period of their earlier history. “Ye brought me sacrifices and meat-offerings indeed in the wilderness for forty years, O house of Israel,” exclaims Jehovah reproachfully through the mouth of the oldest of the Prophets; “but ye bore the Tabernacle of your Moloch and Chiun, your Images, the Star of your God, which ye made to yourselves!” (Amos v. 25, 26.) And that Chiun or Kewan, Chemosch, Molech, and Saturn, transformed at length into Jahveh, were one and the same is admitted by all competent inquirers.

Moses is represented by the writer of Deuteronomy as foreseeing that the Israelites in days to come, when they should have been long in the land, "will corrupt themselves," *i.e.*, will make them idols and go after other gods; as if they had never done so before! as if there had been no golden calf during their nomadic life in the wilderness, nor brazen serpent in Jerusalem to which the Judahites continued to burn incense in the days of Hezekiah; as if the Ephraimites had not gone on worshipping their god El-Isra-El under the form of the Bull to the end of their existence as a state! The writer is fearful, in fact, that the people will continue to do as their fathers had done, despite the better teaching given them of late by the reformed Jehovistic party, of whom he whose words we have before us we can have no doubt was one.

Persisting in the courses denounced, the consequences foreseen by Moses, as said, will be disastrous to the Israelites?

They will then be made to perish from off the land; few in number they will be scattered abroad among the nations, and all the miseries that wait on expatriation and slavery will befall them. Jehovah, however, will not wholly desert the people he had once elected for his own. Did they, in the midst of the tribulations awaiting them, and brought on them by themselves, but return and seek him, then would he not forsake them; for he is a merciful as well as a jealous God, and will not forget the covenant he had sworn to their fathers; neither would he destroy them utterly; "for unto thee," proceeds the narrative, "it was showed that thou mightst know that Jehovah is God in heaven above and upon the earth beneath—there is none else beside him."

This seems to us the first distinct enunciation of the Oneness of God to be met with in the Hebrew Scriptures?

Heretofore we have only had Elohim—God, or

Jahveh-Elohim—Jehovah-God as one among other Gods, the particular God of the Israelites, never as the ONE and ONLY GOD.

There is much, however, that has gone before and that comes after which takes away from the comprehensiveness of the announcement now made?

Much—the partiality for the Israelites with which Jehovah is credited, for one thing, and his indifference towards, or positive hatred of, all the other peoples of the earth. The God now spoken of and named Jehovah is still the particular God of the descendants of Jacob, and it is not denied that other peoples have their Gods; nay, the conception in the mind of most of the Bible writers is in the nature of an enduring strife or competition between their God Jehovah and the Gods of neighbouring tribes or nations. Jehovah is no more than a local God with a limited jurisdiction, jealous of other Gods, not yet THE SUPREME with the universe for his empire and mankind at large for his subjects.

The evils foreshadowed by Moses as about to befall Israel—evils that must already have overtaken them in the days of the writer—and the predictions he is made to utter of the possible restoration of the people to the favour of their God have had a vast influence not only on the history of the Jews but on that of the world?

An influence for good and for ill, the extent of which cannot be over-rated; for here we encounter the ground or motive out of which the MESSIANIC IDEA took its rise—an IDEA which, though it can be said to have borne none but bitter fruit to the Jews, had within it the germ that grew into Christianity with its mingled sweet and bitter fruits for the world at large.

Subjugation by Egypt, Assyria, and Chaldea in succession, with all the miseries to which conquest by eastern usage led in ancient times, and final ex-

inction as a nation by Rome had been enough, as it seems, to have led to despair?

But for the tenacity with which the small Jewish section of the Hebrew people clung to the insolent idea of their being the Elect of Jehovah their God, coupled with the persuasion that the loss of his countenance would be but for a season; that in his own good time he would raise them up a kingly deliverer, an anointed one (Masach Messiah), who should not only restore them to their power in the promised land but make them supreme over all the peoples of the earth, and proclaim the Temple on Zion as the only shrine at which worship acceptable to God could be paid by man.

The great conception of the Oneness of God—granting that it is now announced—cannot, however, be presumed to have come down from Moses or any contemporary of his?

It is beyond question the product of a much later age—an age when men were living in comparative security, and considerable advances had been made in civilisation.

The same great idea we may presume will continue to be dwelt on in the succeeding books of the Old Testament?

Yet is it no more referred to by their writers until we come to the age of the Prophets and Psalmists of Judah. It is again announced, indeed within a little of the page on which it first finds expression, and by the same writer, doubtless, who has just given it utterance, in words which the pious Jew with the tide of life running to ebb, his children and all he loved in life about his bed, hopes to have poured upon his failing sense as he is being gathered to his people: "Hear, O Israel! Jehovah our God is one God; and thou shalt love Jehovah thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy might:" grand words, and, substituting God for Jehovah, to be

borne in mind in every hour of man's daily life, still more than helplessly heard, if heard at all, in the hour of his death!

The phrases *Jehovah our God*, and *Jehovah thy God*, which recur so regularly in the Hebrew Scriptures, suffice of themselves to cast a certain shadow of doubt over the sense in which these words may have been understood by the utterer as well as by those to whom they were addressed?

So much may indeed be safely said. When we further find injunctions constantly repeated against going after *other Gods*, and penalties threatened for having done so; when we hear the Israelites styled a holy people *unto Jehovah their God*, a people whom *Jehovah their God* has chosen to be a special people to himself, &c., it is obvious enough that the Jews did not conceive their God *Jehovah* to be more than one among other Gods; the one, however, whom they, in virtue of his being their God, of course regarded as the chief and most powerful of all.

The Deuteronomist's picture of the Jewish people is consequently calculated in many parts to convey too favourable an impression of the state of the *Religious Idea* prevalent among them at the epoch *about which* he wrote, though not perhaps at the epoch *in which* he wrote?

There can be no question of this; the Book of Deuteronomy is now known to be one of the most modern within the boards of the Bible—much more modern than the Books of Samuel, the Kings, and several of the Prophets. From the injunctions in regard to things to be done and to be abstained from, which have reached us in the fragments of older documents made use of in the compilation of the Pentateuch that have escaped the expurgating hands of its latest editors, it is obvious that the Israelites were not only not a holy people in the age of Moses, nor yet for centuries after him, but a people in a very

low grade of civilisation, savages at heart, brutal in manners, and idolators in religion.

On the barbarous injunctions repeatedly given with regard to the way in which the native populations of the promised land are to be dealt with, we need to make no comment. They are utterly indefensible, though they have been defended. We would merely remark on the inconsistency here as in so many other particulars; for now the people, men, women and children indiscriminately, are to be exterminated, no single soul being to be left alive; and, again, they are not all to be put to death, nor even driven out of the land at once; they are only to be "driven out little by little, lest the land for lack of inhabitants to till it should cease to yield its increase." The women, as among other barbarous peoples, are commonly, but not always, to be spared as prizes of the victors?

"When Jehovah thy God," says the text, inspired as said, "delivers thine enemies into thy hands and among the captives thou seest a beautiful woman and hast a desire for her, and would have her for a wife, thou shalt bring her home to thy house. There she shall crop her hair, trim her nails, and put off the garment of her captivity; and having bewailed her fate for a month she shall then become thy wife."

This is sad, certainly, and is not perhaps utterly inhuman, it is less terrible than death at all events. But what says the seemingly narrative in continuation?

Should the unhappy woman fail or cease to please her captor—"had he no delight in her"—then he was to let her go whithersoever she would; he was not, however, to make merchandise of her, he was not to sell her, "for he had humbled her." The old Israelites were indeed a *peculiar* people, zealous of good works, &c.—in their own estimation!

To take the daughter of a neighbouring tribe or strange nation to wife was, however, particularly forbidden by others of the commandments or statutes

believed to have been delivered by their God Jehovah to the Jews?

“When Jehovah thy God shall bring thee into the land, &c., thou shalt smite and utterly destroy them (the inhabitants); thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them; neither shalt thou make marriages with them,” &c.; the motive for the last clause of the interdict being, lest the woman should seduce the man from his allegiance to Jehovah and lead him to serve other Gods. The women in the olden time, as now, were pre-eminently the pious sex, and the men of old, as in the present day, must have usually yielded to their blindfold guidance. We are well assured, however, that the interdict against cohabiting with alien women, if known at all, was not acted on in times much later than those the text refers to, when the people must have been much less barbarous than in the age of Moses; there is even good reason to suspect that the interdict was only invented some time after the reign of Solomon, to keep the kings and chiefs from following the bad example set them by that concupiscent sovereign, on whom the Jehovism of his holy men—if Jehovism perchance had yet appeared in the bud, as assuredly it had not come into bloom—seems to have sitten all too lightly. But Deuteronomy, from first to last, is a compound of older and more barbarous ordinances that shock by their atrocity, with other newer and more humane requirements that command the love and reverence of the most refined. How, for instance, could such a sentence as this have been written in an age when injunctions to spoil and to slay without pity or remorse were more especially the order of the day: “And now, O Israel, what doth Jehovah thy God require of thee but to fear Jehovah thy God, to walk in all his ways, to love him and to serve him with all thy heart and with all thy might.”

This is fine, but it is not all?

Within the next few verses we find it said that:—
 “Jehovah had delight in thy fathers to love them; and he chose their seed after them, even you, above all people, as it is this day, for Jehovah your God is God of Gods and Lord of Lords, which regardeth not persons nor taketh reward, but doth execute judgment and loveth the stranger; therefore love ye the stranger;”—a sentence in which we see limitation and universality side by side, a balance with an even beam but loaded in the scales with unequal weights. The words here, as in the verse but just quoted, tell a different tale from those in which we meet the commandments to kill and spoil, to enslave and drive out the inhabitants of the invaded lands.

The more humane and reasonable ordinances of the Book of Deuteronomy seem of themselves to supply irrefragable testimony to the late period in the history of the Hebrew people at which it was compiled?

They are so wholly out of keeping with the barbarous, bloodthirsty and often immoral orders elsewhere set forth in the mythical, incongruous and contradictory writings, entitled the Five Books of Moses, that it is plainly impossible to ascribe them all to one and the same age, or to look on them as possible products of one mind.

The code by which the Jews are required to regulate their lives is much more emphatic in exacting obedience to ritualistic observance, or to the service of Jehovah alone, than to any duties towards their fellow men?

These last are mostly matters of secondary consideration. But the people are repeatedly enjoined to break in pieces the graven images of their adversaries, to cut down their *Aschèras*, to pollute their altars, and burn all things pertaining to their religion with fire. Jehovah, the God of the Jews, is always spoken of as a jealous God—*i. e.*, he is jealous of worship or service paid to any God but himself. The sin of sins

that his people could commit was the serving or going after other Gods. The simple soothsayer, seer, or prophet whose predictions were *not fulfilled*, was to be dealt with summarily and at once as a false prophet: he was to be stoned with stones and done away with. But the prophet whose forecasts *came true*, did he attempt to persuade the people to forsake Jehovah and go after other Gods, was not to be hearkened to, but was surely to be put to death. Nay, continues the peremptory and uncompromising ordinance, "if thy brother, thy son, or thy daughter, the wife of thy bosom, or the friend which is as thine own soul entice thee, saying: Let us go and serve other Gods, thou shalt not consent to him nor hearken to him; neither shall thine eye pity him; neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him, but thou shalt surely kill him; thy hand shall be first upon him to put him to death, afterwards the hands of all the people, and thou shalt stone him with stones that he die." The terms in which the simply false prophet is doomed have nothing of the determined severity of these.

And it was not to individuals only, but to communities, that the same terrible commandment was to apply?

Were it reported that the inhabitants of a city had been seduced from the service of Jehovah to the service of other gods, diligent inquiry was to be made; and, the truth of the allegation ascertained, the people of the place were to be smitten with the sword, the city itself, with all within it, was to be utterly destroyed, and the spoil, as accursed, was not to be appropriated, but, being gathered together in a street, was there, along with the city itself, to be burned with fire and reduced to ashes; a heap of ruins being alone left to mark the spot where the dwellings of men had been.

When we are made aware of the many *Religions*

that have prevailed and that still prevail in the world, that God, conceived as First Cause, makes the sun to shine and the rain to fall on the followers of each and every one of these without favour or distinction, and that there are good, upright, and pious as well as wicked and worthless men and women among them all,—what can we think of the ruthless injunctions we find ascribed to the Jewish God Jehovah?

We can only think of them as the outcome of ignorant, intolerant, bigoted, and presumptuous men, never as the decrees of the God of the Universe. That they have had an adverse influence on the progress of mankind in attaining to anything like reasonable conceptions of the way in which God might, could, would, or should be served, and are chargeable with much of the misery that has been inflicted on mankind in the name of religion cannot be questioned. The *Religious Idea*, under whatever shape it has been formulated, even to the latest and noblest—Christianity has only been humane and beneficent as men have been enlightened and truly civilised. By the light we have lately obtained, we see other grounds of hostility to Standing Pillars, Ascheras, and Images of every kind, beside those which attached to them as elements in the Baal-worship of Israel previous to the triumph of Jehovism. Jacob, the patriarch of *Ephraim*, raised Stone Pillars and planted Trees to his God El-Eohe-Israel; Abraham, the patriarch of *Judah*, built Altars to his God El-Jahveh. The Standing Column and Bull-Calf were the religious insignia of Ephraim; the Altar and Everlasting Fire the emblems of Judah: anointings with oil, oblations of the fruits of the earth, libations of wine, and effusions of water, emblems of fertility and increase, as seen in the sacrifice of Cain, might be held the appropriate offerings at the shrine of El-Israel, the God of Jacob and of Ephraim; but Life in the Blood, both of man and beast, as set forth in

the sacrifice of Abel, was the indispensable oblation to El-Jahveh, the God of Abraham and of Judah. The war against Graven Images and Groves was, in fact, the *theological element* in the *political strife* between Jerusalem and Sichem.*

Still, if there be the bane in the texts before us, it is not without the antidote; the world, indeed, has still been complacent enough to overlook the *Ill* and only to rest on the *Good* that is in the Hebrew Scriptures; and some of the later Prophets are surely found delivering themselves in language worthy of all acceptance?

As in the text but just referred to—For what, O man, &c. And the last and most humane and tolerant of all the teachers of Israel—and Jesus was of Nazareth in Galilee, bordering on Samaria—declared that to love God and our Neighbour was the sum and substance of all the commandments.

The monetary transactions of the Jews could scarcely be overlooked as subject of their latest legislation. “Thou shalt lend unto many nations,” says our text, “but thou shalt not borrow.” To which these words are added:—“And thou shalt reign over many nations, but they shall not reign over thee.”

Statements made as prophecies, of which we may say that the first is as true as the second is false. The children of Israel have indeed for ages been the money-lenders of the world, and they have never appeared as borrowers on their own behalf upon any of its exchanges. They have not only never reigned over any nation, however, but every nation has in turn not only reigned over them, but has mercilessly misused them in their subject state. It is only in these our days that the Jews have been treated as men, and allowed anything like a fair field for the

* Comp. Bernstein, ‘Origin of the Legends of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.’ One of Mr Scott’s series.

display of the better powers which, in common with the rest of mankind, some few of them possess.

Can we reasonably suppose one in the position of Moses toiling in the wilderness, with a horde of starving men and women around him, dictating laws about borrowing and lending money?

Hardly—overlooking for the nonce the instructions they had had from Jehovah to borrow silver and gold and raiment from the Egyptians. The text here points very plainly to the late period at which it was written.

There are many subjects omitted, or but slightly noticed in the preceding Books, which find a place in the legislation of Deuteronomy?

Very many. Matters of controversy, for instance, too hard for judgment in the usual way—whatever that may have been—are now ordered to be referred to the Priests, the Levites, and the Judge of the day, who are to inquire of Jehovah understood, and pronounce sentence. And the man, it is said, who hearkens not to the award, is to die. The Jews of old set little store by human life!

The time when the people shall desire to have a king, like the nations round about, is now anticipated?

It is, and without the objections which are made in the name of Jehovah in another place, from an earlier document—1 Samuel viii. 7. There, though Samuel is ordered by Jehovah to hearken to the voice of the people, he is to do so under protest, because of their ingratitude:—"For it is not thee—the Judge—they have rejected, but they have rejected me—their true God and King—that I should not rule over them." They are even warned of the scourge they will bring upon themselves by their foolish demand; for their king will take their sons and their daughters to himself to do menial duties, to be labourers in the field, cooks and confec-

tioners, and something worse, though it is not named; he will also take their fields and their vineyards, and the tenths of all their produce, and make them his servants:—"And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king, and Jehovah will not hear you." Resolved on having a king, nevertheless, they are to set him over them whom Jehovah should choose—one from among themselves, not a stranger, but their brother; the course which was taken, as we learn, when Saul and David were chosen, before the system of hereditary succession became the rule. The king, it is said, is not to multiply horses to himself, neither is he to multiply wives, that his heart turn not away from serving Jehovah; neither is he greatly to multiply silver and gold—injunctions, all of them, we cannot doubt, aimed at Solomon and his successors, so many of whom never walked otherwise than contrary to the statutes delivered from Sinai, and gave as little heed to those which follow, enjoining a diligent perusal of the Book of the Law (only discovered, however, in the late reign of Josiah), to the end that they might learn to fear Jehovah and keep his commandments.

The Levites, it is to be observed, are now very regularly spoken of as priests, and the portions of the sacrifices to be set apart for them are specified—viz., the shoulder, the two cheeks, and the maw—not the best pieces, by any means; whence we might, perhaps, infer that the Levites were not yet in the seat of power.

When the people are come into the land which Jehovah gives them, they are not to do after the abominations of the nations they supplant?

"There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or is an observer of times, or an enchanter or a witch; for all that do these things are an abomination unto Jehovah," says the text, in terms which assure us that all the prac-

tices denounced had formerly been, if, indeed, they were not still, observed. All that opened the womb both of man and beast had assuredly, in times anterior to those in which the text was written, gone in smoke to the God; and that times and seasons were as regularly observed by the Israelites, as by so many of the other peoples of antiquity, is demonstrated by the epochs in the course of the year when their feasts and festivals were celebrated. It is because of their wickedness in doing the things denounced that Jehovah drives out the old inhabitants of the land before the chosen seed, whom, we venture to say, by the way, we heartily wish we could see as a little less like those they dispossess, and somewhat more worthy of the preference shown them.

Cities of Refuge, to which the homicide might flee, are commanded?

“Whoso killeth his neighbour ignorantly, whom he hated not in time past, says the ordinance, shall flee unto one of these cities and live; lest the avenger of the bloodshed pursue the slayer whilst his heart is hot, and slay him. But if any man hate his neighbour, and lie in wait for him and smite him that he die, and fleeth into one of these cities, the elders of the city shall send and fetch him thence, and deliver him into the hand of the avenger of blood that he die.” An order from which we learn that one akin to the slain man—the avenger of blood, as he is called—is to be the executioner; from which further we may form an estimate of the state of society among whom such a law existed, and of the effect it must have had on the character and disposition of the community.

False witness-bearing was to be severely dealt with?

He who is found, after diligent inquiry made, to have testified falsely against his brother, “is to be

done unto as he had [done or] thought to have done unto his brother. Life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot." Such is the specification; different, it must be owned, from the rule that was delivered some centuries later by a teacher nobler and more humane.

Every man of mature years in the early Hebrew history was a soldier; but we now come upon certain exemptions or disqualifications that must have taken from the number of the host?

He who had built a new house, or had planted a vineyard, or had betrothed to himself a wife, or that was fearful and faint-hearted, was to be at liberty to quit the camp. There could, of course, be no building of houses nor planting of vineyards in the desert, and no betrothing of wives to any great extent under the circumstances, but there may have been craven-hearted men enow among the Israelites fleeing from Egypt after centuries of slavery, as the story says they had been.

When a city was to be attacked the inhabitants were to have a choice and a chance for their lives?

By opening their gates and submitting unconditionally to the invader, the inhabitants would only be made tributaries, and bound to serve the invaders; but summoned, and not making an answer of peace, but one of war, then was the city to be besieged; "and when Jehovah, thy God, hath delivered it into thy hands thou shalt smite every male thereof with the edge of the sword; but the women and the little ones, the cattle and the spoil, thou shalt take to thyself. Thus shalt thou do unto all the cities *that are afar off from thee*; but of the cities of those nations (the Amorites, Hittites, Hivites, Canaanites, &c.) which Jehovah thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, *thou shalt utterly destroy them.*"

All that breathed in these devoted cities were to be slain; but the fruit trees around towns that stood a siege were not to be cut down?

Around towns in territories promised them for an inheritance, understood. The preservation of the fruit trees, therefore, was on purely selfish grounds; for of the trees and lands of cities afar off no such considerate account was to be taken. Not only are all the good trees of these to be felled, but every good piece of land is to be marred with stones, and all the wells stopped up. The city is to be razed to the ground, the land about it to be turned into a desert! (2 Kings, iii.) Of the barbarity of these commandments it were needless to speak, of the evil influence of the teaching, presumed to be from God, there can be no question.

Did it happen that a man were found slain in the land, and it was not known who had slain him, the elders of the city nearest the spot where the body was found were to take a heifer that had not known the yoke into a rough valley that was neither eared or sown, and there strike off her head; "and the priests, the sons of Levi, shall come near; and the elders of the city shall wash their hands over the heifer that is beheaded, and shall answer and say, Our hands have not shed this blood, neither have our eyes seen it; be merciful, O Jehovah, unto thy people Israel whom thou hast redeemed, and lay not innocent blood unto thy people Israel's charge. And the blood shall be forgiven them."

All this smacks of magic. Would it not have been better, perchance, had orders been given to make diligent inquiry roundabout, and to search for the slayer? The elders of the city nearest the place where the dead man was found could not be supposed to be the guilty parties; and their mystical purgation over the body of the beheaded heifer that had not known a yoke, in the rough valley, was as little likely to bring the perpetrator of the deed to light as the whole procedure is barbarous and absurd—though it is in the book, every word of which has so long been said to be inspired!

In case a man had two wives, one beloved, another hated, and both had borne him children, no distinction was to be made in the matter of inheritance between the children of the one mother and those of the other?

The father was to acknowledge his first-born son as such, and give him the double portion that by usage was his right, whether he came of the cherished or the hated wife. In this Jewish custom of making more of the first-born son than of any other child, it may be that we have the source of the *Law of Primogeniture* which still obtains in more than one of the most advanced countries of Europe.

If a man had a stubborn and rebellious son, the Hebrew code provided a short and summary way of disposing and being rid of him?

Did such a "ne'er-do-well" refuse to obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, not hearkening to them when they had chastised him, they were "to lay hold on him and bring him before the elders of the city, and say to them, 'This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice, he is a glutton and a drunkard,'"—a deposition on the strength of which "all the men of the city were then to stone him with stones that he die." A little wholesome castigation with stripes, and seclusion, with a course of bread and water, would surely have been a more humane procedure; and this not sufficing to bring the youth to his senses, expulsion from the community would have been better than putting him to death. But the people who had a God to whom they were wont to make burnt-offerings of the first-born of their sons and daughters, and who were the executioners of malefactors with their own hands, would probably make little of stoning a naughty son to death. Yet these are the people who are our masters in religion, and by implication—inasmuch as morality among us is made so exclusively to hang on religious belief—in morals also!

We now come upon a great variety of ordinances or commandments of greater or less significance: some of them reasonable and humane, others inhuman, absurd, and declaratory of a state of society the lowest and most degraded that can be imagined. Among others, we find it particularly ordered that women are not to put on the garments of men, nor men the garments of women;—words that lead our thoughts to the later times when the Succoth Benoth—booths or dwellings of the vile Kadeschim, male and female, which abutted on the Temple—were ordered to be pulled down by the pious and better-minded Josiah.

A man newly married having suspicions that his wife was not a maid when he received her, was to have the matter investigated in a fashion, on which we need say no more than that, though still in vogue in the East, it is one on which no dependence whatever can be placed for ascertaining the truth. The doom that awaited the woman inculpated must therefore as often have fallen on the innocent as on the guilty; and the course prescribed, we need not say, could never have been ordered by the inspiration of God—it came of nothing but the ignorance of man.

Adulterers were to be severely dealt with?

Both the man and the woman, the crime of adultery brought home to them, were to die; and the same fate awaited the betrothed woman who went astray, as well as her paramour. The man only who violated a betrothed virgin in the field, if she cried for help, was to be put to death; did she not cry for help she too was to die; were the woman a virgin and not betrothed, the raptor was to pay fifty shekels of silver to her father, and she was to be his wife—he might not put her away all his days.

Jehovah, as we know, would not be ministered to by any one who was not complete in all his parts and members?

This we have already seen, and here again we find

it ordered that the Eunuch was not to enter into the congregation of Jehovah; neither was a Bastard, even to the tenth generation. As the mutilation and the bastardy, however, were not acts of the parties concerned, it is certain that no such interdict as that now assigned to the Jewish Jehovah could have come from a just God, the impartial parent and upright judge of every individual according to his own deserts. The Hebrew word translated *bastard* in our version, however, does not signify "illegitimately born," in the sense we attach to the term, but applies to one "spuriously begotten" according to Jewish ethics, *i. e.*, one who was the offspring of mingled Jewish and Gentile blood. (Th. Wilson: Pentateuch, p. 224.)

All and sundry of the native populations of the country invaded by the Israelites are not to be dealt with by indiscriminate spoliation and slaughter, or degradation?

This is so; though the tribes or nations to be excepted are not always the same. Here we find the Ammonites and the Moabites, with whom the Jews were often at war, ordered to be excluded from the congregation of Israel, whilst the Edomites and, strange to say, the Egyptians, are to be received; they, it is said, "are not to be abhorred," but are to be allowed to enter the Assembly. These reservations point plainly enough to the late times, when the Jews had alliances and were on friendly terms with both Edom and Egypt, when Solomon had married a daughter of the reigning Pharaoh, and when the text must have been composed. The grounds for the old hostility to Egypt displayed in the Book of Exodus had been forgotten by this time.

Certain very necessary sanitary rules are given?

The unclean are to wash; and there is to be a place without the camp to which resort was to be made for purposes of nature; every man having a paddle on his weapon with which he could dig and

cover up—a simple procedure; but helping us in nowise to a solution of the growing difficulty that besets the modern world—the right disposal of the rejectments of the masses of human beings congregated in townships and cities numbering their thousands or hundreds of thousands, where not their millions, of inhabitants.

Prostitution, in spite of what we know of Josiah's proceedings with the Succoth Benoth, is forbidden?

“There shall be no whore of the sons and daughters of Israel”—says the interdict; and the wages of prostitution were on no pretext of a vow to be brought into the house of Jehovah any more than the price of a dog; “for even both of these are an abomination unto Jehovah thy God.” The interdict here is directed against practices still prevalent, it would seem, in the days of the writer,—relics of Nature Worship,—to which reluctant reference has already been made in this commentary.* The writer of Deuteronomy, sensible of the turpitude of such doings, forbids them.

“When thou cometh into thy neighbour's vineyard thou mayest eat grapes thy fill at thine own pleasure, but thou shalt not put any in thy vessel.”

So says the text; but had the statute been prohibitory instead of permissive, we should have had more faith in the source whence it came. How indeed can we believe that any such injustice as that countenanced could ever have come from God! But that its existence in the Bible has had an evil influence cannot be questioned. Men have only slowly come to the conclusion that robbery of an orchard or vineyard is no less robbery than theft from a storehouse or grange. Little wine would assuredly be made from the vineyard where a right like that proclaimed was acted on. The field of standing corn,

* Vide under Exodus.

too, from which everyone was at liberty to pluck the ears, could scarcely have rewarded the husbandman so well for his toil as if it had been put under the safeguard of the law which says: "Thou shalt not steal." But let us pause for a moment, and think of legislation about vineyards and corn-fields amid a starving multitude in a waterless wilderness, and have a fresh assurance that another and a much later hand than that of a Moses was here at work in laying down the law.

Among an additional number of commandments of more or less significance we come upon one on which we have already had occasion to comment, but on the important bearing of which in another direction than that discussed nothing has been said. "The fathers," says the text, "shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: *Every man shall be put to death for his own sin.*" How great an advance this is on the older declaration, in which it is said that Jehovah visits the iniquities of the fathers on the children, even to the third and fourth generation, need not be insisted on. *But then, if it be accepted, what becomes of the whole system of popular Pauline Christianity, founded as it is on Adam's disobedience and the Fall of Man?*

In the event of one of two brothers, married, but having no child, dying, the surviving brother was bound as the rule to take the widow to wife, and raise up children to his dead brother, as said. But not inclining to do so, the widow was to appeal to the elders, who in turn were to speak to the man, and he "standing to it, and saying I like not to take her," then was she to loose the man's shoe from off his foot, to spit in his face, and say, "So shall it be done unto the man that will not build up his brother's house." The old Jews were certainly neither very nice nor over delicate in their dealings with one another.

On the presentation of the Firstfruits, which are required to be brought to the priest, the bringer was to make avowal that he had not eaten thereof in his mourning, nor taken ought thereof for unclean uses, nor given ought thereof for the dead ?

These obscure sentences probably refer to the custom which obtained in Syria and Samaria of weeping for Tammuz at the same season in which the feast of firstfruits was celebrated, and of furnishing the dead with money and provisions, observed by some of the ancient peoples, for their journey to the realm of shades. But the words quoted must have been written at a late period in the history of the Jewish people—after the Babylonian captivity—and with obvious reference to the customs of nations around, for it is long before we have any evidence that the Jews, like the Egyptians and Greeks especially, became possessed of the idea that there was a state of conscious existence awaiting them in a life to come; and even after they had acquired it their Scheol was nothing more than a darksome pit into which the dead were presumed to go, with little, if anything, of individual consciousness left.

The Jordan once passed, the Israelites are charged in the name of Moses to set up great stones, to plaster them with plaster, and write on them all the words of the law. These stones are then to be set up on Mount Ebal, in Samaria (far away from the spot where the people are now encamped), and the congregation, arranged in two divisions according to their tribes, one on Mount Garizim are to pronounce certain blessings, another on Mount Ebal certain curses; the tribes elected to curse being those of the sons of Jacob by his concubines, those chosen to bless the tribes of his sons by his wives, Rachel and Leah. The Levites are to declare the curses in succession with a loud voice, and all the people after each has been uttered are to respond and say, "Amen, so be

it!" "Cursed be the man that maketh any graven image; cursed be the man that maketh light of his father or mother; cursed be he that removeth his neighbour's landmark," &c. The reader may refer to the book for others of a very different stamp, and will hardly fail to leave the perusal without having formed a very low estimate of the social and moral condition of the people whose records he has had before him. He may even possibly begin, if he have not done so already, to question the propriety of putting the book that contains such matter as he will find there into the hands of his children for their edification and improvement. If he further considers that he is perusing no record from the hand of Moses, or the remote age in which the leader is believed to have lived—excuses for barbarous and unseemly ordinances being often condoned on the score of their antiquity—but the writing of one who lived after the Babylonian captivity, who doubtless was influenced by the state of things around him, his mind will probably be yet further cleared from the false impressions it may have received in the days of his childhood.

Having had the curses delivered, we may look for the blessings?

These are never absolute, but always conditional on the people faithfully observing the commandments of Jehovah their God, and they are never other than of the most purely material nature. If the people be but obedient, for example, Jehovah will "set them high above all the nations of the earth," and will bless them "in the city and in the field, in the fruit of their body, of their cattle and of their ground, in their basket and their store, in their coming in and their going out," and the like. Jehovah, in a word, will make them plenteous in everything; give them rain in due season; make them the head and not the tail among the nations, provided always that they "turn neither to the right hand nor to the left to go

after other Gods to serve them." There is, therefore, no reference to any of the states or doings which we in these days are wont to associate with man in his more perfect condition as man—greatness in letters, philosophy, and science, in morals, freedom, and civilisation—in a word, in culture and humanity.

Failing in their duty to Jehovah, however, going after other Gods to serve them?

Then should they be cursed in their rebellion in the same measure as they were to have been blessed in their obedience—cursed were they to be in the city and in the field, &c., &c. Jehovah would send upon them cursing, vexation, and rebuke in all they set their hand to, until they were destroyed by fever, pestilence, and consumption, burning, drought, and blasting mildew, the heaven above them being turned to brass and the earth to iron! A terrible God was the Jewish Jehovah in his fits of anger and his jealousy of other Gods! and it is only occasionally that we catch glimpses of him in any more placable or beneficent mood. Had not Moses been at hand on more than one notable occasion he would assuredly have broken out on his favourites, and consumed them all in a moment, in which case we should have had none of the writings that lie before us for comment.

But the list of threatened ills is not exhausted by those just named?

Far from it. The disobedient people are to be farther smitten before their enemies, and their carcasses made food for the wild beasts of the field and fowls of the air; they will be plagued with the botch of Egypt, the emerods, the scab, and the itch; be smitten with blindness and astonishment of heart, and oppressed and spoiled for evermore, with numerous ills besides, which the reader will find detailed, and may peruse at his leisure, in the 28th chapter of the Book we have under survey. Having thought

over what he has read, he might then ask himself whether he can believe that there is or ever was any such God as Jehovah the God of the Jews—passionate, vindictive, cruel—and that the collection of printed pages called the Bible can by possibility be any record of the word and will of the God of reason and philosophy, Body and Soul of the Universe in One; all that is, being as it is, and all that happens coming to pass, as it does, in conformity with great, eternal, changeless LAW, Revelation to man of the Being and Attributes of the Supreme.

All that is now said of the miseries and misfortunes that are to befall the unhappy children of Israel when they had gone astray from Jehovah, must be presumed to be said after they had been invaded, vanquished, harried, and carried away captive by the Assyrians and Babylonians?

There can be no reasonable question of this. "Jehovah, it is said in the text, shall bring a nation against thee from afar, from the end of the earth—a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand." We have here but to read Jehovah *had brought* for *shall bring*—the past for the future (as Jehovah with the Jews is ever the immediate agent in whatsoever happens)—to have all made clear. Sennacherib and Nebuchadnezzar had already invaded and besieged them in their cities before the text was written. Holding out here and there with the obstinacy characteristic of their race, they had been reduced to such straits as to have slain and eaten the flesh of their sons and their daughters; and in language, unsurpassed for force in the expression of mingled doubt and fear, had often said: "In the morning would God it were even, and at even would God it were morning!"

The Israelites however were, or are, said to be the chosen people of their God Jehovah, who was the greatest among the Gods. Is it not strange

that, with the power ascribed to him, and his perpetual interference in their affairs, he did not dispose his favourites to be verily the good, great, and holy people we find them called at one time, instead of the perverse, presumptuous, and stiff-necked crew they generally show themselves as having been ?

The Egyptians, Assyrians, and Babylonians knew nothing of Jehovah, and were as thorough idolaters as ever the Israelites are charged with being, or were, in fact ; yet was this no bar to the successful invasion of Israel and Judah by these peoples in succession. Did God really interfere in the affairs of men, as Jehovah is constantly credited with having done in those of the children of Israel, when they were successful especially, it had surely been competent to him either to have made a better choice, or to have had his elect as uniformly obedient as they proved themselves invariably rebellious to his commandments ; to have continued, moreover, as at first, to give them the victory over all their enemies, instead of suffering them *at last* to be vanquished by every power that came against them ?

So much might certainly be said, taking the case as it stands. But God never makes choice, and never interferes in human affairs in any such way as the Israelites believed their God Jehovah to have done, as men in the present day indeed mostly believe their God to do. In what is called the Heathen Mythology we see Zeus and Aphrodite on one side, Heré and Pallas Athene on the other ; but is it not precisely the same in the Hebrew Mythology, where Jehovah is found in perpetual conflict with the peoples and Gods of neighbouring nations ? And, when we follow the strife to its end, are we not forced to admit that, in fine, it is Jehovah who is worsted ?—his chosen people being utterly wrecked at last, and all the promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob coming to nothing.

All that is said of Jehovah's dealings with the Israelites and their enemies is surely calculated to make a false impression upon youthful minds, and to give erroneous notions of that which God *is*, or can be conceived by man *to be*, as well as of the way in which the world is ruled?

There can be no question of this. As grown men and women, when we happen to be gifted with a tolerable share of the God-like faculty of reason, we have to unlearn almost all that had been taught us as children in the name of religion. It is a mischievous error to suppose that God governs or takes care of the world in any human sense. God governs the world assuredly; but it is as UNIVERSAL CAUSE, CONSENTIENT WITH NATURAL LAW—sole expression to the understanding of man of the Being and Doing of God.

Drawing towards the end of his career Moses addresses the people anew, and informs them that he is a hundred and twenty years old, and that Jehovah has said to him that he should not go over the Jordan, but was now to sleep with his fathers. He encourages them, however, and bids them fear nothing, for Jehovah will go with them. But Jehovah, by the writer's showing, would have a competent leader in bodily shape at the head of the host as before, and so orders Moses to call Joshua, the son of Nun, and come with him to the Tabernacle of the congregation that he may give him a charge. This Moses does forthwith, bidding the future leader be strong and of good courage, for that he is now to bring the children of Israel into the land that was sworn to their fathers. After this Moses, like Jacob, intones a death-song, which we note as of the grand Hebrew type in the beginning, though it falls off greatly towards the close: "Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth! My Doctrine shall drop as rain, my speech shall distil as the small rain upon the tender herb and as the showers upon the

grass, for I will publish the name of Jehovah." Speaking on in this great name, and reiterating much in the shape of denunciation for going after other gods, Jehovah, through the mouth of Moses, is made to say: "A fire is kindled in mine anger and shall burn into the lowest depths of hell, and shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains; I will heap mischiefs upon them (the Israelites), the teeth of beasts, the poison of serpents, the sword without and terror within shall destroy both the young man and the virgin, the suckling and the man of gray hairs. To me belong vengeance and recompence; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; for I lift up my hand to heaven and say: I live for ever. If I whet my glittering sword, and my hand take hold on judgment, I will render vengeance to mine enemies, make mine arrows drunk with blood, and my sword to devour flesh."

This is terrible language; conceivable, possibly, as from the God of the Savage, inconceivable as from the God of civilised man. But it is no more than an exaggerated picture of the nature-God in his adverse aspect; not as he meets us in the sunshine and the calm, but in the storm and tempest; not as he smiles on us from the hillside and champaign, well watered and wrapped in verdure, but in the glare of the burnt-up and waterless wilderness; not as the father of life and joy, but as the demon of destruction and death.

Having ended his song, Moses, it is said, wrote it down on the same day, and taught it to the children of Israel. More than this, the writer in the name of the leader, by way of covering with the venerable hues of antiquity the Book of the Law, which was found more than eight hundred years afterwards, orders the "Levites" to take "this book of the law and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of Jehovah your God, that it may be there for a witness against you," and thence, sure enough, or from another

corner of the Temple where he had bestowed it, Hilkiah, the High Priest in the reign of Josiah, some six hundred and twenty years before the Christian era, brought forth a Book of the Law, which most certainly never came from the hand of Moses!

The song is not the only parting Word ascribed to Moses on the eve of his death?

There is another entitled "His Blessing of the Tribes," which the most cursory perusal discovers to be nothing more than an abridged version of the death-song of Jacob. Both the song and blessing of Moses, however, like that of Jacob, are certainly compositions of relatively modern date, their burden showing them plainly enough to have been written subsequently to the reign of the pious King Josiah.

Immediately before the farewell words of Moses, Jehovah, it is said, spake to him, saying: "The days approach when thou must die." By-and-by he is again, and now more gently, admonished of his impending fate in these words: "Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers." Yet again, and this time, as at first, without paraphrase, Jehovah is made to say to him: "Get thee up into this mountain of Abarim, unto Mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab, in front of Jericho, and behold the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel for a possession, and die on the mount and be gathered to thy people, as Aaron, thy brother, was gathered to his people. From afar thou shalt see the land; but thou shall not go thither unto the land which I give to the children of Israel." These intimations, we may presume, are now followed by Moses' death?

From the plains of Moab he goes up to the pinnacle of Mount Nebo, called Pisgah, and there he is informed that the land before him is the land which had been promised to Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob; that he had been made to see it with his

eyes, but was not to be suffered to go over into it, information of which much could not have been needed by Moses, who must have known that Mount Nebo was in the land of Moab over against Jericho, and that the land before him was that which had been promised to Israel, though it may have been needful enough to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for whom the writer is weaving his tale.

The record proceeds ?

“Moses the servant of Jehovah,” it is said in the shortest possible terms, “died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of Jehovah [a gap presumably in the narrative], and he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab over against Beth-Peor, but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day.”

This is even a stranger tale than that we have in connection with the death of Aaron. He went to the top of Mount Hor, attended by his brother Moses and his son Eleazar; but we have no mention of any one accompanying Moses to the pinnacle of Mount Nebo. Yet it is said, after notification of the death, that “he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab over against Beth-Peor,” and we ask who the *he* was who buried him? Not Jehovah, surely, though the words as they stand seem to say as much. Some one, then, who went up with him (Eleazar?) and was the agent in certain preliminary rites other than sepulchral, but on the nature of which the text is silent, though it has been held, with every show of probability, that they were of a solemn sacrificial nature.

What warrant appears or can be given for so startling a conclusion ?

Warrant enough: first, from the general prevalence of human sacrifices in early times among the Semitic tribes of Palestine and their colonies—Phœnicians, Syrians, Carthagenians, Cyprians, &c., all of them cognate with the Hebrews; and next, from the fact that in moments of peculiar difficulty and danger the

customary offerings, even of the highest kind, were not held adequate to insure the countenance and favour of the God; victims of still greater price were then required—a King or King's son, a venerable priest or chieftain—one or other of these was the price that must then be paid for the aid of the supernal (or, shall we say, infernal) power addressed.

The meagre and perfunctory account we have of the death and disposal of a personage so notable as Moses seems of itself to lend countenance to the conclusion that it has not reached us as it once existed?

More than this, and not without significance, the reason given for his being required to die at this particular time is most unsatisfactory—may indeed be said to be without any foundation in fact; for the reason given, to wit, that he “rebelled against Jehovah's commandment in the desert of Zin in the strife of the congregation of Israel, and failed to sanctify Jehovah at the water of Meribah,” is not true. There is not a word of complaint made, nor a sign of rebellion shown, on the part of Moses, at the waters of Meribah. The people, indeed, sore athirst in the burning desert, murmur, as unreasoning multitudes ever will, not only against their chief and ruler, but against their God. The leader himself, however, has not murmured, has not rebelled. On the contrary, he has been in danger of his life, and has cried as a suppliant to his God, saying: “What shall I do unto this people? they be almost ready to stone me!”

Jehovah may perhaps have been offended with this appeal?

It is not said that he was; he not only, indeed, expresses no displeasure, but comes immediately to the suppliant's assistance, bidding him take his rod in his hand, and saying, “I will stand before thee on the rock, and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it that the people may drink.”

The reason assigned in the text for the death of Moses is therefore disposed of by the context?

From all else that appears, the reason given is seen to be groundless. Moses himself may even be said to declare it to be so when he tells the people that he is not to be allowed to enter the promised land because Jehovah was *angry with him for their sakes* (i. 37, repeated iii. 26). Jehovah's displeasure is with the people, and the leader is made the scape-goat for their sins, which is not satisfactory.*

Jehovah's previous resolve that no one of mature years who had come out of Egypt should enter the land that flowed with milk and honey, may have made the death of Moses a necessity?

Such a resolution is never referred to in connexion with Moses; and then it was not absolute, not kept in every case, for Joshua and Caleb, at all events, were to be suffered to go over. But were a single exception to be made, Moses surely was the one in whose favour it might have been expected.

There is something, farther, of much significance, viz., Moses' bodily state, which is particularly commented on at the time of his death, and may be said in some sort to make it matter of certainty that his end was violent, his death sacrificial?

To be acceptable to Jehovah, the victim, as we know, must be without spot or blemish, and though Moses himself has said that he is "an hundred and twenty years old, and can no more go out and come in as of yore," the narrator is particular in telling us that "his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated," meet sacrifice was he therefore to the God.

We are consequently left in the dilemma of having to choose between these two discrepant statements?

The account which Moses gives, or is made by the

* See note at foot of page 396, the reference to Geiger.

writer to give, of himself, is doubtless the one that is true, had his years been even many fewer than the hundred and twenty awarded him; but a decrepit victim would not have suited Jehovah.

There is yet another principle associated with the *Idea of Sacrifice* which points to the kind of death that Moses died?

The victim must not only be faultless, but be given willingly. Aaron's sacrificial death, when we call to mind the customs of early days, may be said to have been matter of course and nowise shocking to a barbarous age; for in his consecration as Priest he became Cherem or Devoted to the God, and that which was Devoted was in nowise to be redeemed, but was "surely to be put to death." Aaron, in fact, never appeared in public without the seal of his consecration and doom upon his forehead. As consecrated priest he was specially set apart to bear the iniquities of the people, and he knew that he would one day be required to make the expiation to which he was pledged. Aaron's sacrificial death was therefore a foregone conclusion; and the supreme moment in his case arrived, as we have seen, when the Israelites were encamped about Mount Hor, having the territories of the Edomites before them, with formidable opponents to be attacked and subdued.

Moses, however, is nowhere said to have been Cherem or devoted to his God?

He is not; but with the Jordan now in front and to be crossed, the walled town of Jericho to be taken, and the more powerful people of Canaan to be assailed, the very noblest victim that could be thought of must alone have been held adequate not only to propitiate, but in some sort to wring success from, their God in the great enterprise that lay before them.

May not Moses, the great and as he ever meets us the self-sacrificing man, be presumed to have pre-

sented himself as the victim likely to be most influential for the occasion ?

We are ready to imagine that Moses, in the grand presentment of the leader we owe to the historian of his life, like other large-minded men, thought never of himself save in connection with the people he led. In conformity with the ideas of the age in which he is believed to have lived, he may have thought that his death would now be more advantageous to the children of Israel than his longer life. His task indeed and in a certain sense was done; the end for which he had lived was accomplished. He and his people were in sight of the promised land. As we read we seem even to see that, in anticipation of the supreme moment which had now arrived, Moses had taken the necessary steps to secure a competent successor in Joshua the son of Nun, a man with the talents of a leader in the field, who had now become of more immediate consequence to the people than the legislator they had heretofore had over them as their ruler.

The compilers of the Pentateuch—which appears to have suffered more from the hands of editors and expurgators than any other division of the Hebrew Scriptures—show themselves extremely averse to acknowledge human sacrifices as any element in the religious ritual of the Hebrew race. But that they were so, there cannot be even a shadow of doubt. The positive announcement as from Jehovah, repeated so often, that *all that opened the womb was his*, when we know the full import of these words, would seem to be enough of itself to settle the question, were the notification not followed in several places by a clause commanding the redemption of the first-born of man and the ass. That this clause, wherever it occurs, however, is an interpolation by a later hand, is cer-

tain. The positive enactment occurs, not once but several times, in more than one of the books, without the qualification; and the reiterated denunciations in the writings of the later prophets against the custom of passing their sons and daughters through the fire, in other words, of sacrificing them to their God El, Baal, Jahveh, or Molech; and the staggering verse in which Jehovah himself is made to say that he had given his chosen people "Statutes that were not good, and had caused them to pass their children through the fire that he might make them desolate, that they might know he was the Lord," suffices to show that up to a late period in the history of the Jewish people the sacrifice of the first-born of man and beast was an indispensable tribute to the power that made the Light and the Dark, that gave the Increase and required Return in the Blood which was the Life. The indisposition to acknowledge this element in the early Israelitish and even later Jewish ritual, with whatever distinctness it is declared in the older documents from which the more modern compilers of the Pentateuch drew, and as it must have been practised in the times of more than one of the prophets, has extended even to the present day. So learned and so liberal a writer as Dr Kalisch, in his exhaustive Commentaries and Essays on Sacrifice in general and on Human Sacrifice in particular, in spite of the conclusive evidence against him supplied by so many passages of the Old Testament, will be found arguing strenuously against the fact that human victims were offered to the Hebrew God, that the first-born of man as Cherem was necessarily put to death, and that Aaron and Moses, ailing nothing, and vigorous enough of limb to climb up rugged mountains, went thither to die natural deaths on their tops! Dr Kalisch does not, indeed, deny the Sacrifice of the virgin daughter of Judge Jephtha, as some utterly unscrupulous commentators do; the *vow* and the

father's grief, and the touching resignation of the daughter, were testimony too strong to be denied; but he lays little stress on the many texts of the historical books and writings of the prophets of his people that run counter to his general conclusion. Human victims may indeed have been offered, but it was to Molech or another of the Gods of the heathen, not to Jehovah; as if El-Israel, Chiun, Baal, and Aschera had not been the national gods of the Hebrews through by much the longest period of their history, and as if Jahveh were other than the chief of the old Gods in a different form, and with attributes in harmony with the age in which he became the God of the Jews! But a scholar and critic of the calibre of a Kalisch is at no loss to distinguish between interpolated passages and the even flow of the narrative, and is well aware that positive general ordinances are not superseded by exceptional qualifying intimations. The reluctance on the part of able men to see and admit the whole of the truth as it meets the unprejudiced eye in the pages of the Bible is greatly to be lamented. No disgrace attaches to peoples living in mythical, legendary, and but half-historical times conforming to the religious and other usages known to have prevailed universally in the long night that intervened between man's emergence from utter savagery to something like settled life and civilisation. How should the Israelites have done otherwise than conform to the inhuman customs, held everywhere around them acceptable to the Deity, in days when they were constituting themselves a people? How should they have abandoned practices in the worship of their God at an earlier epoch in their history than other races struggling from darkness into light? Without being worse than their neighbours, the Israelites, from their own records, show us that they were certainly no better than the greater number of these, and even

far behind the best of them in art and science. In their wars they were often worsted by the Moabites and Philistines; they went down before the Egyptians, Assyrians, and Babylonians in succession, as in later days they fell when confronted by the Greek and the Roman. Never, indeed, in the whole course of their history did they succeed in completely subduing several of the petty native tribes or peoples, inhabitants like themselves of Western Asia—if they had the Moabites as tributaries at one time, they in turn were tributaries to Moab at another; and they never once coped successfully with the Phœnicians, but were always worsted by these, the brave seafaring folks and colonisers of the ancient world, compellers of the winds and waves, navigators of the Midland Sea and rougher Atlantic, and institutors of the system of traffic that binds mankind in bonds of amity over the face of the Globe.



THE BOOK OF JOSHUA.

BECAUSE of the sins of the people, or because he has failed to sanctify Jehovah in some signal way at Meribah, Moses, as we have seen, is not only refused permission to enter the promised land, but is even informed that he is to die on this (the east) side of Jordan. The death of Moses follows hard on the intimation given, and Jehovah then, according to our text, addresses Joshua, saying :—"Moses my servant is dead ; now therefore arise ; go over this Jordan, thou and all the people, unto the land which I do give them, from the wilderness unto Lebanon, the great river Euphrates, and the great sea toward the going down of the sun. Be strong and of good courage, for Jehovah thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest." Encouraging words as well as commands, which, we may presume, Joshua will not be slack to obey ?

He forthwith orders his officers to bid the people get ready for an advance by preparing victuals ;* for within three days, says he, ye are to pass the Jordan and go in to possess the land that was promised to your fathers. He then reminds the Reubenites, Gadites, and half-tribe of Manasseh of their engagement to aid in the war, until their brethren were settled in the territories beyond, as they themselves had been put in possession of lands on this (the east) side of Jordan. As a preliminary to entering on the great enterprise before him, however, Joshua, not relying entirely on Jehovah's promises, as it might

* The writer forgets that manna is still the only food of the people, and that it *stank* forthwith if more was gathered than sufficed for each day's consumption.

seem, is anxious to have some information of his own as to the state of preparedness for resistance or otherwise of the people about to be invaded ?

He sends two men across the river to spy and view the land, " even Jericho," the walled town that blocks the way, and must be taken before further advance into the country can be made. Stealing into the town, but not unobserved, as it by and by appears, the spies take up their quarters with a certain Rahab, a harlot, probably surmising that from such as she they might obtain information of the kind they sought. They are soon inquired after by the King of Jericho, however, who sends to Rahab, desiring her to bring forth the men who had entered her house, they having come, as was believed, to spy out the land.

Joshua's men must have been in great peril of their lives, needlessly exposed, surely, had Jehovah's assurance to Joshua, that he and his were to have the land, been trusted home. But, engaged in the godly business of smoothing the way for the conquest, they will be duly cared for by Rahab the harlot ?

By who but she ; for what was to be expected of a harlot ? Traitress to her people, as she had already proved false to all that best becomes her sex, instead of delivering up the spies to the ruler, like a true woman, she makes terms with them for herself and her kindred in case she conceals them, and favours their escape, having given them the information they sought, as we shall see. She therefore hides the spies until nightfall, pledges her word to the King's messengers that the men had left her house, and putting the searchers on a false scent as to the way they had taken, she enables them to get back to the camp in safety.

The writer of the story before us is at the pains to find something like an apology for Rahab's treason to her townfolk in the words he puts into her mouth ?

He shows her familiar with the history of the invaders, even from the time of their Egyptian bondage, and makes her tell the spies of the "terror because of these things" that had fallen on her people, "the hearts of all melting within them, and nothing more of courage remaining in any man, for Jehovah your God," she continues, "is God in heaven above and in earth beneath." The writer, it would seem, could not resist an occasion, even through the mouth of an idolatrous harlot, to glorify Jehovah his God; of whom, nevertheless, the woman Rahab could never have heard, for the all-sufficient reason that he was not known among the Israelites themselves by the name now used until ages after the reputed days of Joshua.

Rahab, then, has made terms with the spies in return for their safety and the intelligence she has given them. Her house is to be known by a certain sign when the invaders have become masters of the town, and all belonging to her are to be safe whilst the indiscriminate slaughter in preparation for the other inhabitants is proceeding?

As the houses of the Israelites in Egypt were to be known to the destroying angel by the blood on the lintels and door-posts, so is the house of Rahab to be distinguished by a *scarlet cord* hung from a window, red being a colour with which a certain mystical and sanctifying influence was connected by many of the peoples of antiquity. The images of their gods—those of Dionysus in particular, as we know—were painted *red*; the figures of the Chaldæan deities on the wall were "portrayed in *vermilion*" (Ezek. xxiii. 14); and we have seen a *scarlet string* cast into the fire as part of the rite in preparing the water of purification from the ashes of the *red heifer*.

Breaking up from Shittim, in Moab, where they were encamped, the Israelites come to the banks of the Jordan, the priests, the Levites, as said (—but ages before the existence of a levitical priesthood—),

bearing the Ark of the Covenant, leading the way. "And now," says Jehovah to Joshua, "will I begin to magnify thee in the sight of Israel, that they may know that as I was with Moses so I will be with thee." From such a preamble we may be prepared for some miraculous interposition of the tutelary God?

Which follows forthwith, and is of the same sort as that vouchsafed to Moses, when he and his fugitives had the Red Sea before them, and were enabled to pass dry-shod through its bed. Joshua and the Israelites are now said to cross the swollen Jordan without wetting their feet! "And it came to pass," says the narrator, ignoring the statical law, pre-ordained of the true God, which makes the thing impossible, "that as soon as the feet of the priests which bare the Ark were dipped in the brim of the water—for Jordan overfloweth his banks all the time of harvest—that the waters which came down from above stood and rose up upon an heap, and those that went down towards the sea of the plain, even the salt sea, failed and were cut off, and the people passed over right against Jericho."

Joshua would have this remarkable incident recorded by a memorial monument?

He orders a man of each of the twelve tribes to shoulder a stone from the midst of Jordan, to be "a memorial to the children of Israel for ever." As to the way in which these stones are to be disposed of, however, there is, unhappily, discrepancy in the record. By one text (iv. 3), they are ordered to be carried to Gilgal, the place where the people pitched for the night, after passing the river; by another (iv. 9), they are to be set up in the midst of Jordan where the feet of the priests stood that bare the Ark; "and they are there," says the record, "unto this day." The stones, however, would have proved no very conspicuous monument plunged in the waters of the Jordan. Set up in Gilgal, they would certainly have better served the end proposed. Anyhow, the stones

are presumed to be visible, for the text goes on to say: "When your children shall ask their fathers in time to come, saying: What mean these stones? Then ye shall say: Israel came over this Jordan on dry land; for Jehovah your God dried up the waters of Jordan, as he did the waters of the Red Sea, until we were gone over; that all the people of the earth might know the hand of Jehovah that it is mighty."

Miracles—in other words, contraventions of the order or laws of Nature—were to the Jews of old, as they have still been to the ignorant among other peoples, the great vouchers for the Being and Power of God. To the man of science and liberal culture, on the contrary, a miracle, defined as above, would now prove an insurmountable obstacle instead of a help to belief in the existence of God. God, to him, is Order and Law—not discord and disarray. The tales of miracles met with in all the writings held sacred or inspired, whether of Jew or Gentile, are certain demonstrations of their source in the mind of man in his state of ignorance and non-age: AS PUTTING GOD IN CONTRADICTION WITH HIMSELF, MIRACLES ARE AT ONCE IMPOSSIBLE AND ABSURD.

The stones, set up in Gilgal, were "to serve for a memorial to the children of Israel for ever"?

Alas for the eternity implied in the words! There is now no trace of the stones, any more than there is of the people who set them up, save as scattered remnants in far-away countries—the people to whom the promise of possession in perpetuity of a land that flowed with milk and honey was so emphatically and so repeatedly made.

Facts from which we conclude?

That the statements are neither from God nor from any of the far-seeing among men, *his only oracles*, but from presumptuous, short-sighted, and mistaken priests, who lived in relatively recent times compared with those about which they write.

More than this?

That the repetitions, contradictions, and confusion so conspicuous in the Book of Joshua make it plain that its compiler had a variety of documents before him, from which, and doubtless also from floating myth and oral tradition, with small amount of critical or editorial tact, he put together the disjointed narrative that engages us.

Yet more?

That the constant recurrence of the phrase, *unto this day*, assures us that the writer is discoursing of events reputed to have happened in ages long gone by. To refer to one, and perchance to dispose of the first of the miracles brought in to magnify Joshua and show the might of Jehovah's hand, we by and by come upon a few words which show us that the Israelites might have crossed the Jordan without any arrest or drying up of its waters, though not without wetting their feet; for we learn that when the spies escape from Jericho they take their way "to Jordan unto the *fords*;" and we have notices besides, in other parts of the Hebrew history, of the river having been repeatedly crossed in after-times in the ordinary way by fording.

Safely over Jordan, the Israelites will, of course, leave the enemy no time to prepare for resistance?

So might we have imagined; but instead of advancing at once, and laying siege to Jericho, we are told that "at this time" Joshua receives orders from Jehovah to make him sharp knives, or knives of flint, and circumcise the children of Israel—"the second time," says the text—a needless and not very feasible procedure, if the words be taken as they stand. But they cannot be so understood. The rite of initiation which is said to have been practised during the Egyptian bondage—a more than questionable statement—it is now said has been utterly neglected since the epoch of the Exodus. All the men born during the forty years' wandering in the wilderness are therefore without the distinguishing sign of

their election, and must by all means be furnished with it before the business of despoiling, driving out, and slaying the enemies of Jehovah, now in possession of the promised land, can be begun. The time chosen for the ceremony, however, seems as little opportune as the speed with which it is accomplished is extraordinary.

How may this be ?

The invaders are but just entered into the enemy's country, and have a walled town before and a deep and swollen river behind them—a dangerous strategic position, which Joshua, we must presume, was too good a soldier not to understand. He will, therefore, we may expect, like Moses on various occasions, remonstrate with Jehovah ; show the danger to which he is exposed by the order, and beg him to recall it. But Joshua seems never to have felt himself on the same familiar footing with his God as Moses, and offers no remonstrance. Having crossed the Jordan on the 10th of Nisan, he proceeds immediately, according to the record, to circumcise the males among the children of Israel who had been born within the last forty years.

The number of able-bodied men having been found nearly the same as when the census took place at Sinai, the time required to do so must have been considerable ?

The operation in question is one of some nicety, not to be done off-hand in a hurry ; and were the amputation the affair of a moment the subsequent dressing would take time. A simple arithmetical calculation shows conclusively that it could not have been accomplished between the 10th and the 14th of the month Nisan, when the Feast of the Passover is said to have been kept, and the people, therefore, are presumed to be healed, and able to move about. Were five minutes allowed in each case, and the operator tasked to work twelve hours every day during six days of the week, the time required to

operate on something over 600,000 men would be thirteen years and more! By miraculous interposition only, therefore, could the business have been got through in the three days between the 10th and 14th Nisan; and even then, another miracle would have been wanted to heal the people in so short a space of time. The circumcising done somehow, however, as said, Jehovah speaks to Joshua, and says:—

“This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you.”

Can we as reasonable men believe that such words ever came from God?

We have already had occasion to say that God cannot be conceived as speaking save through the mouth of man. He, therefore, we conclude, was mistaken who said that God spoke; as he too erred who imagined that the Egyptians bore about them a badge of reproach in that which has now been cut off in Israel, or that God's handiwork can be amended by any interference of man. Far from symbolising their superiority over other peoples, the initiatory rite of the Jews is persistent testimony to the essentially sensual character of the religious system they inherit from their forefathers; worshippers as they were of the nature God under a certain symbol, frequently characterised as *the abomination* in their writings, and against the display of which, as we apprehend it, in the Temple, we find several of the more modern prophets loud in their denunciations.

We have practices analogous in some sort to the Jewish rite, though with less of meaning, among races we characterise as savage, whilst we are wont to think of the ancient Israelites as the elect of God, and continue to take them for our masters in religion?

Setting the religious aspect of circumcision aside, we see savages in some quarters of the globe knocking out a front tooth or two, cutting off a joint from one of their fingers, or slitting their nether lip, and

distending it with a bung, by way of improving themselves, doubtless, and "rolling away the reproach" of a neighbouring tribe who have no such notable mode of showing their superiority to the rest of barbarous humanity.

The *flint knife*, enjoined in the marginal reading of our English version, is remarkable?

And not uninteresting from an archæological point of view, as pointing to times when tools of bronze and iron were still unknown; to times when a certain sanctity was attached to *stones*; when they were set up under trees as emblems of the Generative Power, when they were thought to be possessed of sense, and were even worshipped as Gods,* and when the only cutting instruments owned by man were flints and agates chipped or ground to an edge. The early God of Israel would not have his altar built of dressed stones; it must be of unhewn blocks: "If ye lift up a tool upon it, ye have polluted it."

Here we encounter another of those strange and meaningless interruptions of the narrative, of which we have had more than one instance already?

Having been informed that the Passover was observed on the 14th of Nisan, and that the manna ceased as soon as the children of Israel began to eat of the fruits of the land of Canaan, we are told that "it came to pass when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes, and behold there stood a man over against him, with his sword drawn in his hand; and Joshua said to him: Art thou for us or for our adversaries? And he said: Nay; but as Captain of the host of Jehovah am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face on the earth and did worship, and said: What saith my Lord unto his servant? And the Captain of Jehovah's host said unto Joshua:

* "And Joshua took a great stone and set it up under an oak, and said to the people: Behold, this stone shall be a witness unto us, for *it hath heard* all the words of the Lord which he spake unto us."—Joshua, xxiv. 26, 27.

Loose thy shoe from off thy foot, for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so."

This on the face of it is no very important information; neither is the act required of such significance as to have needed so august a presence as the Captain of Jehovah's host to make it?

Surely it is not; for one foot's breadth of earth is as holy as another; and the only difference between the shod and unshod foot is that one rests on dressed and the other on undressed hide. The mere intimation that the speaker was the "Captain of Jehovah's host," moreover, must have left Joshua in the dark as to the purport of the visit paid him; the indefinite "Nay" of the visitor to his challenge leaving it open to question which side the Captain of the host was to take in the impending engagement before Jericho. Gilgal, however, was one of the oldest and for long among the most renowned of their holy places to the children of Israel. The apparition and intimation may therefore have been contrived by the writer to illustrate the antiquity and peculiar sanctity of the site; or it may have been introduced as a parallel to the vision vouchsafed to Moses in the burning bush on Mount Horeb when he was ordered to take off his shoes, the ground on which he stood being holy. The Captain of Jehovah's host, to conclude, bears a highly suspicious likeness to one of the Amschaspands of the Zoroastrian system, and may help to confirm us in our persuasion that the writing before us must be referred to times posterior to the Babylonian captivity.

Resuming the thread of the story, we are informed that Jericho is at length laid siege to and closely shut up—none coming out, none going in—and that Jehovah himself condescends to give certain new and hitherto unheard-of orders for the conduct of the siege. For six successive days the besiegers are to compass the city once on each day, the priests bear-

ing the Ark and blowing on the sacred trumpets of rams' horns as they march; but on the seventh day—violation of the Sabbath, by the way, and giving us to know that the Commandment to keep it holy could not yet have been known—on the seventh day they are to compass it as many as seven times, and the blasts on the ram's horn trumpets are to be louder than ever. At the proper moment Joshua is to stretch out his hand with his spear, the priests are to blow their best, and the people are to shout with a loud voice, on which the walls will fall down and the city will be won!

Such a mode of taking Jericho could hardly have been contemplated by Joshua when he sent out the spies and confirmed the compact made with Rahab; any information he may have had from her through them being turned to no account. All, however, is done according to superior orders?

And the result follows: The rams' horns are lustily blown; Joshua raises his spear; the people shout; the walls tumble down; and the Israelites walk into Jericho without striking a blow.

The inhabitants, innocent of all offence, thus miraculously thrown on the mercy of the invaders, will, we may presume, be ordered by Jehovah to be mercifully dealt with?

Coming commissioned by their God, as they imagined, to spoil and to slay, mercy in the early Israelitish wars was a thing unknown. On the contrary, the city had been proclaimed *Cherem* to Jehovah, and we know what that implies: Every living thing within it must be put to death, and every lifeless thing consumed by fire. "The city," says the leader, "shall be devoted, even it and all that are therein, to Jehovah; only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and those that are with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent." "And," proceeds the story, "they utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both men and women, young and old; ox, sheep,

and ass." All that breathed were put to the sword, and the city, with all it contained, was burned to the ground; "only the silver and the gold, and the vessels of brass and of iron, they put into the treasury of the house of Jehovah."

Not content with burning Jericho to the ground, Joshua, for no conceivable reason, would never have it rise from its ruins. "Cursed be the man before Jehovah," says he, "that riseth up and buildeth Jericho; he shall lay the foundation thereof in his first-born, and in his youngest shall he set up the gates of it."

But Jericho, had it ever been ruined, must by and by have been rebuilt, notwithstanding Joshua's curse; for David desires the messengers he had sent to congratulate Nahum on his accession to the throne of Ammon, but who having been mistaken for spies had been ill-used by the Ammonites, to tarry at Jericho until the signs of the disgrace put upon them had disappeared. "Tarry at Jericho until your beards be grown, and then return," are the words of King David (II. Samuel, x. 5). At a much later period in the history of Israel, indeed, and to make matters tally with Joshua's denunciation, it may be supposed, we learn that in the reign of Ahab, more than five centuries after the age of Joshua, "Hiel built Jericho, and laid the foundation thereof in Aborim, his first-born, and set up the gate thereof in his youngest son, Segub (I. Kings, xvi. 34). The interdict assigned to Joshua is, therefore, from one who lived during or after the reign of King Ahab.

Jericho is ruined, then, but faith is kept with Rahab?

She, her father's household, and all that she had, it is said, were saved alive, "because she hid the messengers which Joshua sent to spy out Jericho; and she dwelleth in Israel unto this day."

Were the text to be taken quite literally, Rahab would appear to have been very long lived?

Rahab may possibly be here used in a generic sense:—Rahab and her daughters dwell among ourselves *even unto this day!*

When a town was declared to be Cherem, or devoted, it was of course unlawful for individuals to appropriate any part of the spoil?

All then belonged exclusively to Jehovah; in other words, what was not put to death and burnt came to the priesthood; and, that no one might trespass through ignorance, Joshua has been particular in warning the people against theft—the unpardonable sin, in such a case:—“Keep ye in anywise from the thing that is devoted, lest ye make yourselves devoted,” says he, and so implicate the camp of Israel and trouble it. But Achan, the son of Carmi, has been imprudent enough to take of the devoted thing, and the anger of Jehovah is kindled against Israel.

Achan’s transgression of the law of Cherem becomes known in rather a roundabout way?

Proceeding with his work of conquest, not witting that aught has been done amiss, Joshua sends out spies to take the measure of the next town that lay in the way—Ai by name. The spies return and report the place of little strength, and its defenders few; a body of two or three thousand men, say they, would suffice to smite it. So a corps of three thousand is told off for the duty. But they behave ill; they flee before the men of Ai, six-and-thirty of them are slain, and the rest are chased from before the gate of the town unto Shibarim; “wherefore the hearts of the people melted and became as water.”

Joshua takes this much to heart?

He rends his clothes, falls on his face before the Ark, with the Elders of Israel puts dust upon his head, and says:—“Alas, O Jehovah 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! O Jehovah! what shall I say when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies? For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land shall hear of it, and shall environ us round and cut off our name from the earth; and what wilt thou do for thy name, the mighty?" (De Wette.)

This is surely not a becoming address on the part of Joshua; reproachful as it is to Jehovah and unworthy of himself as leader of the host. Instead of owning that his men had been seized with a panic fear, or that he had erred in sending an inadequate force against Ai, he throws the blame of the defeat upon his God, and even threatens him with the evil constructions of the Canaanites for having led his elect into difficulties. But Jehovah comes to the foolish mortal's aid, though addressing him in terms more brusque than we have been wont to find applied to Moses when he has ventured to ask his God what the Egyptians would think of him did he not carry his people triumphantly through their troubles:—"Get thee up," says Jehovah; "wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face? Israel hath sinned; they have taken of the accursed [devoted] thing, and have also stolen and put it among their own stuff."

Jehovah is made by the writer to look sharply after his interests—he will have nothing that should be his appropriated by another; he even knows where the things purloined have been bestowed. So he is reported as saying farther to Joshua:—"Up, sanctify the people; for thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel: There is an accursed [devoted] thing in the midst of thee, O Israel; therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, because they were accursed; neither will I be with you any more except ye destroy the accursed from among you. And it shall be that he that is taken with the accursed thing shall be burned with fire, he and all that he hath."

A little leaven leavens the lump, indeed; but were

one thief among thousands to make cowards of the rest, there would, we trow, be little courage in any army that ever took the field, whether in ancient or modern times. The virtuous Israelites, however, who had never, in a body, borrowed silver and gold, and fine raiment from the Egyptians, at the instigation of their God, as they say, must now be purged of the offender who had taken to himself of the devoted thing. But why Jehovah, who is cognisant of the theft, should not also have instantly pointed out the thief, does not appear. Lots are the means adopted for finding him out; and though we know that the lot is as likely to fall on the innocent as on the guilty, inasmuch as a miracle was now required, so is it forthcoming, and Achan the son of Carmi, the delinquent, is taken.

His guilt divulged, Joshua addresses the culprit?

In a speech that begins in a fine fatherly spirit, but does not so end assuredly: "My son," says Joshua, "give, I pray thee, glory to Jehovah, God of Israel! Make confession unto *Him*, and tell *me* now what thou hast done?" To which the unhappy Achan replies most penitently now that he is known for the thief: "Indeed I have sinned, and thus have I done. When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonian garment and two hundred shekels of silver and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I took them, and they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent." And there, sure enough, as Jehovah had indicated, the stolen things are found "among the other stuff." "And Joshua and all Israel with him," continues the record, "took Achan and the gold, and the silver, and the garment, 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 to the Valley of Achor, and all Israel stoned them with stones, and burned them with fire after they had stoned them with stones. So Jehovah turned from the fierceness of his anger."

The story here must surely be apocryphal,—invented for a purpose?

It has every appearance of being so at all events; yet may it have an old tradition for its root. The God of the early Israelites was by no means the God of their later descendants, the Jews. He was a jealous, revengeful, partial being, never to be approached empty-handed, only to be appeased by the sacrifice of life through the shedding of blood, and not to be defrauded of his share of the spoil. The tale, however, may have been invented as a pendant to the story of Phinehas, when he slew Zimri and Cozbi at a blow, and so stayed the pestilence that was making such havoc in the camp. Or it may have been devised to terrify the people against all privy appropriation of aught especially that was held by prescriptive right to belong to the priesthood.

Achan is the sole offender; but we find that he alone is not made to suffer for his crime?

In old and barbarous times, as among some savage or half-civilised communities in the present day, all that belonged to the house were held answerable for the act of its head—wives, sons, daughters, cattle, goods and chattels—all that breathed died, and all that had value was burned or confiscated, in case the penalty for the deed done were death.

And wholesale sacrifices of the kind were required by Jehovah, God of Israel?

So says the record: "Joshua and all Israel took Achan and all that belonged to him unto the valley of Achor, and the leader addressing the offender, said to him: Why hast thou troubled us? Jehovah shall trouble thee this day. And Israel stoned him with stones and burned them with fire; so Jehovah turned from the fierceness of his anger."

What are we in these days to think of the tales of such horrors?

¶ We are to see them for what they are: libels on humanity, blasphemies against the Supreme. Their

writers may have thought that their God Jehovah required silver and gold, and brass and iron, and the blood of the innocent as well as the guilty to appease his anger; but we who live in this 19th century of the Christian era know that God, the Ineffable Supreme, requires nothing of us but love of him and love of our neighbour, in other words, obedience to his laws and deed towards our neighbour as we would have deed from him to us. Let the writings before us therefore be seen for what they are—records of a barbarous age, delivered by unenlightened men, and unworthy longer to be looked on as the word of God or as means available for the education and improvement of the world. The mention of the Babylonian garment might assure us that so much of the tale as refers to it, must at all events be of modern date; for a horde escaped from slavery and but just setting foot on the southern confines of Palestine, after long wandering in the wilderness, could have known nothing of Babylonian garments; and we may be well assured that the tents and hamlets of the Amorites were as little familiar with shekels of silver and wedges of gold in the days of Joshua as he and his warriors could possibly have been. These are all particulars added to colour a tale of late invention that most certainly can form no part of the true word of God to man.

The town of Ai, however, stands in the way, and must be taken; and Jehovah, not trusting as yet entirely to the military genius of Joshua, though the Captain of his own choice, proceeds to give him particular instructions as to how he is to set about the business:—"Take all the people of war with thee," says Jehovah, "and arise; go up to Ai; see, I have given into thy hand the King and his people, the city and the land; and thou shalt do to Ai and her King as thou didst to Jericho and her King; only the spoil thereof and the cattle thereof shall ye take for a prey to yourselves. Lay thee an ambush for the city

behind it." And this Joshua proceeds to do; he sends 30,000 mighty men of valour away by night to lie in ambush and attack the city from behind, whilst he himself with 5,000 more will make a feint of attacking it in front. "And it shall come to pass," says he, "that when they come out against us we will flee before them, and they will follow after us;" seeing which the 30,000 men in ambush are to show themselves and seize on the city; "for Jehovah your God," continues the tale, "will deliver it into your hand; and when ye have taken the city, ye shall set it on fire: according to the commandment of Jehovah shall ye do."

Jehovah, portrayed ruthless as ever, appears even to have been on the field in person upon this occasion?

Like the Gods of other ancient peoples, he of the Israelites is presumed to be there to help his friends and discomfit their enemies. Venus, in the Iliad, shields Paris when in danger, and favours the Trojans; Pallas has Achilles and the Greeks under her protection; and so in the Jahvehiad is Jehovah with the Israelites in the fight before Ai. The men of the feint on this side the city take to flight when attacked; the defenders pursue; and now, says Jehovah to Joshua, "Stretch out the spear that is in thy hand toward Ai, and I will give it into thy hand." Joshua brandishes his spear, the ambush of 30,000 arise (an ambuscade of 30,000 men!), march into Ai, set it on fire as commanded, smite the inhabitants from behind, as its defenders are now smitten by Joshua and his party in front, and the day is won. "They let none of them escape; Joshua drew not his hand back wherewith he stretched out the spear until he had utterly destroyed all the inhabitants of Ai. And all that fell on that day, both of men and women, were twelve thousand, even all the men of Ai, but they took the King alive, and brought him to Joshua." The cattle and spoil are appropriated by Israel, and the town is burnt and made "a heap of desolation unto this day." The unoffending Chief of Ai, to con-

clude the bloody business, is hanged on a tree until sun-down (in other words, he is crucified as a sacrifice to the sun-god), when his body is cast before the gate of what was the city of his people, and a heap of stones is raised over it that "remaineth unto this day."

So much for Ai, its King, and its people, thus dealt with in furtherance of Jehovah's promise to the forefathers of Israel to give them a land that flowed with milk and honey. Would not Blood and Tears, to judge from the tales before us, have been better chosen words? Let the reader refer to the sieges of Jericho and Ai as first acts in the drama of getting possession of the covenanted land, and answer bravely to his own conscience whether they would or not.

And what are we as reasonable, merciful, and responsible men, with the details of such atrocities before us, to think of those theologians of the present age who persist in forcing the writings of a barbarous people upon us as the source—sole source, moreover—whence passably becoming ideas of God and his dealings with the world are to be derived?

As reasonable and not utterly benighted men we are to think and feel assured that they are altogether unreasonable, and are living in a state either of wilful or unconscious blindness.*

After his triumphs at Jericho and Ai, Joshua builds an altar of whole stones, as said, to Jehovah, God of Israel—Jahveh-Elohe-Israel—on which burnt-offerings and peace-offerings are presented, and on the stones of which it is composed a copy of the Law of Moses is engraved, not a word of all that Moses commanded being omitted in the writing, or in the reading aloud to the people which followed?

* Well may Strauss have said: "How many of the laity understand the Bible?—how many of the clergy understand it?—how many of them are *willing* to understand it?"

This, in part at least, is somewhat extraordinary intelligence—circumstance, matter, time, and place considered; for the altar is set up on Mount Ebal, and all that passes by the name of Law of Moses could scarcely have been engraved on its twelve unhewn stones. But Mount Ebal is in Samaria, some days march away for an army operating in Canaan with its base at Gilgal; and it is now quite certain that nothing was known among the Israelites under the title of Law of Moses until the reign of Hezekiah, seven hundred years after the days of Joshua, according to the usual reckoning.

Seeing the difficulty of engraving the whole of the Pentateuch or Thora on twelve rough stones, Bible harmonists have said that it was the abstract of the Law comprised in the book of Deuteronomy which Joshua carved on the stones?

An assumption, however, by which the difficulty is not got over; for every competent and candid critic now knows that Deuteronomy is among the most modern of the five so-called books of Moses, and that the bulk of the book, with the exception of a few verses met with here and there copied from Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, does not date from days farther back than the reign of Josiah.

Others of the inhabitants of Canaan are now said to take alarm at the terrible doings of the Israelites?

The Kings of the Amorites, Hittites, Canaanites, and other septs dwelling on this or the western side of Jordan, hearing of what has been done to Jericho and Ai, band themselves together and prepare to resist the invaders. But the people of Gibeon, nearer the scene of action, stricken with a panic fear, as it seems, and despairing of any effectual resistance, go otherwise to work, and succeed by guile in binding Joshua and the princes of Israel by an oath to spare their lives. A deputation present themselves in the camp, and make show of having come from afar: the sacks and wine-skins they have with them being old and rent,

their clothes patched, their shoes clouted, and the bread they still possess, "though taken hot from the oven when they set out," as they say, being now "dry and mouldy." Joshua inquires of them who they are, and from whence they come? From a far country, say they in reply; and having, like Rahab the harlot, heard of the great fame of Jehovah the God of Israel, and all he had done for his people in Egypt, against Sihon, King of Heshbon, and Og, King of Bashan, against the Amorites beyond Jordan, and doubtless also against the people of Jericho and Ai, they had come their long journey to entreat the leader of the dreaded host to enter into a league of amity with them.

Joshua falls into the snare?

"Because he had not asked counsel at the mouth of Jehovah," says the text, "he made peace with them and let them live, all the princes of the congregation swearing to the league." Had he but taken counsel of the mouth of Jehovah, as he ought to have done, he would have been better advised: instead of engaging to let them live, he would doubtless have found himself authorised to deal with them in another fashion. Commanded to hold them Cherem, as in other instances, he would have been enjoined to slay and despoil, instead of simply enslaving and putting them to tribute. All that breathed—men and women, old and young—would then have been put to death, and the silver and gold, the brass and iron they possessed been paid into the treasury of the God!

Joshua and the Israelites, of course, soon discover that they have been imposed upon—that the footsore and ragged deputation came from no far-off country, but verily from the cities of Gibeon, Cephirah, Beeroth, and Kirjath-Jearim, all close at hand?

The people, therefore, murmur against Joshua and their chiefs: they would much have preferred putting the Gibeonites to the sword, and appropriating their spoil; "but they smote them not, because of the oath

of the princes," and are pacified by having them made hewers of wood and drawers of water to the congregation of Israel. Joshua, we need not doubt, rates the deputation soundly for having deceived him, they pleading in excuse the rumour gone abroad that Jehovah the God of Israel had commanded his servant Moses to give his people all the land for a possession, and to destroy all its native inhabitants from before them. Joshua therefore keeps the hands of the children of Israel from the throats of the Gibeonites; but, as the story says, "he made them hewers of wood and drawers of water for the congregation and for the altar of Jehovah in the place which he should choose, even unto this day."

How may this be interpreted?

The hierodouli or slaves of the Temple, built by King Solomon—if it were not perchance of the second Temple, built by the remnant that returned from their captivity in Babylon—on Mount Moriah, in the city of Jerusalem, are turned by the writer into Gibeonites subdued by Joshua.

The Gibeonites have made peace with Joshua then, but the Kings or chiefs of the cantons, their neighbours, threaten them for having come to terms with the invader?

Five of these Kings gather their fighting men together, and make war on Gibeon for its selfish desertion of the common cause. But Gibeon sends to Joshua at Gilgal, entreating for speedy succour and assistance; all the Kings of the Amorites that dwell on the mountains being now gathered, as they say, against them. Joshua is not slow to obey the summons of his new allies. He moves at once from Gilgal in the night; falls suddenly on the host of the five confederates, discomfits them, and slays them with a great slaughter. But he has not been without a powerful ally of another kind than the dastardly Gibeonites to aid in the work of destruction, for "Jehovah," as we learn, "cast down great

stones from Heaven upon them, so that there were more that died with hail-stones than the children of Israel slew with the sword." More than this, and still more marvellous, it is here we read that Joshua, addressing Jehovah, says, in the sight of Israel, "Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou moon in the Valley of Ajalon. And the sun stood still in the midst of Heaven, and hasted not his going down a whole day." The moon, too, although her light could not have been wanted in face of the sun, paused, it is said, in her course, whilst the chosen seed avenged themselves on their enemies. "And there was no day like that before or after it, that Jehovah hearkened to the voice of a man; for Jehovah fought for Israel." We have so often had occasion to differ from the writer that for once we rejoice to find ourselves in accord with him: there certainly never was, and never will, "until chaos come again," be a day like that which saw the sun stand still in Heaven, and haste not his going down for a whole day at the word of a man!

Had the writer been content with his hail-stones of Jehovah—in other words, his great hail-stones—it would not have been difficult to admit that such a contingency as a hail-storm occurring in the course of a skirmish in Judea was well within the limits of possibility, but the standing still of the sun and moon in Heaven, in other words, the arrest of the earth in its revolution, to give Israel the better opportunity to slaughter the Amorites, takes the tale entirely out of the pale of belief. Such an occurrence, as against Nature, *i.e.*, against God, is an absolute impossibility. The narrator himself, indeed, must have had misgivings as to the credibility and reception of his story, for he seeks either to bolster it up, or to shift the responsibility for its truth from his own to another's shoulders, appealing as he does to an inaccessible source as his authority. "Is not this written," says he, "in the Sepher Haijashar?"—the

Book of the Just, now lost to us. Reference to such a document shows that the writer drew from an older source than is the text in which we have his tale, a document, however, that certainly did not date so far back as the days of Joshua, inasmuch as we learn elsewhere (II. Samuel, i. 17 and seq.) that it is from the Sepher Haijashar that the touching lament, put into the mouth of David for Saul and Jonathan, is derived. The Book of Joshua, consequently, could not have been compiled and put together in the indifferent fashion in which it meets us until after the reign of David, second King of Israel.

This tale of the standing still of the sun and moon in their apparent course must surely be one of the parts of the Old Testament which, in face of the science of our age, has failed to find apologists?

So might we have expected. Nevertheless, attempts have not only been made to explain away but even to defend the statement, and in the *physical impossibility* implied to find an illustration of the *power*—we do not know that any one has ventured to add: of the *goodness* and *mercy* of God. But early indoctrination still makes men incompetent to see things as they are, and lets them of the power to distinguish between what is no more than contingent *statement* and that which is *absolute or necessary truth*. Blind sentiment then takes the lead of open-eyed intelligence, and blank absurdity and hideous cruelty are seen in the disguise of wisdom and beneficence.*

* It is not a little extraordinary that so bold a thinker and, in matters of science, so well-informed a man as Spinoza should have been tempted to offer a natural explanation of the *myth* relating the still-stand of the sun and moon at the word of Joshua. He says (assuming it as a fact that the daylight lasted longer than usual) that Joshua and those about him, ignorant of the true cause of the longer continuance of the light they witnessed, believed that the sun stood still on the day in question. They never thought of referring it to

With the great ally he had, or thought he had, in his God Jehovah, Joshua could not fail to put the five Kings of the Amorites, in alliance against Gibeon, to the rout?

They are defeated, as matter of course, with signal slaughter of their peoples, they themselves only escaping immediate death by hiding in a cave at Makkedah. This being told to Joshua, he, to make sure of his prey yet not to interrupt the pursuit and slaughter, orders great stones to be rolled to the mouth of the cave, and a guard set over it. "Pursue after your enemies and smite them," says he; "suffer them not to enter into their cities; for Jehovah your God hath delivered them into your hand." The triumph complete, Joshua and the men of war return to the camp at Makkedah, and—*væ victis!*—it is now the turn of the chiefs who are hidden in the cave:—"Bring forth those five Kings unto me out of the cave," says Joshua. Calling his officers about him, he bids them put their feet on the necks of the prostrate chiefs, and assures them that if they continue strong and of good courage, thus will Jehovah aid them to do to all against whom they fight. But this is not yet the end; for Joshua, continues the record, inspired by Jehovah, and with his own hand, we may presume, even as Samuel did to Agag, "smote them and slew them, and hanged them on five trees until the going down of the sun." The dead bodies were then taken down and thrown into the cave wherein, having sought a refuge, they now found a grave; its mouth, to conclude, being stopped up with great stones, "which remain unto this day."

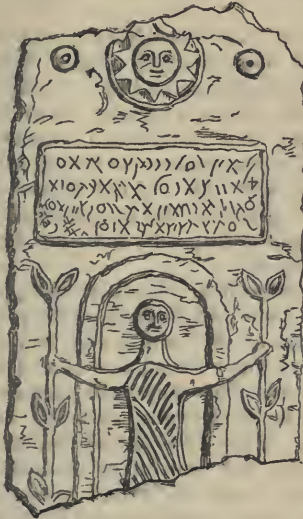
Such *hangings up before the sun*, or *until the going down of the sun*, so frequently mentioned in the He-

any less obvious cause, such as *the ice and hail which then filled the air, and might have given rise to a higher refractive power in the atmosphere than usual.*—Tr. Theol. Polit., ch. ii., p. 60, of the English version.

brew Scriptures, must be presumed to have a special significance?

That they have, cannot be doubted, and that they were sacrificial is scarcely questionable. The *trees* on which the suspensions took place were *crucifixes*, and the attitude of the victim was that which appears to have been assumed by the Semitic peoples generally in the act of adoration. At the dedication of the Temple, for instance, Solomon, it is said, "stood before the altar of Jehovah and *spread forth his hands towards heaven* and said: Jehovah, God of Israel, there is no God like thee," &c.; and when he had made an end of "praying all this prayer and supplication unto Jehovah, he arose from kneeling on his knees *with his hands spread up to heaven*" (1 Kings, viii. 22 and 54). Those *stretchings out of the arms*, again, with or without the *Rod of God* in his hand, of which we read so frequently in connection with the mythical history of Moses, must have had the same significance—they implied prayer and adoration. Moses stretches out his hand when he divides the flood of the Red Sea and when he draws water from the rock, but most notably of all when he gains the victory over Amalek. Waited on by Aaron and Hur, he has ascended the hill that overlooks the field; "and it was seen," says the text, "that when Moses held up his hands, that Israel prevailed, and when he let down his hands, that Amalek prevailed. But Moses' hands were heavy, and they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur *stayed up his hands*, the one on the one side, the other on the other side, *until the going down of the sun*. And Joshua discomfited Amalek." (Ex. xvii.) The rude Figure in the woodcut on the next page, after a Votive Tablet of Hicembalis, King of Massylia and Numidia, to his Deity the Sun-God Baal—older in all likelihood than anything we have in the Hebrew Scriptures—is in the very attitude of the victim on the accursed tree as well as of Moses and Solomon in the act of

prayer, and is surely not a little interesting when seen in connection with the great Catholic Christian symbol of mediæval and modern times.*



Joshua, to whom the idea of mercy appears to have been unknown—as, indeed, it would have been out of season, acting as he does under orders from Jehovah to smite and not to spare—never pauses now in his career of conquest over the tribes standing in the

* The rude and very ancient tablet figured above was brought by Sir Grenville Temple, in 1833, from Magrawa, the site of a Lybo-Phœnician settlement in the Beylik of Tunis, and is described and figured in the *Trans. of the Royal Asiatic Society for 1834*. The inscription in the Phœnician character has been deciphered by Gesenius: *Scripturæ Lingvæque Phœnicia Monumenta*, 4to, Lips. 1837, and is to the following effect:—*Domino Baali Solari, Rege Eterno, qui exaudivit preces Hicembalis: "To the Sun-God Baal, Eternal King, who heard the prayers of Hicembalis."*

way of the chosen seed, their enemies only because occupants of the soil on which they had been born, and their title-deeds no other than indentures from God when he gave them power to subdue and make it fruitful?

He advances from one victory to another, according to the record, *might* his only rule of *right*.

And the countenance and aid of Jehovah?

So he or the writer who uses the sacred name may have imagined; but enlightened humanity knows nothing of God's countenance or favour save with deeds in conformity with his eternal laws—with those in special which proclaim the sacredness of human life, and forbid appropriation by force or fraud of aught that is another's.

But the Canaanites, it has been said, were a wicked race, and so were disinherited, as they deserved?

Of the state of civilisation and morals among the Canaanites we know little; and that little not always in their favour. But they were farther advanced in the arts of life, as it seems, than the horde that invaded them. They were settled denizens on the land of their birth, not wandering nomads like the Israelites; they dwelt in walled towns, associated as independent petty republics, and lived in peace or at war with one another as interest or passion prompted. If perchance they were not entirely moral in their generation, and their religion was stained with what we now look on as indecency, and with blood, what, it is fair to ask, were the Israelites who came up against them? Let the reader refer to the chapters of the book of Exodus in which so many commandments with a social bearing find expression; and, if he have it not already, let him thence acquire the formation that will enable him to answer the question.

Favour or no favour, Joshua is a daring leader, and his warriors are braver, more numerous, better armed, or better led than their opponents, so that he takes in

succession Makkedah, Libnah, Lachish, Gezer, Eglon, and Hebron, and does to each and all of them as he had done to Jericho and Ai, putting the men, women, and children to the sword, and appropriating their spoil, utterly destroying all that breathed, "as Jehovah the God of Israel commanded" (x. 40).

So many of the cities of the level land, or land of Canaan, and their territories thus subdued, Joshua turns his attention to the Perizzite, the Hittite, the Jebusite, and the Canaanite which dwell in the more mountainous districts. Jabin, King of Hazor, had, in fact, allied himself with the clans just named, and "come up against Israel with much people, even as the sand on the sea-shore in multitude, with horses and chariots very many." But Jehovah, as on other occasions, bids Joshua not to fear them, for "to-morrow, about this time, I will deliver them all slain before Israel, and thou shalt hough their horses and burn their chariots with fire."

Israel, with such assistance, prevails?

Of course!—Jehovah delivers all into the hands of his ruthless favourites: Jabin and his confederates are smitten until none of them remain; "Joshua did unto them as Jehovah bade him: he houghed their horses and burnt their chariots with fire." Hazor, the leading place in this unsuccessful stand against the invaders, is particularly mentioned as suffering summary chastisement. Taken by assault, we may presume, Jabin the King of Hazor, and all the souls therein, are smitten with the sword, none of them being left to breathe, and the town itself with all within it is burnt to ashes. Hazor, in a word, had been made *Cherem*; and we are already familiar with the terrible significance of this word. The other cities confederate with Hazor are also taken; but they are not burned down; the victors content themselves with slaying their inhabitants and appropriating the spoil. "There was not a city," says the record, "that made peace with the children of Israel, save the

Hivites, the inhabitants of Gibeon; all the others they took in battle;" for it was of Jehovah to harden their hearts that they should come against Israel in battle that they might have no favour, but be utterly destroyed as Jehovah commanded Moses"—that is to say, they were led to their destruction by Jehovah himself.

There is the saying of a heathen writer, that God first makes mad those he would ruin; but in the book, every word of which is still received by so many among the most civilised peoples of the earth as inspired by God, we should scarcely have expected to find the Supreme Creator presented as leading men to their destruction. Let us think for a moment of God hardening the hearts of the Canaanites to oppose their invaders, and commanding the indiscriminate slaughter of men and women, with the particular houghing of horses and burning of war chariots with fire!

Had the book been truly inspired by God it would most assuredly have contained no such commandments. Do we, however, accept the definition of inspiration given by one of the few consistently pious, thoroughly competent, and candid biblical critics of our day as: "*The expression of man's religious consciousness;*" and that of "*God's promises of the land of Canaan to the Israelites,*" as: "*the spontaneous consciousness of the writer and his nation,*"* we come to a much better understanding of the text than when it is seen as the result of any immediate intimation or inspiration from God. It is, indeed, and can by no possibility be more than a picture by the writer of his God Jehovah, and the destinies of his people. God, most assuredly, no more hardened the hearts of the Canaanites to resist Israel than he hardened the heart of Pharaoh, in older times, when refusing to let Israel go; and he no more ordered the children of

* S. Davidson, D.D. *Introd. to Study of the Old Testament*, I., p. 440 et seq.

Israel to go in, slay and take possession in Canaan, than he inspires a neighbouring people of our own day to covet certain lands that border the Rhine, and another to desiderate the domains of the Sultan, whilst he inclines the hearts of the Teuton and Turk to hold their own. It was the want of elbow-room and the need they felt for escape from the *nomad* to the *settled state* that drove the Hebrew of old to cast longing eyes on the better watered and more fertile lands of Canaan, and led him on, with arms in his hand, prepared to slay where liberty to settle was denied. The story of the invasion of Palestine by the children of Israel, as we have it, is a poem, its historical foundations, in all likelihood, no broader than those of "The Tale of Troy divine." Myth and legend, largely as they pervade every part of the early Hebrew story, are so conspicuous in Joshua that an astrological and allegorical meaning has even been connected with the whole of the book. Jericho, it has been said, may be the Moon-city, Rahab the Moon-goddess (Rahab, increase, from the waxing of the Moon through the first half of her orbit), and Joshua himself another Hercules or Sun-god, pointedly referred to as a Beth-schemite or of the House of the Sun (Ha-Schem, the Sun, a name of the Hebrew god), of whose birth and descent, further than that he was the son of Nun [the fish], we have no information, though we are told that his death and burial took place at Timnath-Heres—eclipse of the Sun, or the obscurity that follows his setting.*

Some considerable time, we must presume, was spent in these wars of conquest and spoliation of Joshua?

Five or six years, according to the usual reckoning, but this is merely conjectural, and though Joshua is said to have taken "the whole land and given it

* See Drummond, *Œdipus Judaicus*, 4to., London. Reprinted, 8vo., London, 1868. Higgins, *Anacalepsis*, 2 vols., 4to., London; and Nork, *Biblische Mythologie*, II., 226.

for an inheritance to Israel," so that at length "the land rested from war" (xi. 23), we by and by learn that "there yet remained very much land to be possessed" (xiii. 1); a statement which, doubtless, approaches the truth more closely than the one first made. Many towns and districts were very certainly never subdued in Joshua's time, nor, indeed, for long after: "As for the Jebusites, the children of Judah could not drive them out; but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah at Jerusalem unto this day—a statement that must date from some considerable time after the reign of David. Neither would it seem did Ephraim slay and drive out the Canaanites from the lands allotted to them, in the manner first described: "They drove not out the Canaanites that dwelt in Gezer; but the Canaanites dwell among the Ephraimites unto this day, and serve under tribute."

With the land thus partially subdued, Joshua nevertheless proceeds to the difficult task of dividing it among the victors according to their tribes?

To avoid dispute, apparently, and charges of partiality, he has recourse to lots, and gives an engagement as from Jehovah that the peoples still in possession should in due season be driven out. The tribe of Levi, alone, is to have none of the land as an inheritance, "the sacrifices of Jehovah, God of Israel, made by fire, are their inheritance;" they are, however, to have certain cities, situated in the territories of the other tribes, for dwelling-places. The admission but just made that there still remained much land to be possessed, and that the slaying and driving out had by no means been so complete as reported, now finds confirmation in the statement that "the five Lords of the Philistines, the Canaanites north of them—the Avites, the Gibbites, all Lebanon, and the Sidonians"—as well as certain other tribes more centrally situated,—the Geshurites, Maachathites, and Jebusites, had not only not been slain or driven out,

but had not as yet been even molested ; they continued to dwell among the Hebrews of old, as they did in the days of the Jewish writer of the age of Josiah (xiii. 13). The *veni, vidi, vici* of the Book of Joshua is thus found, after all, to be an empty boast.

On the above showing there is obvious discrepancy in the accounts we have of the doings of Joshua ?

The discrepancy is endless. The country could evidently have been overrun and subdued to a very limited extent only. Instead of being exterminated, the native populations remained in most parts even numerically superior to the Israelites. But the natives, graziers here, agriculturists there, divided among themselves doubtless, and quarrelling at times, must still have been unused to war on any great scale. Their assailants, the Israelites, on the contrary, are represented as soldiers trained and armed for battle, acting as invaders in a body under a single leader, and superior through discipline to any opposition that could be offered them. There was, therefore, no necessity for the indiscriminate slaughter paraded by the Jewish annalists for the purpose of magnifying Jehovah and his people Israel.

The vast multitude said to have left Egypt and made to toil so long in the wilderness, disappear soon after Joshua comes upon the stage ?

After the questionable Census in the plains of Moab, we hear no more of the six hundred thousand and odd able-bodied men, from twenty years of age and upwards, armed for war. The force in the field under Joshua, though greatly exaggerated in numbers, doubtless, is a comparatively compact body, more easily handled than any larger mass, but still, we may imagine, more than sufficient to make resistance useless on the part of the Canaanites. They could, in fact, have seen nothing for it, in the majority of instances, but submission ; a course to which they may have been the more easily reconciled when they found that the invaders were of their own kindred,

spoke the same or a dialect of the same language, followed the same social usages, and with little difference observed the same religious rites as themselves. The Hebrews and Canaanites were in truth, as we have seen, scions of the same Semitic stock, and intermingling freely through the whole of the earlier and by much the longer period of their history—each taking the sons and daughters of the other as husbands and wives—they became amalgamated at length into the people whom we finally know as the Israelites, or, in a more restricted sense, as the Jews.

Such a conclusion, however, does not tally with the gist of the general history?

It must be true none the less; for though Jehovah is pledged by the writers of the Hebrew records to drive out the native populations before his elect—the children of Jacob, the wily—as the pledge was never redeemed, so need we have no misgivings in concluding that it never came from God, among whose eternal ordinances, as we read them in the book of Nature, it has no place.

What then becomes of the many stringent enactments so frequently repeated, from the mythical days of Abraham and Sarah downwards, against taking daughters of the soil to wife?

As we see that these were all against the customs of the country, and were never observed by high or low until after the Captivity, we conclude that they are the product of the very latest legislation. They belong, in fact, to times when the Jehovistic religious party had got the upper hand in the state, and the bigotry and intolerance that spring up whenever men in power imagine themselves the favourites of heaven, their views alone agreeable to God, and all who differ from them as no better than accursed, had ripened into a system.

There is particular as well as general discrepancy, also, as regards the districts and cities said to have been conquered by Joshua?

Hebron, for instance, is said in one place to have been taken and smitten with the edge of the sword, and the king and all the souls therein so utterly destroyed that not one was left alive (x. 36). But in another place Caleb says to Joshua, "Now, therefore, give me this mountain, Hebron, where Jehovah spoke in that day, how the Anakims were there and the cities great and fenced. If so be that Jehovah will be with me, *then I will drive them out* as Jehovah said. And Joshua blessed Caleb and gave him Hebron for an inheritance." Hebron consequently had not been captured, neither had its inhabitants been exterminated in the manner declared. By-and-bye, indeed, we are told that *Caleb* drives out the three Anakims, Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmi from Hebron (xiv. 12); but at a later period in the story, we learn that "*After the death of Joshua the children of Judah* went up to Hebron, fought against the Canaanites who dwelt there, and slew the three Anakims, Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmi (Judges i. 9), who had all already been first put to the sword by Joshua, and then driven out by Caleb!*

Much the same story is told of Debir as of Hebron?

Joshua and all Israel with him, it is said, fought against Debir; took it; smote it with the edge of the sword, and utterly destroyed all that breathed—"as he had done to Hebron, so did he to Debir" (x. 38). But immediately afterwards we find that Caleb, after clearing his possession, Hebron, of the Anakim, goes up against Debir, and makes proclamation that whosoever takes the city, to him will he give his daughter Achsah to wife; and that Othniel, the son of Kenaz, succeeds, and is rewarded in the terms of the proclamation (xiv. 16-17). But then we have Othniel as the Hero and Achsah as the prize in connection with the city of Kirjath-Sepher—called

* Comp. De Wette: *Introd. to O. T. by Th. Parker, II.*, 165, and seq.

Debir of old, says the writer, in times posterior to the death of Joshua (Judges i. 11-13).

From these and the numerous other contradictory and obviously mythical statements of the book of Joshua we conclude ?

First, that the book is a compilation from fragments, mainly traditional, and in many cases purely mythical; and second, that we have the writings of two—if not of three or more—different individuals jumbled together. Besides the information proper to the book itself, there are many allusions to particulars with which we are already familiar in writings that have gone before, as well as with others, in works more sober in their tenour and more reliable as authorities, that come after it. References to the plagues of Egypt and the wonders done in that country are put into the mouths of Rahab and the Gibeonites; the passage of the Jordan is plainly a parallel to the passage of the Red Sea, and needless, inasmuch as the river is fordable; Moses is the hero of the legislation and Joshua the hero of the conquest of the promised land; Moses had a wonder-working rod, and Joshua has a wonder-working spear; Jehovah appears to Moses in the burning bush, and the Captain of Jehovah's host appears to Joshua, and in the very words used to Moses bids him loose his shoe from off his foot, the ground he stands on being holy; and, to conclude, the death and burial of Joshua at Timnath Heres in the dark bears some analogy to the mysterious death of Moses on Mount Nebo.

Beside the general distribution of lands to the tribes, there are a few particular allotments to distinguished individuals ?

We have seen Caleb put in possession of Hebron, and we now learn that the sons of Aaron, the priests, are handsomely endowed; they have no fewer than thirteen cities assigned them. But, as the sons were only two, we are at a loss to imagine what use they

could have made of so munificent a gift: they could not have occupied thirteen cities, and in the days referred to there was no letting and sub-letting; possessions were for individuals and their families, and the transmission of property only took place by sale or inheritance among the members of each several tribe. Such an anachronism as the presentment of thirteen cities to the priesthood can scarcely be conceived possible even at a date so remote as the age of Solomon; the statement before us, therefore, we must conclude, was made after the reign of that sovereign.* And now, continues the text, "Jehovah gave unto Israel all the land which he swore to give to their fathers; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein, and Jehovah gave them rest round about . . . and there failed not aught of any good thing which Jehovah had spoken unto the house of Israel—all came to pass" (xxi. 43-45).

This must be a note supplied by a late hand, ignoring much of what had been said before?

It has every appearance of being so, standing as it does in flagrant contradiction with the statements we have but just had made that there still remained much land to be taken in and possessed; that the children of Judah could never drive the Jebusites out of their city, nor the sons of Manasseh expel the Canaanites from the district assigned them, &c. Neither, indeed, were the Geshurites ever got rid of, but continued, the text tells us, "to dwell among the Ephraimites unto this day," *i.e.*, unto the day when the writer lived, some time assuredly, longer or shorter, after the reign of Solomon.

The tribes of Reuben and Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh, which have kept their word to Moses that they would aid the other tribes, their brethren, in the conquest of the promised land, now take their

See Kuehnen. *Hist. critique de l'ancien Testament*, Tr. de l'Hollandais, T. I., p. 330, 8vo, Paris, 1866.

leave, and set out in return to their own territory beyond Jordan, with the blessing of Joshua and a charge that they should diligently keep the commandments and observe the law which Moses the servant of Jehovah had given them ?

They depart, and having come to the banks of the Jordan in the land of Canaan they are minded, it is said, to build an altar, "a great altar to see to," according to the text.

This was piously intended, doubtless, and in thankfulness to their God who had so marvellously befriended them and their brethren in their great enterprise ?

So might we conclude; but, strange to say, it is taken as a mortal offence by the ten tribes they had just left; "the whole congregation of Israel, it is said, gathered themselves together at Shiloh to go up to war against them."

This seems extraordinary ?

So would it be assuredly, could anything of the kind have occurred at the Early period of Hebrew history assumed. Then, and for long ages after, there were numerous holy-places, with rude altars of earth and unhewn stones, scattered over the country, at Hebron, Beth-El, Beer-Sheba, Gilgal, Sechem, Siloh, Lachish, Dan, &c., dedicated to the Hebrew God or Gods—El, Elohim, Isra-El, or by whatever other name known, under whatever form represented, at all of which sacrifices could be duly and lawfully offered. The ire of the congregation of Israel, however, ceases to strike us as extraordinary when the writing is referred to post-exilic times, when the only shrine to which oblations could be lawfully brought was the one on Mount Zion, and the only God to be addressed without sin was Jehovah, God of the reformed religious party in the kingdom of Judah. The story, if it be more than a myth, if it have any historical foundation at all, must refer to an episode in the rivalry between Judah and Israel, in the days

of Jeroboam, or still later, but here relegated to the remote age of Joshua and the Epoch of the Conquest.

The congregation of Israel (Judah) expostulate with Reuben and Gad (Israel or Ephraim) before proceeding to extremities and coming to blows with them ?

They send Phinehas, distinguished as we already know by the 'murder of Zimri and Cozbi, so much approved of by Jehovah, if the record may be trusted, and with him ten princes of the tribes. Coming up with the sons of Reuben, Gad, and half Manasseh, at Gilead, they say :—"What trespass is this that ye have committed against the God of Israel" [Jehovah, the God of Judah, being here to be understood] "in that ye have builded you an altar? If the land of your possession be unclean, then pass ye over into the land of the possession of Jehovah, wherein Jehovah's tabernacle [Temple on Mount Zion, to be understood] dwelleth; but rebel not against us in building you an altar beside [in addition to] the altar of Jehovah *our* God."

The Reubenites and Gadites will be much amazed at this interference with the custom of their fathers—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and themselves, of setting up an altar whenever and wherever they were minded so to do ?

That they must have been taken aback there can be little question, and we should find them saying so, assuredly, had we the true account of the incident out of which, we must presume, the story of the text to have arisen; but we have it not, we have only the travestied Jehovistic narrative, in which the parties inculpated are made to say :—"God, God Jehovah [Judah's God] knoweth, and Isra-El [Ephraim's God] shall know, if this has come to pass through falling away from Jehovah or rebelling against him, may there be no help for us this day! If we have built us an altar to turn from following Jehovah, or to offer burnt-offerings or thank-offerings thereon, may

Jehovah avenge it! And if we have not rather done this to the end, that in time to come when your children say to our children, 'What have ye in common with Jehovah, seeing that Jehovah hath made Jordan the boundary between us and you—ye have no part in Jehovah.' . . . Therefore, said we, we shall build an altar, neither for burnt-offerings nor for sacrifice, but for a witness between us and you, and between your generations and our generations after us that we do service to Jehovah, and come to him with our burnt-offerings, our sacrifices, and our thank-offerings, so that your children shall not in time to come say to our children, 'Ye have no part in Jehovah.' Far be it from us, therefore, say we, this day to fall away from Jehovah by building an altar for burnt-offerings and meat-offerings, and sacrifices, other than the altar of Jehovah our [the word should be your] God that stands before his dwelling-place" [the Temple of Jerusalem to be understood].

The account here is not only tautological and extremely prolix in the original, but, when closely scanned, is seen to be at variance with other parts of the Hebrew Scriptures?

Hardly to be understood either without the comment here supplied in some small measure by the few words within brackets. Explanation more at large is found when note is taken of the two great religious parties, Elohist and Jehovist, into which the Hebrew people came to be divided subsequently to the reign of Solomon. Of these the Elohist represent the Catholics, the Jehovist the Protestants, of modern times. The Elohist "stand fast on the ancient ways," have their strength in the kingdom of Israel or Ephraim, and they possess numerous altars or holy places; the Jehovist, more advanced, have their stronghold in Judah, with the Temple on Mount Zion as the only shrine or holy place they acknowledge. The Elohist, in a word, abide by the

worship of the old Hebrew God El Elohe Israel, and continue to sacrifice to him under the semblance of the Bull. The Jehovahists, again, having attained to the conception of the Oneness and Omnipresence of Deity, had abandoned the Idea that God could be presented under any *similitude*, but inconsistently maintained that he could only be lawfully addressed at his Shrine on Mount Zion. Reuben and Gad, we see, do not deny that they had built an altar; but they are made by the Jewish writer to belie themselves, and say that it was not intended for burnt-offerings nor for sacrifice, but for a witness between them and their brethren. Altars, however, were never built save for sacrifice, it was the Cairn or Heap of stones, and upon occasion the single stone pillar under a tree or by a well, that was the proper memorial monument. The text but just quoted, in its inconsistencies and its statements at variance with all we know of use and wont among the early Hebrews, shows unmistakable signs of late writing and of yet later editorial manipulation in the transparent purpose it presents to set Jehovah above El Elohe-Isra-El.

The religious difference between the two sections of the Hebrew people may possibly have lain at the root of the fatal disruption that turned into two the single kingdom conquered by David and ruled over through the greater part of his life by Solomon?

There may be some truth in this. United, Judah and Ephraim might, as it seems, have made head against either Egypt or Assyria, operating so far from home, and have even held their own, under a competent leader, in the hilly and easily-defended country of Northern Palestine against Chaldea. But divided, hating each other with the blind and deadly hate that is engendered of religious difference, and often at war with one another, they became in succession the easy prey of even the least powerful of their enemies.

If Reuben and Gad had built, or were minded to

build, an altar at all, it could therefore only be for sacrifice and oblation; and their offence lay in this, that it was not to Jehovah, but to the God El-Elohe-Israel, Chiun, or Chamos, whose Tabernacle, Image, and Star had been borne by them and their fathers in the wilderness for forty years, according to the prophet Amos (v.), that they were about to bring their offerings?

In the olden time there was not only no restriction as to the building of altars for sacrifice, but every facility was given for their erection. Jehovah [the name should here be Elohim] orders Moses to say to the children of Israel, "An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me, and shalt offer thereon thy burnt-offerings." It was only when the Temple of Jerusalem had been built, and proclaimed by the Jehovistic or Jewish party, the sole shrine at which their God Jehovah could be worshipped, that the building elsewhere of an altar for sacrifice and oblation came to be regarded as a trespass of such magnitude that it could only be atoned for by bloodshed. The Hebrew people of the age of Joshua must not be seen as the Israelites of Jeroboam and his successors of the age of the writer, setting up altars and bringing offerings to a Golden Calf as the God who had brought them out of their Egyptian bondage; they must be paraded as observant of the Law of Moses, eight centuries before it was even imagined to be in existence, and nine centuries before the second Temple of Jehovah, God of Judah, had been built!

Phinehas the priest and the other delegates express themselves satisfied with the disavowal they receive from Reuben and Gad of any purpose on their part to raise an independent altar?

They say: "This day we perceive that Jehovah is among us. Because ye have not committed this trespass, ye have delivered the children of Israel out of the hand of Jehovah." The children of Israel, it is said in continuation, "blessed God, and did not

go up in battle array to desolate the land wherein Reuben and Gad had their possessions ;” and they, it is added, called the altar they had built “ED—*Witness that Jehovah is God.*”*

The words which speak in this place of the “deliv-ery of the children of Israel out of the hand of Jehovah” must have a special significance?

The writer would, doubtless, persuade his countrymen and co-religionists that all departure from the so-called Law of Moses—which had been brought to light, we may suppose, a short while before his time—and any sacrifice offered at a shrine other than the Temple of Jerusalem, would bring Jehovah down upon them with war or pestilence for their presumption. He would have them believe that his God Jehovah would not be slow, through the instrumentality of such a zealot as Phinehas, or by war or pestilence to make them smart for daring to worship God in any but the prescribed, though it were, perchance, the an-

* It is with great diffidence that we venture to differ from so accomplished a Biblical scholar as Professor Kuehnen in our interpretation of this curious episode in Hebrew history. Referring to Joshua xxi., Professor Kuehnen says :—“How we see Israel zealous for the unity of worship! What—build an altar outside of Shilo, the holy place! This were indeed a sin of the gravest complexion, which the parties inculpated make haste to explain away as they best can. The great thing in the writer’s mind is to have the calf of Jehovah centered at Shilo, and allowed at no other place.” But we are persuaded that it is *Judah* that is here zealous against *Ephraim*, after the disruption of the kingdom. The question, in our opinion, is not about having an altar *anywhere save at Shilo*, but of having an altar *anywhere save at Jerusalem*. The narrative in the text Professor Kuehnen believes to be derived from the document he styles ‘The Book of the Origins;’ and, as he refers the composition of this book to no more ancient a date than the reign of Solomon, we see that the history may very well refer to times by no means so remote as those of Joshua. In the shape in which we have the tale, it is probably from the pen of a Jewish writer, who lived not earlier than the reign of Josiah, and is an indifferent invention—*ad majorem Jehovahæ gloriam!* The text is confused, tautological,

tique way, and even the way of their immediate fathers and of most of themselves.

The Jehovists were the Iconoclasts of the days of Josiah and a few of his successors. They were the men who ruined the High-places, broke in pieces the stone columns, and slew the priests of Baal, burnt the wooden pillars of Aschera, pulled down the booths of the infamous Kadeschim, destroyed the brazen Serpent—said to be that which Moses set up on a pole in the wilderness—made a bonfire of the Chariot of the Sun that stood in the porch of the Temple, and so on. They present themselves in almost all things as prototypes of the early reformers of modern times, who were not always content with breaking in pieces the images and wrecking the altars, but did not hold their hands from the solemn piles in which what they styled *The Idolatry* had been carried on.

With the departure of Reuben and Gad to their possessions beyond Jordan, "a long time after Jehovah had given rest to Israel," according to the

and bears obvious marks of editorial manipulation; but the burden of the narrative assimilates itself perfectly with the state of things existing between Judah and Ephraim in days subsequent to the age of Solomon. It is not uninteresting to note that the site of the ED or WITNESS altar spoken of appears to have been recently discovered in the course of the Ordnance Survey of Palestine, proceeding at this time. There is, it seems, a remarkable lofty white peak visible from the modern Jericho, twenty miles distant, projecting like a bastion, and closing the valley of the Jordan. From the summit of this peak there is a magnificent and very extensive view. Accessible on the north side only, the surveying party there obtained the name, Tal'at abu Ayd—the ascent leading to Ayd. The lofty peak in question, conspicuous in days when writing had become familiar to the Jews as it had been from time immemorial, was probably in want of a history, and has been supplied with one by the writer of the Book of Joshua. The times with which we have ventured to connect the narrative of the 22nd chapter of Joshua implies our persuasion that the tale has reference to incidents much later than any that can be referred to the days of the mythical successor of the still more mythical Moses.

text, Joshua, now far stricken in years, calls the Elders of Israel around him?

And reminds them, in imitation of Moses, when he had the notice that he was to die, of all Jehovah had done for them. Modestly passing over his own achievements, he speaks of the partition he had made among them by lot, not only of the lands overrun and possessed, but of those of the peoples which still remained to be conquered and taken in. But he informs them that they have only to be of good courage, to do all that is ordained in the book of the Law, to serve none of the gods of the native tribes among whom they settled, and particularly to contract no marriages with their women; the Jewish writer showing himself as well aware, in his day, as we are in ours, of the power of the *female propaganda* in securing outward conformity, at all events, if not always inward assent, to the religious dogmas and rites which are the fashion of the age.

But if they failed to follow the advice now given them?

Then should they smart for it: "Do ye in anywise go back and cleave to the remnants of the nations left among you," says the text, "making marriages with them and they with you; know for a certainty that Jehovah your God will no more drive out any of these nations from before you, but they shall be snares and traps unto you, scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish from off the land. It shall come to pass that as all good things are come upon you which were promised, so shall Jehovah bring upon you all evil things. When ye have transgressed the covenant of Jehovah and have gone and served other gods, then shall the anger of Jehovah be kindled against you, and ye shall perish quickly from off the good land which he hath given you" (xxiii. *ad fin.*).

This has a great look of prophecy after the event? There can be little question of its being so in

reality. God as *Inmanent Cause*, *In All and Of All* that *Is*, cannot be jealous of other gods, for there are none such; and God neither favours nor is angry, in any human sense, with act of man or event that comes to pass. Such language is the effect of anthropomorphosing God and supposing him possessed of human appetites, passions, and prejudices — a sin that must be charged against the writers of the Hebrew Scriptures, above all others. In the texts just quoted we see iteration of the old system of contract or bargain between Jehovah and his people, upon which we have observed already; and in the warnings against serving *other gods* we have fresh assurance that Jehovah was believed by the Jews to be but one among many gods, and not a little jealous of their power.

Joshua continues his parting address?

Or rather we have another writer beginning it for him anew and varying it in particulars here and there. The first oration, which breaks off at the end of chapter xxiii., is continued at the 14th verse of the 24th chapter, and in terms that are not a little remarkable, the usual interpretation put upon the Hebrew Scriptures considered. "Now, therefore," says the writer, "fear Jehovah and serve him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the Gods which your fathers served on the other side of the stream [the Jordan] and in Egypt, and serve ye Jehovah. And if it seem not good unto you to serve Jehovah, then choose you this day whom ye will serve,— whether *the Gods which your fathers served on the other side of the stream*, or the Gods of the Amorites in whose land ye dwell; but as for me and my house we will serve Jehovah."

Joshua therefore gives the people their choice of the God or Gods they would serve; and in what is said incidentally we now learn that *Jehovah was not the God* who was served either in Egypt or beyond Jordan, the proper boundary between *the Divinities of one*

Pantheon and *Those of another*. We discover at length, and at the very end of our task that JEHOVAH could have had nothing to do with freeing the Israelites from their Egyptian bondage; but that it was verily THE GOD whose similitude was presented by Aaron to the wanderers in the guise of the Bull-Calf, who had led them out of captivity. The writer of the Book of Joshua, plainly enough, has no idea of God as ONE and ONE ONLY; he recognises a multiplicity of Gods with Jehovah his own God among the number. All we have had in Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, therefore, about Jehovah as the God of Israel, his apparitions to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses, his personal communications and immediate commandments to the chiefs of the chosen seed, &c., &c., vanish into nothing. We have, in a word, no *Records* of the distant ages and strange doings referred to in the Pentateuch, but *Poems* by writers who lived, as we believe, for the most part after the Babylonian Captivity.

To Joshua's proposition as to the God they would serve the people answer and say?

"God forbid that we should forsake Jehovah to serve other Gods; for Jehovah is he that brought us up and our fathers out of the land of Egypt, and did great wonders in our sight, and preserved us all the way wherein we went and among all the people through whom we passed."

This does not tally exactly with what Joshua has but just been made to say, and with very much besides that we have had already; for Aaron the priest has presented them with a Golden Calf as the God that brought them out of Egypt, and Jehovah has not only broken out on the people for their backslidings on numerous occasions and slain them by thousands with the sword and pestilence, but has inflicted forty years of wandering in the wilderness, and, with the exception of Joshua and Caleb, has killed off all of adult years who had left Egypt.

How, then, should we now have the people speaking of Jehovah as their God, of the wonders they had seen, and the care that had been taken of them in their journeyings?

It were very hard to say, could we not with the most perfect assurance refer the writing we have before us to a very late period in the history of the Hebrew people, and even divine the motive that led to its composition.

Joshua does not receive the people's ready acceptance of the new God Jehovah in place of their own and their fathers-old Gods without a warning?

"Ye cannot serve Jehovah," says he, "for he is a holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins. If ye forsake Jehovah and serve other Gods he will turn and do you hurt, and consume you after he hath done you good."

The people are not frightened by these somewhat formidable assurances?

They say: "Nay, but we will serve Jehovah," on which Joshua tells them that now they are witnesses against themselves, that they have chosen Jehovah to serve him. So he makes a covenant with the people and writes the words of it in a book; takes a great stone and sets it up under a tree and says: "Behold this stone shall be a witness to us; for it hath heard (!) all the words of Jehovah which he spake unto us. It shall therefore be a witness unto you that ye deny not your God"—Jehovah, the God just chosen, understood.

By which procedure we see that Joshua, or the modern writer who is using his name, had not got beyond the old religious notions of his forefathers. He sets up a stone pillar, symbol of the life-giving power, under the shade of a living tree, so long an object of worship with man escaping from the merely animal into the more properly human or speculative sphere of existence. It is not unimportant to observe

that the stone is referred to as *having heard* all the words spoken. It was not only the Symbol of the God, therefore, but the God himself—Deity at once, and Deity's dwelling-place. The Book in which Joshua is said to have written what is called "The Law of God" has not come down to us?

The Book we have, which passes under the name of Joshua, contains little or nothing that has not an immediate bearing on the conquests and partition of the promised land, and so cannot be that now referred to. If it ever existed, and it may very well never have had being out of the imagination of the historian of Joshua's deeds of spoliation and slaughter, it has perished in the wreck of ages.

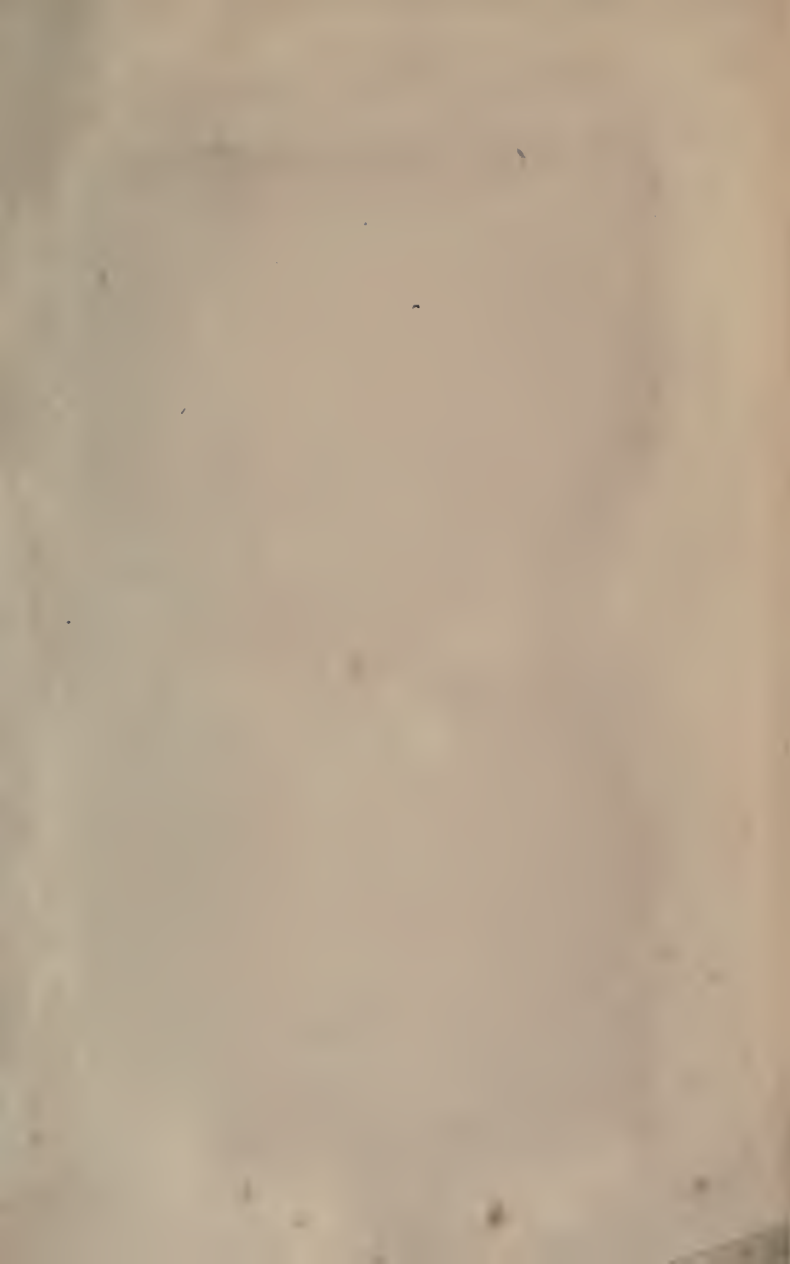
Having done his work, Joshua has now only to be gathered to his fathers?

He dies, it is said, at the advanced age of one hundred and ten years, and is buried on the borders of his inheritance in Timnath-Heres, as we have already had occasion to learn.

We have anticipated almost all that need be said of the age and authorship of the Book of Joshua. That it is of relatively modern composition, there can be no doubt; and from the repeated references we find to late incidents in Hebrew history, we see that he whose name it bears could not have been its author. It is, in fact, a sort of appendix to Deuteronomy, and the style and peculiar forms of expression show, almost beyond question, that the writer of Deuteronomy was, in great part at least, the writer of Joshua also, although it bears many marks of subsequent editorial manipulation. Both Elohist and Jehovist documents appear in the text. The Book of Judges has furnished the compiler with several of his statements, and in this has left our modern harmonists with a crop of contradictions that have sorely taxed their ingenuity to reconcile with the

accredited idea of inspiration. A few of these we have had occasion to notice in the course of our commentary. The mention of *Jerusalem*, which occurs oftener than once, would of itself suffice to take the writing out of the age whose history it details; for Jerusalem was Jebus until the reign of David; and the obvious reference made, in more places than one, to the sufferings that befall a city in a state of siege, and the miseries that wait on exile, point unequivocally to the invasion of the Chaldeans and the Babylonian captivity. The Book of Joshua, therefore, in its present shape, cannot be of older date than the age of Manasseh. Speaking of the first twelve chapters of the Book, containing the tale of the invasion of the land of Canaan, Professor Kuehnen gives it as the result of his inquiries, that "the author cannot be regarded as an entirely credible historian." Dr. Davidson, having determined the time of the Deuteronomist as falling in the reign of Manasseh, and ascribing, as he does, Deuteronomy and Joshua to one and the same compiler, concludes that the Book before us was compiled during the reign of that monarch.





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[Willis, Robert]

The Pentateuch and Book of Joshua in the
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